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At least the rain momentarily stopped on Saturday night, and the fireworks lit up the sky at the 2018 Herndon Festival. The fireworks were choreographed to music. Songs such as "My Little Town" rang loud and clear stirring the hearts of festivalgoers.

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WELLBEING

Families Meditating Together

Family mindfulness practices can boost overall wellbeing.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Sitting on cushions in a dimly lit corner of the living room, a family of five struggles to relax. But when a lithe woman in flowing yoga pants and a pale grey ballet-wrap top brings her hands together and the gentle sound of Tibetan meditation cymbals fills the air, their eyes close, their shoulders relax and they begin to breathe deeply.

"This is how I like to begin all of my family sessions," said meditation teacher Pleasance Baechli of Transcendental Meditation and Mindfulness Center in Bethesda, Md. "It allows people to calm their minds and bring their attention to the breath and what's going on in their bodies. For a moment, there's nowhere else they need to be and nothing that they need to do."

This is the nature of a family mindfulness session, a chance for families to unplug and disconnect from a world of tablets, smart phones, long commutes, sports practices, homework and errands. Such sessions, says Baechli, offer opportunities for families to reconnect with one another and strengthen their bonds, and are not as difficult to establish as one might think.

"Mindfulness can sound complicated and confusing, especially for children," she said. "But it's simply a state of awareness, and that just means noticing what we're feeling and what we're sensing at the present moment. And it's noticing those thoughts and feelings without judgement or criticism. It's accepting them and letting them pass through our bodies."

Carving out time to meditate in a overloaded schedule can be tall order, but simplicity can help overcome that roadblock. "Unfortunately, the older the kids get and the more activities they have, the harder it gets to make time for quiet and meditation, even though we need it more, of course," said Elizabeth Rees, a mother of three and the associate rector and leader of meditation practices at Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. "I try to teach my kids breathing techniques and we have a few favorite meditations that we practice periodically before bed. There are also some great [smartphone] apps [like] Insight Timer, Calm and Headspace."

Understanding what mindfulness is and what it is not can help avoid frustration from unmet expectations. "Grasping the concept of mindfulness is tough for some kids and sitting still for long periods of time to practice can be torture," said Baechli. "Mindfulness is simply focusing on your thoughts and feelings as they are right in this moment. That's it. Mindfulness is not a cure-all. Don't expect it to turn your high-energy son into a quiet child or your daughter



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Cymbals and meditation cushions are tools that mindfulness teacher Pleasance Baechli uses in her family mediation sessions.

who has trouble paying attention and is struggling in school into a straight-A student. That's probably not going to happen."

What it can do however, when practiced over time, is help regulate emotions and strengthen one's ability to concentrate and focus, advises Anne Navolio, Ph.D., a child psychologist based in McLean. She points to a 2012 study by researchers at the University of Washington which credits weekly mindfulness sessions with an improved ability to concentrate. She also references a 2016 study by the University of Wisconsin which showed that even a five minute meditation session each day can increase one's ability to deal with stressful situations. "For beginning a daily practice, start with shorts sessions, especially for young children. Even one-minute of sitting can be beneficial," she said. "And if your kids aren't even interested in that, don't force it."

Incorporating meditation music and concepts that children can understand can make the process easier, advises Baechli. "I like to use cymbals at the beginning of a practice or sound a bell," she said. "Those sounds usually last about 30-45 seconds and sometimes I tell kids to sit quietly and focus on what they're hearing until they can no longer hear it. I also tell kids, especially boys, to use their superhero senses to determine what they can hear and smell all around them."

— Elizabeth Rees,
Associate Rector,
Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church

Spending time outside, either on a hike, nature walk or a trek through the park, can be an opportunity to practice mindfulness as a family, says Navolio. "Simply walking in silence for even a few short minutes and noticing birds, squirrels and cars that are passing or even the scents of freshly mowed grass or food cooking in a restaurant you pass can be a mindfulness practice."

Leading by example can get children engaged in mindfulness practices. "I encourage and model gratitude and attention to small things in the world around us," said Rees. "I definitely think the more mindful and present we can be, the less angst we will have about the past and the future, neither of which we have much control over."

