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Captain Gavin White, before he received the keys to his newly renovated mortgage-free smart home compliments of the Stephen Siller Tunnels to Towers Foundation Building for America's Bravest program.

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Kathryn J. Sowerwine, MD



Dr. Kathryn J. Sowerwine is a board certified Allergist and Immunologist with a special interest in dermatological diseases linked to allergy. She completed a residency in Internal Medicine at Georgetown University Hospital and her clinical and research fellowship in allergy and immunology at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD.

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WELLBEING

Erasing the Stigma

Mental Health advocates work to tear down barriers to treatment.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

It was during college when Laura Greenstein began to notice that something was not quite right. “I noticed that things that were creating anxiety on a daily basis, they weren’t just situational,” she said. “My anxiety was grabbing onto anything that it could. If I was running late, I would start to panic. Any small thing became a big issue.” “My mother has always been supportive, but when [my anxiety] got to a certain point some close friends and family began to stigmatize it,” said Greenstein, who now works for the National Association for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) in Arlington. “They would say, ‘You’re not doing enough.’ It was difficult to feel that I wasn’t being fully accepted.”

After months of therapy and recent session with a psychiatrist who prescribed medication, Greenstein said that she is beginning to feel some relief. She even began blogging about her experience. “This was my first time sharing my story,” she said. “It’s been a really validating process. Being open can really improve your outlook.”

During May, Mental Health Awareness Month, Greenstein and other mental health advocates are sharing the ways in which negative perceptions about mental illnesses can impact those who suffer from it. NAMI reports that approximately 1 in 5 adults and children in the United States are experiencing mental illness in a given year. Only 41 percent of those adults received mental health treatment, while slightly more than half of children aged 8-15 received those services. One of the roadblocks to treatment, say mental health professionals, is the stigma surrounding mental health.

“Micro-aggressions towards individuals with mental illness are very common, such as assuming that someone with a mental illness is inferior, stupid, or not in control of their own behaviors,” said Jessica McLaughlin, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology at Montgomery College. “Because of our society’s misperceptions of mental illness, many individuals struggling with mental health problems feel ashamed and isolated. They may even feel like it is not appropriate to seek help. “[And] being on the receiving end of these hurtful comments and beliefs actually worsens symptoms.”

With a theme of “Cure Stigma,” NAMI activists are encouraging people to educate themselves and eradicate the stigma which can be a roadblock to those who suffer from mental illness to get the treatment they need. They were afraid of being labeled, so they suffered in silence.

This is particularly true with teenagers and pre-teens, advises Stacie Isenberg, Psy.D., a child psychologist who specializes in anxiety disorders. “A mental illness stigma may cause a teen or pre-teen to be hesitant to admit to her or himself that they are having a mental health problem, to share with a parent, teacher, or pediatrician about their problem, and to seek mental health treatment,” she said.

The stigma surrounding mental illness is an important issue that often goes unrecognized, says McLaughlin. “Individuals with mental illness face both overt and covert discrimination,” she said. “For



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA GREENSTEIN

Laura Greenstein is using her personal experience with anxiety to help others who suffer from mental illness.

example, there is an assumption that people with mental illness are violent or crazy, which is not true. However, our belief in these myths can affect someone’s ability to find employment or obtain housing.”

“Education is a powerful tool in combating mental health stigma, and community-wide, mental health awareness campaigns are helpful,” added Isenberg. “Individually, kids often search online to check out what their symptoms mean. Education from credible websites, and those of mental health organizations often provide clarity and guidance for those seeking help.”

Allowing those who might be experiencing symptoms of a mental illness to speak freely about their condition without fear of judgment can remove barriers to treatment advises McLaughlin. “That means asking how we can help, listening with an open mind, and being nonjudgmental,” she said. Sometimes it

can be a tremendous help just to let someone know that they have someone to lean on and that they are not alone.”

People can also fight the stigma of mental illness by being accepting and supportive of people who are experiencing mental health issues, and by modeling this acceptance for their children, suggests Isenberg. “Employers can encourage employees to use mental health days as needed, and to permit longer lunch hours or flexible dismissal or arrival at times to accommodate therapy appointments,” she said. “Similarly, schools can work with families to allow kids to use free periods, lunch periods, etc. to attend therapy when an after-school time is not available and the need for treatment is significant.”

A family’s attitude about the mentally ill can affect a child’s willingness to ask for help, advises Isenberg. “A child who comes from a family that does not consider mental health issues to be real or problematic may be reluctant to share with her or his parents,” she said. “Similarly, kids whose friends stigmatize mental health issues, or kids who don’t talk much about personal issues with friends, are often unsure about sharing with their friends. On the contrary, kids who believe their families and friends will be sensitive and supportive to them are more likely to be open with them about any concerns they are having.”

McLaughlin says the conversation needs to happen on a national level. “One of the most important things our nation could do is make therapy services more easily accessible,” she said. “We should encourage individuals to seek treatment, not make them feel embarrassed. There is nothing more courageous than someone who is willing to advocate for their own mental health.”

More

See www.nami.org

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‘Celebrating the Magic of Giving Back’

Some 144 individuals and groups honored at Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards.

BY STEVE HIBBARD
THE CONNECTION

About 400 people attended the 26th annual Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards on Friday, April 27, at the Waterford in Springfield where some 144 individuals and groups were honored. With the theme “Once Upon a Volunteer, Celebrating the Magic of Giving Back,” the breakfast included the “Who’s Who” of Fairfax County’s leaders in business, education, government and nonprofits. It was sponsored by Volunteer Fairfax, members of the Board of Su-

pervisors and Chairman Sharon Bulova. The volunteers, who do everything from helping with technology mentoring, supporting at-risk seniors and working to combat homelessness, gave a total of 328,760 hours of service worth \$7.9 million in support of the Fairfax County community. Peggy Fox, Virginia Bureau Chief at WUSA9/CBS affiliate, served as event emcee.

Many different awards were given out, including 2018 Benchmark Awards for volunteering 100, 250, 500, or 1,000 hours; 2018 Community Champions who were selected by the Board of Supervisors honoring a volunteer in their districts who was

dedicated to improving life in the county and beyond; and 2018 Competitive Awards for youth, adult, and seniors in individuals and groups.

“Today is all about recognizing the wonderful volunteers we have in Fairfax County,” said Elise Neil Bengtson, CEO of Volunteer Fairfax. “We’re giving them a platform so the county can understand better where volunteers fill gaps and meet the needs of the community and nonprofits at the same time. Without volunteers, we could not get everything done that we do. We have a tremendous wealth of experience and education in this area so even when you’re older and retired, you can do amazing things and feel good and stay energized in this county and be an active participant.”

Added Rick Garza, Volunteer Fairfax board president: “This is a signature event

for Volunteer Fairfax and Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax to just honor so many people who devote their time outside of their working hours helping others, helping our community be a better place.”

Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, who offered a Fairfax County Proclamation to Volunteer Fairfax, which was established in 1975, added: “Fairfax County has a unique culture and that includes volunteerism through the roof ... We would not be able to do as much as we do with volunteers if we didn’t have an organizational body pulling people together, connecting people and making volunteerism happen. Congratulations Volunteer Fairfax and thank you so much for everything you do for our community.”

For more on Volunteer Fairfax, visit www.volunteerfairfax.org.

PHOTOS BY STEVE HIBBARD/THE CONNECTION

County Residents Named Community Champion

The following citizen volunteers from the area were chosen by members of the Board of Supervisors from each of their districts as a Community Champion. This award recognizes volunteers who are committed to improving Fairfax County through service that fulfills or addresses a pressing community need.

May Bernhardt is an active supporter of the community not only as an individual but also through her small business, Mayflowers. Over the years, her personal creations have added an element of graciousness and style to organizations fortunate enough to receive her floral creations. Among her many philanthropic activities, she demonstrated her commitment to raise support and funds when she and her staff joined the Cornerstones planning committee to end

William “Ed” Pickens is Dranesville District’s outdoor volunteer. If it involves trails, beautification, or stream cleanups, he is the man to ask and the man to get the work done. Each year, he has provided hundreds of volunteer hours involving work with the Fairfax County Park Authority to design, build, and maintain two natural surface trails, Pimmit Run and Scotts Run, as well as initiate major improvements on the Cross-County Trail. In addition to managing other volunteers, he identified and coordinated over 50 trail projects with the Boy Scouts and supervised over 40 Eagle Scout projects, serving as a mentor to those who work beside him. Anyone who enjoys hiking along the many trails in Fairfax County reaps the benefits of his multi-year efforts to expand and maintain the county’s trail network. From ardent hikers to casual walkers, every trail user gets a safer and more enhanced experience as a result of his efforts.

“Mr. Pickens is not a person who seeks



Supervisor Cathy Hudgins honors May Bernhardt, Hunter Mill District.

homelessness. With her in-kind donations of her professional goods and services, she continues to support nonprofit organizations – exemplifying the Reston spirit of philanthropy “live, work, play, and serve.”

District Supervisor Cathy Hudgins said, “The growth of a community lays on the compassionate actions of its members. May is a true example of how individuals can make a difference by selflessly giving their time and talents.”



Supervisor John Foust honors William Pickens, Dranesville District.

acknowledgement of his contributions to our community. Instead, in his quiet and patient way, he performs yeoman’s work to improve the county’s trail network. His work with Eagle Scout candidates on trail projects is inspirational and encourages civic engagement,” said District Supervisor John Foust.

The **PRS CrisisLink’s CareRing** program assists vulnerable older adults in maintaining independence and community connections by increasing mental and social well-being. Through scheduled calls daily or several times throughout the week, CareRing Volunteers phone clients for social support while also assessing any risk of depression or cognitive decline. These volunteers build trusted and healthy social relationships with clients who may be at risk of isolation. The volunteers embrace clients’ thoughts and feelings, making sure they know someone cares about them and that they are not alone. In 2017, CareRing volunteers served over 1,000 clients, handled over 35,000 calls, and exchanged over 33,000 text messages. The impact of this

The **Fairfax County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** program is a Citizen Corps volunteer program managed under the auspices of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. The CERT program prepares ordinary citizens to safely help themselves, their families, and their communities during emergencies. They also provide emergency preparedness and public safety related services on an ongoing basis. Over the last year, 694 active CERT volunteers improved the county’s overall emergency response posture through a variety of trainings while also providing a multitude of emergency preparedness and public safety related services. In addition, hundreds of volunteers applied their skills to support community activities and events such as lost child assistance and traffic management. CERT members attended 47 outreach events across the county, informing approximately 7,653 residents about opportunities and activities to better equip them-



Adult Volunteer Group: PRS CrisisLink’s CareRing volunteers with Board Chairman Sharon Bulova.

group is best described by a CrisisLink client whose letter to volunteers read, “I love when you call me to see how I am doing. It cheers me up and gets me going for the day. I tell you with all my heart and soul, I will never forget your kindness and love.”



Fairfax County Government Volunteer Program: Fairfax County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) with Board Chairman Sharon Bulova.

selves, their families, and their neighbors in the event of an emergency.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Volunteer Liaison Jeffery Katz said, “Fairfax County’s CERT program is a prime example of ‘Neighbors helping Neighbors.’ 2017 was another year of unprecedented growth and innovation during which our CERTs further improved our County’s disaster preparedness.”

Two Council Members Challenge the Budget Adoption

Respectful conversation and facts eventually lead to budget adoption.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Herndon Town Councilmembers Sheila Olem and Signe Friedrichs stunned fellow councilmembers in a surprise attempt to stall passage of the measure which levies taxes on the town real estate and homes, meals, cigarettes and more. They did so during Council proceeding on the ordinance held Tuesday, April 24, 2018, in Town Chambers during the Public Hearing on the Proposed FY 2019 Budget. There is no increase in tax rates in the proposal, but the measure requires five votes to pass.

Council approval of the ordinance is one of three pieces required to approve the budget. By law, the Council must adopt FY 2019 Budget by June 30, 2018, with enactment to begin on July 1, 2018, the first day of the fiscal year.

"We are not proposing a change in our tax rate," said Mayor Lisa C. Merkel earlier in the evening. The ordinance maintained and did not increase the town's real estate tax set at \$0.2650 per \$100 of assessed value, the meals tax at 2.5 percent and all other taxes and levies remain unchanged in the budget proposal. Taxes generated by the ordinance are directed to the primary operating fund of the town, the General Fund. If the Council wished to increase a tax rate, it had to be advertised twice and hold two public hearings before any Council.

Not anticipating any opposition, Councilmember Grace Cunningham put forth the motion to approve the tax rates. "There have been some really smart decisions by our staff," she said. "They have found every penny to save taxpayers from any increases."

Olem presented a substitute motion to defer consideration on the ordinance until May 5, 2018. Olem said she was doing so because some individuals in the community shared concerns about the overall budget. She wanted more time for budget discussion. Olem qualified her actions by mentioning how "lean and tight" the budget was while noting, "You can't pass one of the three items without talking about all of them."

Friedrichs agreed with Olem yet expressed praise for the budget. "This is a great budget in many, many ways, [but] we need to talk about something constituents have brought up to us."

Olem's substitute motion to delay action confirming the tax rates failed in a vote of 4 to 2 as Councilmembers Bill McKenna and Grace Cunningham, Vice Mayor Jennifer Baker and Mayor Lisa Merkel voted "No."



Councilmember Signe Friedrichs initially presented motions to stall the vote on the tax rates, and later changed her mind. "I don't want to contribute to an impasse; I do want there to be a conversation [about the budget]."

BUT FIVE VOTES ARE REQUIRED to pass the tax rates, and in that vote, Olem and Friedrichs voted, "No." McKenna, Cunningham, Baker and Merkel voted, "Yes."