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Kate's Cause Donates \$25,000 For Childhood Cancer Research

Contribution to help study in Cellular Pathways to Enhance Treatment in Ph-like Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in Children.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection



PHOTO IMAGE SCREENSHOT
FACEBOOK.COM/PRAYERSFORKATE.13/

Mike and Lindsay Rhoades, founders of Kate's Cause, Herndon-based non-profit organization created after their young daughter, Kate died of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, present a \$25,000 check partnering with the Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation in co-funding a grant to Dr. Christian Hurtz, Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania seeking less toxic treatments for the childhood cancer.

Two and a half years ago, four-year-old Kate Rhoades of Herndon lost her battle with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Her parents, Lindsey and Mike Rhoades, promised their daughter her death would not be in vain. At that time all they knew was there was a need to fund a pediatric cancer researcher with bright and promising prospects for better and less toxic treatments for children with cancer, especially for those with cancer like Kate's. At the Second Annual Kate's Cause PanKate Breakfast Annual Birthday Party held June 2, 2018, at the Herndon United Methodist Church, Mike and Lindsay Rhoades announced to the crowd present, that on behalf of the Board of Kate's Cause they were presenting a check for \$25,000 to partner with the Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation in co-funding a grant to Dr. Christian Hurtz, Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

The contribution will help support the study of Cellular Pathways to Enhance Treatment in Ph-like acute lymphoblastic leukemia...the most common cancer in children and the one Kate had.

The following is part of the letter Kate's mom wrote and read to those gathered at the Kate's Cause PanKate Breakfast:

"This past Saturday, almost one year to the day of our official launch, we celebrated the first birthday of Kate's Cause, our foundation built from love and heartache. We gathered with 254 of our closest friends, family and new faces alike and we celebrated our birthday. We celebrated Kate. BECAUSE OF YOU, IN ONE YEAR, WE WERE ABLE TO FULFILL OUR PROMISE TO KATE... I want to thank you for coming out today and giving us a chance to share what Kate's Cause is all about.

Two and half years ago, we made a promise to our little girl. I held her hand as we promised that we would tell her story. We promised that we would do

anything in our power to make noise and raise awareness. That her departure from this life would never have been in vain... One year ago (almost to the day) I stood right here in this very spot and made a promise to YOU, to Kate's Cause supporters and donors. We officially launched her cause and our plan for what was known at the time as 'Katie's Grant' to fund a pediatric cancer researcher with bright and promising prospects that met our greatest need of better and less toxic treatments for our kids...

It is with the greatest excitement that I announce, on behalf of the Board of Kate's Cause, our partnership with Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation to co-fund a grant to Dr. Christian Hurtz, Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. Our \$25,000 contribution to the grant on studying Cellular Pathways to Enhance Treatment in Ph-like acute lymphoblastic leukemia...The most common cancer in children (Kate had this cancer.)

From here.... we keep on going. We keep on keeping on. We keep doing what we're doing with your help and we keep trying to change the lives of children in Kate's name. For them...because of her. Happy birthday, my girl. I love you. I miss you. Best friends forever. I promise. - Lindsay Rhoades, Kate's mom." To learn more about Kate's Cause, especially upcoming events, visit katescause.com and [Prayers for Kate - Home | Facebookhttps://www.facebook.com/prayersforKate.13/](https://www.facebook.com/prayersforKate.13/)



PHOTO BY TOM MANNING/THE CONNECTION

Eighth-grader Sreeram Pillai of Herndon listens as background information is given for the word "forastero" on May 29 at the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Herndon Student Competes in National Spelling Bee

The 91st Scripps National Spelling Bee took place from May 29 - 31 at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, Md. A record-number 515 spellers competed this year after launching an invitational program called

RSVBee. Among the competitors was Sreeram Pillai, a 14-year-old eighth grader at Carson Middle School in Herndon. He spelled "forastero" correctly onstage in round 2 but misspelled "dropsy" in round 3 which eliminated him from the competition.

Herndon, Reston Senior Senior Prom Celebrated

The Annual Senior Senior Prom sponsored by the Rotary Clubs of Herndon and Reston was held for the 16th year at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Herndon on May 5, 2018.

Three hundred-fifty-two seniors registered, a larger number than ever before.

Music was provided by the Loudoun Jazz Ensemble and the dance floor was full all afternoon. Dance instructions and demonstrations were provided by the Fred Astaire Studio in Herndon.

The room was decorated in a Hawaiian theme with pineapples on the tables and leis and flowers given to everyone.

A delicious meal was provided by Jimmy's Old Town Tavern, St. Joseph's, Amphora's and Carrabba's; prom photos were taken by Mark Swatzki Photography.