"No decision" called the Town Attorney Lesa Yeatts. Five votes were required. The motion failed.

A volley of motions to delay, defer and continue action on the tax rate ordinance by Olem and Friedrichs erupted, each motion turned down by the other councilmembers in winning votes. Questioned why they were doing this, Friedrichs said, "The matter Councilmember Olem and I are concerned about is not the real estate tax."

"The only tax I'm concerned about is the meals tax," Olem's said. "I just want to have time to talk about the budget and the long-term, and whether or not the [tax] rate goes up."

The four other councilmembers expressed frustration with the tactic.

"I'm a little disappointed this information was not shared before the public session this evening," said Cunningham. "I don't believe we've had the intent to raise taxes, and if the intent is not to raise taxes, I would strongly urge my colleagues to approve the advertised tax rate that we discussed extensively with significant input ... none of which have changed for a number of years. To get a ninth inning surprise like this is



Councilmember Sheila Olem presented a motion to defer action on setting the tax rates in an attempt to stall the budget process and give time to address concerns she said had been shared with her by some members in the community about the overall budget.

extremely disappointing."

Baker expressed similar sentiments, "I think this is bad form to do in a public hearing when we've been talking about the budget since February. ... We have a responsibility to pass the budget and given the restrictions on time that we have, and with legal obligations, I think it is really important to pass something today."

A second attempt to pass the ordinance through a reconsideration motion failed. "We are at an impasse again," said Merkel in frustration. "There is no decision. We're back where we started. We are either going to have to have five votes to pass it tonight, or we are going to have to have enough votes to continue it. We cannot have a 'no decision' and send us into the next fiscal year without a budget. I would implore someone to make a motion."

Cunningham made another reconsideration motion to approve the tax rates. She told her two opposing colleagues to look solely at this public hearing, which was the tax rate levy. "Unless there are plans on raising any of these taxes, I will urge you to pass them as advertised."

Friedrichs said, "I don't want to contribute to an impasse [but] I do want there to be a conversation."

The clerk called the roll on the question to pass the resolution for the third time.

Friedrichs voted, "No."

Olem voted, "No."

Merkel said, "We are back where we

started. A recess was called. All councilmembers left the dais.

UPON THEIR RETURN, Merkel provided guidance. They could enter a motion to reconsider the ordinance once again, or move on to the meeting and possibly not have a budget before the fiscal year started.

"Would either of the 'no votes' like to reconsider?" asked Merkel.

Friedrichs agreed, and said she would like to make a motion to reconsider but with a condition "...If we agree we will discuss this at our next work session... the matter of raising the meals tax or some other method of raising funds for this very tight budget."

Merkel informed Friedrichs the issue was they could not raise taxes without a two-week advertising period and two public hearings. Baker informed Friedrichs that if she voted yes that evening, they could discuss her concern at the next meeting, but the discussion would be for the fiscal year 2019-2020 budget, not the one this July.

Baker put forth the motion to approve the tax rates, "with an addition that we discuss this, the meals tax rate at the next work session. ... We have a responsibility

to pass the budget. on time. ... I think it is really important to pass something today."

The clerk called the roll.

The motion passed 5 to 1 with Friedrichs now voting "Yes."

Olem voted "No."

The Town Council quickly passed and adopted the second budget item for the evening, the Fiscal Planning Resolution. Approval for the third budget process item, the Appropriation of Funds came quickly. "We've adopted the tax rate and approved the budget," said Merkel.

"Then we might as well appropriate the funds."

The motion to appropriate funds carried with a vote of 5 to 1.

Councilmember Olem voted, "No."

THERE WERE SOME INCREASES in fees:

❖ Sewer Service Rate increased from \$5.05 in FY 2018 to \$5.40 per 1,000 gallons of water consumption in FY2019.

❖ Sewer Availability Fee increased from \$7,490 in FY 2018 to \$10,800 in FY2019 for new, single-family homes.

❖ Water Service Rate increased from \$2.90 in FY 2018 to \$2.98 per 1,000 gallons of water consumption in FY 2019. Peak rate increased from \$4.95 in FY 2018 to \$5.08 in FY 2019.

❖ Water Availability Fee increased from \$4,863 in FY 2018 to \$7,800 in FY2019 for new, single-family homes.

PHOTOS COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON

NEWS

What's In \$60.2 Million Budget Water and Sewer Funds and Downtown Parking Fund drive the majority of the 17.7 percent increase.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Following two public hearings and after receiving input from citizens online and in person, the Herndon Town Council adopted a balanced FY 2019 budget of \$60,222,260 for all funds (General Fund, Water and Sewer Fund, Golf Course Fund, Chestnut Grove Cemetery Fund, Downtown Parking Enterprise Fund and the Capital Projects Funds). The total reflects an increase of 17.7 percent over the adopted FY 2018 budget of \$51,181,877.

The budget will provide the resources necessary to maintain or enhance the level of quality services expected by its citizens. The town's FY 2019 begins July 1, 2018, and extends to June 30, 2019. The Council also set the town tax rate for the budget year. It remains unchanged from the previous year. All excise taxes were maintained at their current rates in the proposed budget. The Meals Tax remains at 2.5 percent, and the Cigarette Tax remains at 75 cents per pack.

"It's always a fine calibration to hold tax rates at their current levels while providing funding for services, programs and projects that are important to our citizens," said Mayor Lisa Merkel. "We are grateful to those who came out and provided their input on the budget process."

The town reported the majority of the FY 2019 Budget increase is due to the inclusion of \$6.4 million in the Water and Sewer Fund to purchase additional capacity and \$1.0 million in bonds in the Downtown Parking Fund.

THE TOTAL BUDGET includes two funds, the General and the Enterprise, and the FY 2019 portion of the Capital Improvement Program.

The General Fund was set at \$36,216,231 which represented a 1.7 increase when compared to last year's budget. It is the primary operating fund of the town. Expenditures include personnel, operations and maintenance, minor capital, inter-fund transfers and debt service.

The budget reflected a 2.95 percent increase in assessed property tax values. The average residential property value was projected at \$386,541. The town reports the average residential real estate tax bill at \$1024.33 based on \$0.2650 per \$100 assessed value.

The total anticipated FY 2019 general property taxes, which includes real estate, are projected at \$11,739,701, 32 percent of the General Fund resources.

The second fund, the Enterprise Fund operates similar to a private business and has stand-alone funds. User fees, not real estate taxes, support operational, maintenance and capital expenditures. Revenues provide services and maintain or expand its

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Budget Highlights

SOURCE, Town of Herndon.

Maintenance of the town real estate tax, meals tax and all other tax rates at their current levels;

Continued allocation of resources to strategic capital projects, including downtown redevelopment and Metro planning;

Resources to support the development of an arts facility that will act as an economic driver for the downtown;

Implementation of a town-wide sustainability plan;

Focus on the town's use of technology to support administration and service provision; and

Increased personnel costs to include a 1.25 percent market rate adjustment and an average pay-for-performance increase of two percent.

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) calls for funding of longer-term projects such as Phase 5 of the Herndon Community Center, a Nature Center at Runnymede Park, vehicular and pedestrian access to Metro and Van Buren Street improvements.

The town announced its complete budget would be available online at www.herndon-va.gov by July 1.

facilities. The town's Enterprise Funds are the Water & Sewer Fund, Cemetery, Golf Course, Downtown Parking, and Capital Projects.

The FY 2019 portion of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) was incorporated into the town's FY 2019 budget and adopted as part of the annual budget. It provides funding for nineteen general projects and six enterprise fund projects. The FY 19 program projects also seek county, state, and federal funding to reduce the impact on the general fund.

MAJOR PROJECTS for the FY 2019 Capital Improvement Program are the Water & Sewer capacity purchases; the water through Fairfax County at \$6.5 million, the purchase and financing not yet finalized and sewer at \$80,000. Additional capacity is needed to support development and redevelopment of the town.

The Sewer Service Rate increased from \$5.05 in FY 2018 to \$5.40 per 1,000 gallons of water consumption in FY2019. The Sewer Availability Fee increased from \$7,490 in FY 2018 to \$10,800 in FY2019 for new, single-family homes.

In FY 19, the Van Buren Street Improvements, Part I and II total \$2.68 million of which \$1.4 million are for Herndon Parkway north to old Spring Street, Part I and rebuilding Van Buren Street by providing linkage north and south, Part II at \$1.2 million. The projects are supported in part by grant sources.

Two other key improvements are \$1.0 million for the Downtown Parking Capital Contribution and \$500,00 budgeted for Art Center interior.

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STAYING SAFE TOGETHER

May 9 is Bike to School Day.
Here are some safety tips to remember.

Allow 3 feet when passing a cyclist. Motorists may legally cross the double yellow line if the oncoming lane is clear.

Be careful at intersections. Look both ways for people biking and walking before making your turn.

After parking, look over your left shoulder for approaching cyclists before opening your car door.

Join us for the National Bike Challenge - May 1-31
Bike to School Day - May 9 and
Bike to Work Day - May 18
fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/bike-walk



The Navy Junior ROTC Color Guard of Herndon High School presents the colors at the Home Dedication Ceremony for service member Captain Gavin White who was injured in combat.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Home at last and with a smile. When Captain Gavin White realized his house had become an obstacle course of constant frustrations, he reached out to the Semper Fi Fund for guidance. On the table behind Captain White and his wife, Karissa rests a beam from the south tower of the World Trade Center, a gift from the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Tower Foundation.

Captain White Comes Home

Local businesses help renovate Herndon home for catastrophically injured service member.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

One day in 2013, while Captain Gavin White led a patrol in Afghanistan looking for improvised explosive devices, one found him. With that one step, White's life and the life of his wife, Karissa, changed forever. He remembers hearing the blast and calling out to his combined Afghan U.S. Patrol, "Who's hit?" Then hearing the words, "You are, Sir."

Captain White sustained catastrophic injuries. His right leg eventually was amputated; he lost the use of his left leg. White suffered chronic pain and other injuries, and he endured sixty surgeries. He would try to walk the hospital halls, White recalled, "...through grinding teeth and tears of pain and frustration."

White grew stronger, and with his wife, they moved into a house in Herndon, only to realize it was an obstacle course of unending frustration for him.

"Problems began to appear in my house," said White who sat in a wheelchair outside of it, up on a temporary stage. Karissa sat beside him. Behind White, a 30-foot long American flag flew, suspended on a long wire. The flag shielded the view of the house. "I knew I needed help, and had to ask for it."

THIS DAY, April 12, 2018, was the Home Dedication Ceremony. In front of White, a crowd of more than 100 people stood silently. The night before, the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation Building for America's Bravest program had put the finishing touches on their four-month renova-



Fairfax County Police Motorcycle Patrol officers escort Captain Gavin White and his wife Karissa to their newly renovated 'smart home' in Herndon.

tion of the Whites' home in Herndon. It was now a "smart home" for Captain Gavin White and his wife due to the efforts of many businesses such as the Reston Home Depot, Wolf Furniture, J.C. Penneys and more.

Before the renovation, White could not reach the cupboards; the narrow hallways were challenging to maneuver through in his wheelchair. White could not use the stove with any ease. "At one point, every time I wanted to use the bathroom, I had

to get out of my chair to the floor and walk on my hands to get to the toilet."

"I reached out to the Semper Fi Fund," said White as he spoke to the crowd. He continued: "People need a place where they can feel comfortable, where they can relax and where they can be at ease. For most people, it's their home. Until today, this was just a house where I lived. Now I feel like it's my home."

The Semper Fi Fund had put White in touch with the New York nonprofit organi-



Captain Gavin White unsuccessfully tries not to tear up as he and his wife Karissa enter the front door of their home and see it for the first time since they left it four months earlier.

zation, Stephen Siller Tunnels to Towers Foundation. The organization's stated mission is to "Honor the sacrifice of firefighter Stephen Siller who laid down his life to save others on September 11, 2001."

On hand at the Dedication Ceremony stood Stephanie Ferguson of the Semper Fi Fund. Ferguson said, "We are the land of the free because of you Captain Gavin White."

Frank Seller told the crowd, how his

SEE CAPTAIN, PAGE 7

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Frank Siller, older brother of Stephen Siller, the New York firefighter who lost life helping others in the south tower of the World Trade Center on 9/11, tells how Stephen lived the guiding words he attributed to St. Francis, Assisi: "While we have time, let's do good."



Jason Alexander, Store Manager of the local Reston Home Depot looks toward Captain Gavin White and thanks him for his service and sacrifice for the country.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Captain White Comes Home

FROM PAGE 6

younger brother Stephen had heard over his scanner of a plane hitting the north tower of the World Trade Center. Stephen returned to the Brooklyn's Squad 1 fire station, grabbed his 60-pound backpack full of gear and drove his truck to the entrance of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, but it was closed. He strapped the backpack on and raced on foot through the tunnel to get to the World Trade Center. Stephen entered the south tower and was never seen again.

Siller said his brother lived by the guiding words attributed to St. Francis Assisi: "While we have time, let's do good."

Siller explained the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation is a nonprofit organization, which honors "military and first responders who continue to make the supreme sacrifice of life and limb for our country."

The organization performs their service through their Building for America's Bravest program and with the support of many other organizations and program sponsors, such as those here that day, among them the Reston Home Depot through their Home Depot Foundation, JC Penney, Wolf Furniture and more. Tunnel to Towers builds mortgage-free smart homes for the most catastrophically injured service members.

The Reston Home Depot was one of the many program supporters. Jason Alexander, Store Manager of the Reston Home Depot, thanked Captain Gavin White for his service to the country. Alexander explained the Home Depot Foundation and Team Depot, their strong army of associate volunteers, are dedicated to serving veterans and was proud to support the project's needs. Alexander said Home Depot Foundation had improved 37,000 veteran homes and facilities since 2011, promised to give a quarter of a billion dollars for veteran-related causes by 2020, and \$50 million is committed to training 20,000 tradespeople by 2028.