The Interact Clubs from Herndon High School and South Lakes High School greeted the seniors, helped with the photos, bringing plates of food to those who needed help and in cleaning



PHOTO BY MARY DRUM/ROTARY CLUB OF HERNDON.

Prom Queen Jeannie Sweet and King Roland Dionne.

up. They all enjoyed spending time with their elders.

— MARY DRUM

OAK HILL/HERNDON CONNECTION ♦ JUNE 6-12, 2018 ♦ 3

Rolling Thunder In Herndon

Four members of the Herndon and Fairfax County Police Department Motorcycle Squads escort motorcyclists, many from Rolling Thunder, from Jimmy's Old Town Tavern on the morning of Sunday, May 27, 2018. After the escort released them, the JOTT motorcyclists rode to Bolivar Park in Northwest D.C. and later stopped at the Masonic Temple for their Annual Group Photo.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY TEA CEARV

On the evening of Friday, June 1, 2018, the Herndon Festival attracted a large crowd of excited patrons ready for the thrill of a carnival with the fun of outdoor concerts.



Twins Adeline and Claire Avenoso, 2 of Herndon fly through the air on a magical dragon at the Herndon Festival 2018. "This is our first carnival ride with the twins," said mom, Amanda Avenoso.



At least the rain momentarily stopped on Saturday night, and the fireworks lit up the sky. The fireworks were choreographed to music. Songs such as "My Little Town" rang loud and clear stirring the hearts of festivalgoers.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Maggie A. DeBoard, Chief of Police Town of Herndon makes sure Jude, gets water on a hot afternoon, the only hot afternoon of the Herndon Festival 2018. It rained the other three days.

Behind the Scene at Herndon Festival

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

No one ever thought there would be a Herndon Festival like this one. Although forecasters predicted unsettled weather and rain, never in all of its years of operation has the Herndon Festival experienced so many episodes of torrential rain, which unrelentingly, drenched the

long awaited and yearlong planned event held Thursday, May 31- Sunday, June 2, 2018. The Festival is an unofficial trademark of the Town of Herndon.

Eventually, the gods of rain did win the battle and organizers closed the Festival Sunday afternoon, well before the 7 p.m. official closing, shutting down the last festival in the Historic Downtown District.

The rain did not, however, win

the war.

It did not drench the spirits of the Town staff, the men and women of the Parks & Recreation Department who spent the last year along with the Executive Festival Committee and all support teams throughout the town organizing the event. Instead, they watched musicians not playing and performing.

The weather did not wear down the Public Works Department who

set up, checked and continually maintained, and then took down much of the equipment and banners in poor weather.

The Town of Herndon Police Department kept everyone safe as did the fire and rescue crews of Fairfax County Fire Station #4 Herndon.

Hundred of unsung heroes carried on through the rain wearing improvised raincoats made out of plastic trash bags, and nearly every one of the hundreds of volun-

teers scheduled for given shifts showed up for their assigned tasks and tackled their service requests regardless of the weather.

On Friday, things looked better, and there was a short respite. Rides twirled, children tugged parents this way and that, and music played throughout the town. Arts and craft vendors sold their items and the delicious smells of ribs, fried dough, and kettle corn turned the Town of Herndon into the

There are streams of teams that make every Festival, even a rained out one a success.

sought after moments of summertime fun. Organizers even got to shoot off the fireworks Saturday as the mist and rain lifted.

It was what thirty-eight years ago, Arno Randall and a group of friends thought a "little" festival in the town of Herndon could be with community support.

What began with thoughts of a one-day event grew to a four-day festival which demanded an impressive number of resource per-

sonnel- volunteers, musicians, carnival people, vendors and police, security and more.

Cindy Roeder is the Director of Parks and Recreation for the Town of Herndon.

The Festival comes under her umbrella. Asked in an interview for her thoughts on this year's event, Roeder wrote and provided the following statement.

"You can't produce an event of this complexity without the sup-

port of a dedicated and hard-working team. You know you have a great team when you watch them collectively do the best the can to make the festival a success, despite the less than desirable weather.

And that includes all the town staff, volunteers, civic groups, and sponsors and vendors. Herndon does this well because we are close-knit community, with a tremendous amount of pride in our town."



Megan Hervey and her daughter, Haley dance to the music of "The Hunts" on Saturday, June 2, 2018, of the Herndon Festival.



A couple of Festival goers want to try their luck at the Midway by Jolly Shows during the Herndon Festival 2018.



John Mosesso manages volunteers for the Herndon Festival. "Volunteers make this a community event which contributes greatly to allow this to be a free admission event." Mosesso's unofficial volunteer count as of Sunday was more than 450 individuals, including those serving through civic organizations.



The crowd packs the HMC lawn to hear the performers "Almost Queen" on Friday, June 1, the second night of the Herndon Festival 2018.

"We take security very seriously here," says Chief Maggie DeBoard Town of Herndon. "Which is why we made the decision last year to close Elden Street to vehicles between Monroe and Center Streets. Our people are not just wandering around. They are strategically placed and assigned."



"The rain will never deter us from serving our community," said Maryanne Hull, a member of Herndon Rotary Club as she receives her radio. Hull marshals the entrances and checks the contents of backpacks and all packages, bags, and containers brought into her assigned Festival area.



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An expert is someone who knows
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be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

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ENTERTAINMENT

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

ONGOING

Photography Exhibit "Liquid Beauty." Through June 25, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. at the JoAnne Rose Gallery, Reston Community Center at Lake Anne, 1609-A Washington Plaza, Reston. The Reston Photographic Society, a special interest group of the League of Reston Artists, invited photographers to enter their work in the "RPS at Lake Anne" show. Free and open to the public. Visit www.leagueofrestonartists.org for more.

Twitterpated: Animated Adoration at ArtInsights. Through June 30 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.

Art Exhibit - Mike Cloud: Figure Studies. Through July 7, Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. at GRACE, 12001 Market St., Suite 103, Reston. Mike Cloud: Figure Studies presents a selection of works by Brooklyn-based artist Mike Cloud (b. 1974, Chicago) that consider language, symbolism, metaphor, history, and identity through the examination of the figure. Based around a single monumental painting, Cycle and Stable (2015), the exhibition includes the artist's series of collages based on the work of photographer Annie Leibovitz and new paintings. Call 703-471-9242 or visit restonarts.org.

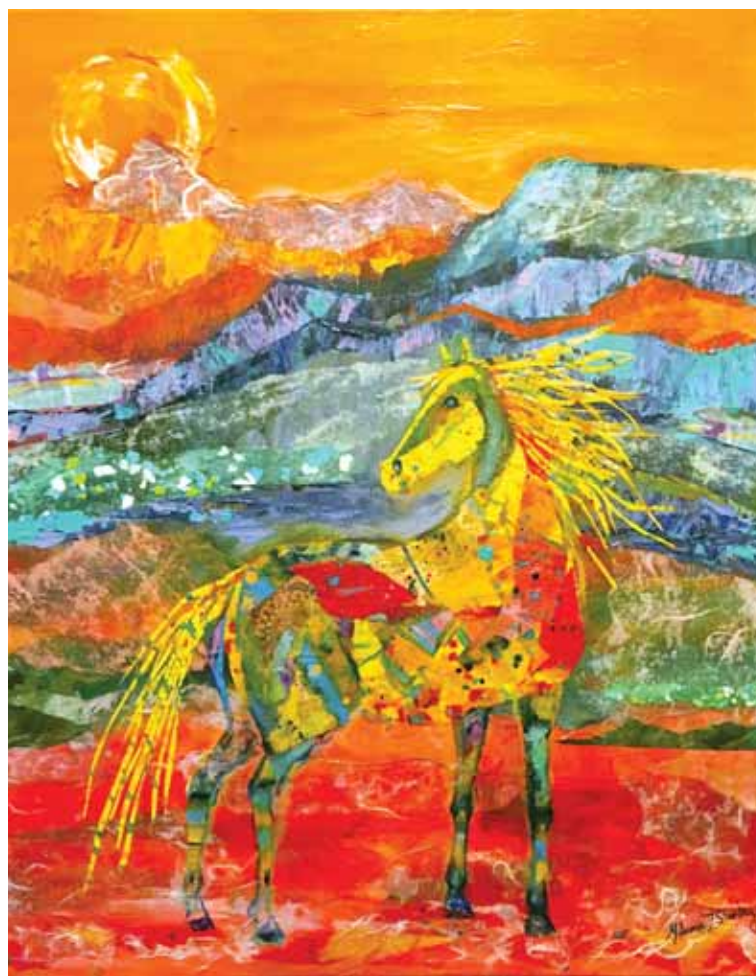
Reston Concerts on the Town. 7:30-10 p.m. Saturdays, June through August. At Reston Town Center Pavilion, 11900 Market St., Reston. Music genres from around the nation are performed by live bands each week. Bring lawn chairs or picnic blankets for seating. Free. Rain or shine. Alcohol permitted at restaurants only. Visit www.restontowncenter.com/concerts.