In honor and gratitude for White's service and sacrifice, the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation gifts Captain Gavin White a piece of blackened steel beam from the south tower of the World Trade Center. "It holds the spirit and souls of so many. We entrust it to you, Captain Gavin White," said Siller.

AFTER THE REMARKS, the Whites were ready to see their new home, but not before being presented a gift by the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation in gratitude for White's service and sacrifice. In Frank Sillers' hands rested a piece of blackened steel beam from the south tower of the World Trade Center. "It holds the spirit and souls of so many. We entrust it to you, Captain Gavin White," said Seller adding the words, "Who better?"

On the curb, a specially equipped van donated by GMC waited for White. Volunteers turned toward the ropes. They lowered the flag, unveiling the renovation. Welcome, Captain Gavin White. You are home.



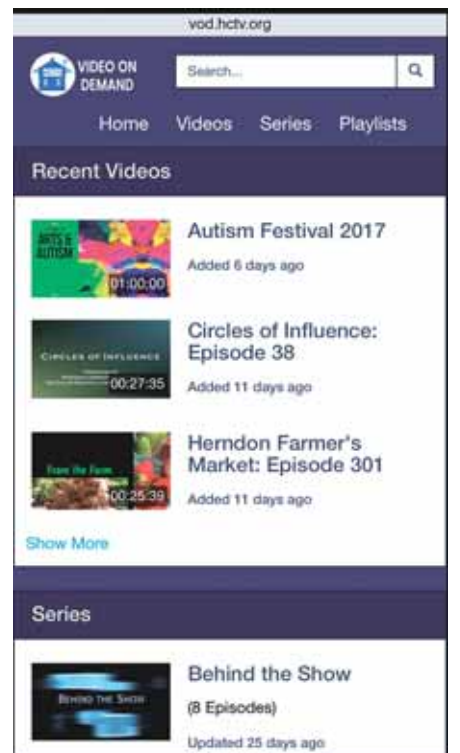
PHOTOS BY MARSHA KERMAN

HCTV President, Blake Rose, gave a tour of HCTV's studio to Councilmember Sheila A. Olem, Vice Mayor Jennifer K. Baker and Councilmember Bill McKenna (not-pictured).

Herndon Community Television Unveils Technology Upgrades at Open House

Herndon Community Television's Open House held on April 21 was attended by both current and future volunteers, viewers, and members of the town council. Attendees toured the studio; received hands-on demonstrations of the equipment and learned about HCTV's recent system-wide technology upgrade. The most recent implementation was the launch of their new "Video on Demand" platform last week. HCTV now has a destination to watch HD original content from mobile devices and desktop computers on www.vod.hctv.org. HCTV Executive Director, Nancy Rose, said, "We're excited that our viewers can 'keep connected' no matter where they are."

Mobile-view of HCTV's new Video On Demand Platform.



Budget Provides Grants to Non-profit Organizations

HCTV, Next Stop Theatre and Arts Herndon named highest funded grant recipients.

Based on its adopted FY 2019 Budget, the Town Council of the Town of Herndon budgeted funds to help support seven local non-profit organizations that serve the town.

The funded recipients are among the reported 14 organizations that had applied to receive funds through a competitive grant application to the town. The application detailed, among other requirements, proposal need and budget information.

During April 17, 2018, Town Council Work Session, it was reported that Mayor Lisa C. Merkel said she would like to make

a statement that the town supports the arts. Additional funds were added at that time to the arts organizations previously proposed budgeted awards.

The FY 2019 Non-Profit Organization grant recipients and award amounts are: Herndon Community Television: \$113,500; Friday Night Live: in-kind services only; Jam Brew \$0, in-kind services only; Herndon High School PTSA: \$2000; Kids at Hope Herndon \$4000; Next Stop Theatre: \$47,250 and Arts Herndon \$47,250.

—MERCIA HOBSON

ENTERTAINMENT

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

ONGOING

Exhibit: This and That. Through May 7, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. daily at The Artists' Undertaking Gallery, 309 Mill St. in Historic Occoquan. "This and That." an features copper work by Anne Jordan of Fairfax; oil paintings by Steve Myles of Reston; and turned wood by Greg Wandless of Fairfax. Meet the artists, Saturday, April 14, 1-5 p.m. Call 703-494-0584 or visit www.theartistsundertaking.com.

"Thoroughly Modern Millie."

Through May 12 at Reston Community Center's CenterStage, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. May 4, 5, 6*, 11, 12, 2018. Curtain time is 8 p.m. except for May 6 which are matinees with a 2 p.m. curtain. Cost is \$27/adults; \$23 students/seniors. Visit restonplayers.org.

Reston Farmers Market. Open Saturdays, through Dec. 1, 8 a.m.-noon at 1609 Washington Plaza N., Reston. Fairfax County Park Authority markets are strictly producer-only meaning that vendors must grow or make from scratch everything they bring to market. Call 703-642-0128 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets.

Homegrown Yoga. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Alison Adams is bringing Homegrown Yoga to ArtSpace Herndon. All levels welcome. Drop in and take a class. \$25 two week unlimited pass or drop-in available. www.homegrownpoweryoga.com

All-comers' Group Fun Run at Potomac River Running. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. For beginners or competitive runners, come out for a fun, low-key run that is safe and social. Call 703-689-0999 potomacriverrunning.com.

MAY 1-JUNE 30

Twitterpated: Animated Adoration at ArtInsights. At ArtInsights, 11921 Freedom Drive, Reston. ArtInsights celebrates Devoted Couples of Disney, with images of Lady and Tramp, Pongo and Perdita, Mickey and Minnie, Thumper and Miss Bunny, Belle and The Beast, and more, including new releases by official Disney concept and production artists.

Call 703-478-0778 or visit artinsights.com.

THURSDAY-FRIDAY/MAY 3-4

Big Truck Days. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Thursday and 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday. At the Public Works Maintenance Complex, 1479 Sterling Road, Herndon. The Town of Herndon's Department of Public Works hosts its annual "Big Truck Days," an opportunity for children to see the town's big trucks and heavy equipment on display. Free; bring non-perishable food donations. www.herndon-va.gov/PublicWorks or call 703-435-6860 or via email at public.works@herndon-va.gov.

FRIDAY/MAY 4

TGIF: Free Fridays. 5-7 p.m. at GRACE, Greater Reston Arts Center, 12001 Market St., #103, Reston. Creative Fun at GRACE. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-476-4500.

Baby & Me (Yoga). 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Bring your baby and reap benefits from this nurturing yoga workshop designed for the two of you. Age 6 weeks to 15 months with adult. Call 703-689-2700.



Langston Hughes Middle School students presented their production of 'Hairspray JR.' in April.

Langston Hughes Students Present 'Hairspray JR'

Hairdos and excitement were on the rise and Reston was shaking and shimmying when local students at Langston Hughes Middle School performed 'Hairspray JR.' The family-friendly show captured the spirit and turmoil of 1962 Baltimore through laughter, dance, romance, and tuneful songs.

"Hairspray JR." is a dynamic musical with an important message: that acceptance comes in all shapes, sizes, and nationali-

ties. Through their production the students explored ideas like civil rights and discrimination in the context of a period of tremendous social and historical significance in the United States.

The story follows Tracy Turnblad (played by Claire Callaway), a full-figured girl with big hair and a big heart, who has only one passion – to dance. When her determination and rock 'n roll moves land her a spot on a local television dance program, she is transformed from



Corny Collins played by Nathan Miller and the Council Members singing 'The Nicest Kids in Town.'



Tracy Turnblad (played by Claire Callaway) singing "Good morning, Baltimore!"

Herndon Social Justice Concert Christian Perez Chamber Ensemble.

1-3 p.m. at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Two singer songwriters fiercely represent equality and everything they stand for through their music and lyrics. \$20. Visit artspaceherndon.org.

HHS Band Benefit Concert. 6 p.m. at Herndon Town Green, 777 Lynn St., Herndon. Hosting Normandy Kick-Off Celebration. Features live performances by "The 5:55" and more. Support their trip to Normandy to represent the USA at the 75th Anniv of D-Day. Donations accepted at entrance and www.herndonband.org/normandy.

SUNDAY/MAY 6

March for Babies. 8 a.m. registration; 9 a.m. walk. at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. Support the March of Dimes for the health of all moms and babies with a 3-mile walk, then celebrate the efforts with lunch, DJ, and family fun. Call 571-257-2305 or visit marchforbabies.com.

Indigo T-Shirt Dyeing. 2-4 p.m. at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. With Elizabeth Gibson. Ages 7-13; cost \$20 per student. Visit www.artspaceherndon.org.

WEDNESDAY/MAY 9

Kendra Gives Back Party. 6-9 p.m. at Reston Town Center, 11924 Market Street, Reston. Hosted by Herndon High School All-Night Grad Committee. Enjoy light bites and bubbly as you shop for Mother's Day Gifts. Some 20 percent of purchases will benefit the Herndon High School All-Night Grad Celebration. RSVP to gina.gallagher1@verizon.net.

Dinner Lecture on Stress. 7-8:30 p.m. at GreenFare Organic Cafe, 408 Elden Street, Herndon. Dr. Jyothi

Rao, Integrative Physician, will discuss Stress -The Good vs The Bad," its impact on the body and the role cortisol and the adrenal glands play. Enjoy a healthy organic plant-based meal at GreenFare Organic Café in Herndon. Call 703-689-0506 for details or visit GreenFare.com.

SATURDAY/MAY 12

Spring Farm Day. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Frying Pan Farm Park, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Milk a cow or goat, hear the antique farm equipment putter, play old timey games, and enjoy crafts in a family-friendly atmosphere. Call 703-437-9101 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-pan-park.

British Invasion: The Beatles & Beyond. 4:30 and 7:30 p.m. at Reston Community Center, Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Rock out with The Reston Chorale and friends from the Piedmont Symphony and Rock Band to musical hits from across the pond. \$25/Adults; \$20/Seniors; Free/Youth and Active Duty Military. Tickets at www.restonchorale.org and 703-476-4500, ext. 3.

SUNDAY/MAY 13

Exercise with Athleta. 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Reston Town Center in the Pavilion, 11900 Market St., Reston. Free. Down Dog Yoga for Mother's Day. Call 703-668-0256 or visit stores.athleta.net/store-4866/.

MONDAY/MAY 14

Golf Tournament. 1:30 p.m. Shotgun Start at Hidden Creek Country Club, 1711 Clubhouse Road, Reston. The 2018 Celebrate Great Falls Foundation Golf Tournament. Proceeds benefit Great Falls, Forestville and Colvin Run Elementary schools. Afternoon registration 12:15-1:15 p.m.

Foursome - \$600; Single Golfer - \$175. Visit www.greatfallsgolf.org.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/MAY 18-20

Northern Virginia Fine Arts Festival. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. each day at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. More than 200 artists will show off their works. Presented by GRACE - Greater Reston Arts Center. Admission \$5/adults. Free garage parking. Visit northernvirginiafineartsfestival.org.

SATURDAY/MAY 19

Kids in the Park. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Claude Moore Recreation & Community Center, 46105 Loudoun Park Lane, Sterling; Claude Moore Park, 21544 Old Vestal's Gap Road, Sterling; and Heritage Farm Museum, 21668 Heritage Farm Lane, Sterling. Celebrate National Kids to Park Day, a fun-filled day including a scavenger hunt at all three sites, farm tour, moonbounces, arts and crafts, games, food trucks and more. Free admission. Call 571-258-3600

SUNDAY/MAY 20

Red Shoe 5K Run & Walk. at Dulles Station in Herndon. The family-friendly event will feature a timed 5K course suited for both runners and walkers (all competition levels welcome), and a Kid's Fun Run for kids 8 years and younger. Sponsored by Ronald McDonald House Charities. Registration fees are \$35 for Adult 5K registration, and \$25 for Kid's Fun Run (8 and under); \$40 on race day. Visit www.RedShoe5k.org.
Sunday Spring Tea Fundraiser. 2-4 p.m. at Crowne Plaza, 2200 Centreville Road, Herndon. Arts Herndon Fundraiser to Benefit Arts Herndon's scholarships and programming. Silent Auction Baskets, live music, door prizes and more. Register at artspaceherndon.org.



Johnathan Lacher, board member Friends of Runnymede Park volunteers at the 2018 Town Parks & Stream Clean-up held at Runnymede Park. Lacher waters newly planted native violets in front of Hotel Runnymede, an insect hotel.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

The Town of Herndon earned Tree City USA Recognition and the Esteemed Tree City USA Growth Award in 2018. Citizens and youth volunteers from VTSEVA were on hand to help with the planting of trees at the official Earth Day/Arbor Day event and ceremony.

Environment Events Attract Hundreds of Residents

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Three environmentally con-scious events brought hundreds of local citizens out to volunteer, recycle, and celebrate on Saturday, April 21, 2018, in the Town of Herndon.

Town Parks & Stream Clean-Up, 8 a.m.-noon at Runnymede Park, Herndon

At the Town Parks and Stream Clean-up citizens volunteered to help plant, cleanup, and beautify the park and nearby streams.

Johnathan Lacher, a board member Friends of Runnymede Park, bent down on his knees planting violets around a strange looking box of shelves created with an assortment natural items—corn cobs, drilled wood, rotting logs, bundles of twigs, sticks, and stems. “We’re fancy’n up the insect hotel, a place for any insect to go into hibernation,” Lacher said. The legion of different insects will help pollinate the gardens and prey on pests. Other volunteers planted, weeded, and removed litter from the park.

Recycle-Shred Event, 9 a.m.- noon at Runnymede Park, Herndon

In the parking lot at Runnymede Park, a line of vehicles waited to be next in line free and secure document shredding service by SHREDPROS who provided secure on-site document destruction people could watch.

Citizens brought up to five containers of papers they did not want in the hands of others, such as tax returns, insurance and bank information, canceled checks, financial and credit card statements, and personal information such as medical records, wills, deceased information.

Pat Voltmer of Herndon sat in her car as staff from PROSHRED removed the bags of confidential information from her front passenger seat. “I heard about this event in the newspaper and on the Town Calendar,” said Voltmer. “I had stuff from 2001, and I’m decluttering. Shredding is environmentally conscious and safe for sensitive matter.”

Say, “Trees!” Town of Herndon Holds Earth Day & Arbor Day Ceremony

At the third event, citizens gathered to celebrate trees and plant. The Town of Herndon is one of more than 3,400 towns and cities nationwide which benefits from cleaner air, shade, lower energy costs, and stormwater control through a vital urban forest management framework the town embraces powered by its involvement with the Tree City USA community improvement program.

Youth from the nonprofit organization VTSEVA were on hand to help with the tree planting. Among the many things VTSEVA does, the organization promotes understanding and tolerance by empowering their youth with value of volunteering and philanthropy. In turn, the youth “learn how to plan, develop, and implement projects for protection of animals and environment... [and in doing so] build bridges between different communities.”

John Dudzinsky, Community Forester Town of Herndon, emceed the event. Dudzinsky said that the town had celebrated an official Earth Day/Arbor Day event for Tree City USA for 29 years, since 1989. He added: “The Tree Award program encourages and recognizes communities that take care of their urban forest. Trees in nature are vital to people’s health. Herndon can be happy they have been recognized as a Tree City USA.”

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News

Pooch Pros Pet Care Services Opens in Herndon

Pooch Pros Pet Care Services held its Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Tuesday, April 17 in front of Herndon Town Hall, 730 Elden Street, Herndon. Pooch Pros Pet Care Services is a new business owned and operated by Cyndie Anderson. The Dulles Chamber of Commerce hosted the event.

Pooch Pros Pet Care Services LLC provides personalized daytime and evening walks for dogs in the Herndon, Reston, Sterling and Ashburn communities. Pet sitting is available. On the company website, Anderson writes, "Don't let the name fool you, we do Cuddly Cat Care too!"

Following the ribbon cutting, Elden Street Tea Shop catered a Tea and Cookie Celebration at ArtSpace Herndon. Visit poochpros.com for more information.

—MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Herndon Town Councilmember Signe Friedrichs cuts the ribbon at the Grand Opening Ceremony of Pooch Pros Pet Care LLC as owner Cyndie Anderson (center) and members of the Dulles Chamber of Commerce, friends and town staff gather. (From left) Mike O'Reilly, former mayor, Dulles Chamber of Commerce; John Boylan, President & CEO, Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce; Laurie Poindexter, Steve Anderson, Rachel Eisenfeld; David Whittaker, Unifirst; Dennis Holste, Economic Development Manager Town of Herndon and Harry Britton, Unifirst.

Celebrating the Earth at Springfest

Springfest, Fairfax County's official Earth Day and Arbor Day celebration, was held Saturday, April 21, at the Sully Historic Site in Chantilly. In photo, the Mulholland brothers (from left) Parker, 8, and Chase, 10, pet Fern, a 2-1/2-month-old bunny held by Frying Pan Park's Paul Nicholson.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

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BULLETIN

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

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers Needed for Northern Virginia Fine Arts Festival. At Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. Greater Reston Art Center's (GRACE's) largest annual fundraiser. Draws up to 30,000 visitors and there is free garage parking all weekend. Over 500 volunteers are needed. Volunteers perform a variety of roles including setting up with the logistics crew, welcoming and booth sitting for participating artists as part of the Artist Hospitality entourage, welcoming visitors and accepting donations for GRACE as a Festival Ambassador, or helping young artists with their creations in the Family Art Park. Visit restonarts.org/fineartsfestival.

The Herndon High School PTSA is in need of a treasurer, but anyone interested in serving on the board is welcome. The HHS PTSA works to provide connections between students, teacher and parents. They offer mini-grants to teachers, scholarships and achievement awards to students as well as appreciation events for staff. Email HerndonHSPTSA.Treasurer@gmail.com

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

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. Mentors provide companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at 703-324-4547 or Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov

PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nam-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

SATURDAY/MAY 5

Workshop for Siblings of Children with Special Needs. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at Key Middle School, 6402 Franconia Road, Springfield. This Sibshop workshop is for 8-13-year-old siblings of children with special needs enrolled in Fairfax County Public Schools. A pizza lunch will be provided. Visit www.fcps.edu/spedconference2018.

Free Sober Rides. Saturday, May 5, 7 p.m. through Sunday, May, 6, 4 a.m. Area residents, 21 and older, may download Lyft to their phones, then enter a code in the app's "Promo" section to receive a no cost (up to \$15) safe ride home. Promo code will be posted at 5 p.m. on May 5 on www.SoberRide.com. The SoberRide code is valid for the first 1,500 Lyft users

WEDNESDAY/MAY 9

Pushing the Frontiers of Dyslexia. 6-7:30 p.m. at Cortona Academy, 13505 Dulles Technology Drive, Ste 3, Herndon. Cost is \$10/person. Monthly Dyslexia Parent Support Seminar! Neurofeedback. How does this relate to Dyslexia, and what are the applications for homework, test-taking, and studying? Visit cortonalearning.com.

THURSDAY/MAY 10

Open House and Public Hearing. 5:30 p.m. at NVTA Office, 3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax. The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority has released 60 candidate projects for its inaugural FY 2018-2023 Six Year Program for public comment. The open house will start at 5:30 p.m. and the public hearing will commence following a 7 p.m. presentation. Pre-register to speak: phone: 703-642-4652; email: TheAuthority@TheNoVaAuthority.org; or in person on May 10, 2018 from 5:30-7 p.m. Visit www.TheNoVaAuthority.org.

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You Mean Next Week Tuesday?

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



Today, Sunday, April 22, I am not on any real – or imagined, deadline pressure, quite different than my previous column (“You Mean Tomorrow Tuesday?”), published April 25. This column isn’t due until nine days from now, since my copy editor returns from vacation that Tuesday. And of course, since there’s no abbreviated/immediate-type deadline, and it’s a relatively quiet weekend at home (as opposed to the “triple threat” Tuesday I wrote about last week), Chino, in addition to any of our other four cats, are nowhere to be found. Certainly, they’re all sleeping. I mean, it is 12:30 pm. In fact, as I get up to investigate, Chino is sleeping on the very same chair he ended up on last week. This week however, when I have minimal deadline pressure, Chino has minimal Kenny interest. At present, he is not the least bit involved in the creative process, other than as a point of reference, that is.

And just as Chino is minding his own business – for now, I am able to mind mine and stay on task. It is so much easier to do so when my writing pad is not the exact midpoint and/or crossroads for where Chino is and for where he wants to be. Therefore, I have no excuses for not maintaining a creative flow as pen is put to paper. No cat interruptions or interference whatsoever. To quote my late father, I have no “encumbrances” – at the moment.

More so even than Chino walking right to left across my desk (and back of course). I just received an email from my oncologist, yes on the weekend, telling me that my two scans taken on Wednesday, April 18, continue to show “stable.” News, with which I’m extremely fond of writing – properly, I can live. As much as I could likewise live with tumor “shrinkage” as well, I am ALWAYS pleased when I see my new favorite word: “stable,” in any communication from my doctor. For a cancer patient still undergoing treatment – as I am, or for any cancer patient in remission, a “stable” result is hardly the problem. The problem is growth and/or movement or appearance elsewhere in the body. (For lung cancer patients, movement to the brain, which occurs in approximately 30 percent of patients, is the predominant worry. As such, I get a brain MRI regularly.) So, no scan-result pressure. No post-chemo side-effect pressure. No newspaper and/or deadline pressure. And no cat-related pressure compounding any of the aforementioned pressures. Ergo, the ‘pressure’ is officially off. And when the ‘pressure’ is off, my creativeness is on. Though this may not be the best column I’ve ever written, it’s certainly been one with the least amount of ‘encumbrances.’

And speaking of my father, Barry, who died in in 2006, and now my mother, Celia, who died two years later, almost to the day, what I am particularly grateful for is the timing of my diagnosis/prognosis: it all happened after they had died. They never knew. My first symptom manifested four weeks after my widowed mother was laid to rest. They both know now though as I regularly update them when I visit their gravesites at the cemetery. And though the conversations are mostly one-sided, still, it brings me comfort and a peculiar sort of joy to share the details of my treatment and the miscellaneous pressures I experience, some of which I’ve mentioned and some of which I haven’t. Many of those my parents knew about, and were often topics of discussion – while they were alive.

I was lucky then and I continue to be lucky now. Great parents before and an amazingly fortunate post-cancer-diagnosis after. Whoever I have to thank: thank you.

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

Challenges to an American Ideal

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)

"The current landscape of the nation has been darkened by storm clouds of hate speech, white nationalist ideology, bias-motivated violence, and rising intolerance," according to a report of the Inclusive America Project titled *Pluralism in Peril: Challenges to an American Ideal* (Aspen Institute, 2018) sponsored by the Aspen Institute Justice and Society Program. Recently I had the pleasure of interviewing Meryl Justin Chertoff, Executive Director of The Aspen Institute Justice and Society Program, and to participate in a roundtable discussion of this issue at the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center in Sterling. The interview can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/yctqwxq6>

Pluralism refers to the right of all Americans to practice their faith in freedom and security. As indicated from the quote of the Aspen Report in the opening sentence of this column, there are attacks on religious freedom from many directions and in many forms in recent years. Some even question the mean-



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they define him or her in their religious beliefs.

A basic problem in defending American pluralism seems to me to be the ignorance on the part of some of basic constitutional protections and how they were secured. Virginia was settled as a land venture by investors who were looking for a way to make money in a colonial empire. First settlers were part of the state church of England as Anglicans or they had no religion at all. As more settlers arrived the minority religions such as Baptists started to arrive, and they objected to having part of their tax money go to the church. Religious conflict occurred as more settlers recognized an op-

portunity to free themselves from a state-imposed religion.

Soon after Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, he wrote what became known as the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, the most important piece of legislation ever passed in the Virginia legislature and I believe in any legislative body. Just as the Declaration had declared political and economic freedom from the mother country, the Statute of Religious Freedom in one sentence of more than 700 words declared in part that "no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities."

The challenges to our pluralism must be countered by our unwavering support of our own beliefs as well as the right of others to their own religious beliefs. As the report on pluralism found, "this work requires decency, sympathy, appreciative curiosity about difference, and concern for our shared beliefs."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medicaid Expansion: It's Time

To the Editor:

The 2017 elections demonstrated that Virginians believe that individuals cannot work, take care of their families, or pursue happiness if they cannot see a doctor when they are sick. The candidates who heard this message and ran on expanding access to healthcare, won. Those advocating for expansion are more than willing to compromise with lawmakers who may have legitimate policy concerns.

We know that 33 other states have already opted to insure their working poor. It is time that our federal tax dollars stay here in Virginia to help cover approximately 400,000 hard-working families earning up to 138 percent of the poverty level. Making health insurance available to more Virginians is the right thing to do and the sensible thing to do. The Federal government is offering to cover no less than 90 percent of the costs of insuring Virginia's working poor. Virginia's hospitals are committed to covering the remaining 10 percent of the costs. Additional money flowing to Virginia under Medicaid expansion will enable the state to increase funding for schools and other needed services.

Another benefit of Medicaid expansion is the likelihood of smaller rate increases in our health insurance plans. Studies have shown that in states where more people are insured, the cost of uncompensated care drops. Yes, we will all benefit if more of us have access to healthcare. It is time to act!

Barbara Favola
State Sen. (D-31)

Missing Numbers

To the Editor:

County Chairman Sharon Bulova's April 25 opinion piece, "Budget Hits All the Right Notes," about the proposed FY2019 real estate tax hike, is misleading. When she says the proposed real estate tax rate is

\$1.15, she omits the stormwater rate. When that is included the FY2019 rate will be \$1.1825 instead of \$1.15.

She states that new budget includes a 2-cent increase in the real estate tax rate, but this omits the additional tax increase due to the 2.2 percent increase in average residential assessments. The effective rate increase when assessments and the additional stormwater rate increase (1/4 cent) are included is 4.7 cents, not 2 cents.

The typical Fairfax County homeowner's real estate tax bill will increase by \$258, a 4.2 percent increase. Loudoun County reduced its average tax bill by \$48, a 1 percent decrease.

Chairman Bulova states that the tax hike fully funds the Market Rate Adjustment, Performance, Merit and Longevity increases for county employees and states that the Market Rate Adjustment is 2.25 percent. She does not state the total salary increase resulting from the Performance, Merit and Longevity increases. When those are included county employees will see average increases ranging from 4.25 to 4.50 percent.

Likewise, the school board is funding a 2.3 percent step increase and other salary adjustments, but does not say what the total average raise will be when the other adjustments are included. It is likely to be 4 percent also.

The real estate tax hike will increase county revenues by about \$116 million. The cost of next year's county and school raises is \$139 million. Raises are the primary driver of the county's annual real estate tax hikes.

Since FY2000, the supervisors have increased real estate taxes 169 percent, more than three times faster than inflation, which increased 53 percent.

If Chairman Bulova felt that the voters who defeated the 2016 meals tax, which would have raised \$100 million, would support next year's 4.2 percent tax hike to raise \$116 million for 4 percent raises, why didn't she acknowledge those numbers in her statement?

Arthur Purves
President
Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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