Muscle Up Mondays. 6:30 p.m. Meets Mondays, May through October, at Pavilion at Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. Free fitness classes presented by CRUNCH Fitness-Reston group instructors. (No class on Memorial Day, May 28.) Call 571-267-5000 or visit crunchreston.com Facebook.com/CrunchReston.

Mr. Knick Knack! 10:30-11:15 a.m. May through October. At Reston Town Center Pavilion. Free performances of heart-centered music for children. No performances on Memorial Day, Labor Day, or Columbus Day. Visit www.restontowncenter.com/events.

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. Visit www.homegrownpoweryoga.com to sign up.



Wild Horse Landscape

Design and Wine

Come explore sketching and painting a horse while capturing its wild spirit and compelling expressions. Focus on the horse's face, using color and imagination to create expression, spirit, and joy with flowing manes that are full of vibrancy. Have fun learning some good techniques to help you render a most wonderful horse with eyes that are full of life. Tuesday, June 12, 7-9 p.m. at Art Space Herndon, 3712, 750 Center St., Herndon. Visit www.artspaceherndon.org for more.

The Elden Street Tea Shop.

Saturdays in ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Sip tea and enjoy a variety of locally made snacks and pastries while enjoying the latest art installations in the gallery. Visit www.eldenstreettea.com.

Small Business Support Sundays.

Visit independent stores and restaurants, and those that support small businesses at Reston Town Center, offering specials, discounts, tastings, and localized treats every Sunday. Visit SmallBusinessSupportSundays.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.

Over-40 Softball League. A Fairfax-based league is looking for enough players to form another team. Players must be at least 40 years of age to be eligible. All games are doubleheaders - played on Sundays at Bready Park in Herndon between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. If interested, email skeduman@aol.com for more.

IMPROVING ENGLISH

One-To-One English Conversation.

Mondays, 1 p.m. at Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Multiple one-on-one practice sessions with a volunteer are available each week. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Pre-Beginners. Wednesdays 10-11

a.m. at Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Beginners. Tuesdays 10-11 a.m. with Beth; Thursdays 10-11 a.m. with Genie; Fridays 10-11 a.m. with Ivan. At Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Intermediate. Mondays 10-11 a.m. with Rick; Wednesdays, 1-2 p.m. with Susan; Wednesdays 2-3 p.m. with Sharoni. At Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Advanced. Thursdays 10-11:30 a.m. with Richard; Fridays, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. with Mary. At Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Vocabulary Building. Mondays 11 a.m.-1:15 p.m. at Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Speak & Write. Mondays, 1:30-3 p.m. at Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Dialogs & Grammar. Tuesdays, 11:15-12:30 p.m. at Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

Pronunciation. Thursdays, 1-2:30 p.m. at Reston Library, Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Free. Call 703-689-2700 to reserve a spot.

BULLETIN

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

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Child turning 5 years old by Sept.30? If so, contact your child's school to make arrangements for kindergarten enrollment. Most schools begin getting information together now for parents of incoming kindergartners, and many host an orientation or open house. All kindergarten programs are full-day and located in FCPS elementary schools. Check your school's webpage or contact the school directly for specific enrollment information and dates of orientation or visit www.fcps.edu/registration/kindergarten-registration.

WEDNESDAY/JUNE 6

Member Orientation. 8-10 a.m. at Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, 1886 Metro Center Drive, Suite 230, Reston. New to the chamber? Interested in joining? Been a member for years but need a refresher? Orientation is the best way to learn about a Reston Chamber Membership. Visit www.restonchamber.org for more.

FRIDAY/JUNE 8

Catholic Business Network to Honor Mark Ingraio. 11:30 a.m. at Hyatt Regency Dulles, 2300 Dulles Corner Blvd., Herndon. The Catholic Business Network (CBN) is honoring five Catholic Chief Executive Officers of Northern Virginia's largest Chambers of Commerce. Those attending will enjoy networking, a plated lunch, panel discussion and a brief awards program. Visit cbnova.org.

Application Deadline. Reston Community Center is seeking performing arts groups of all ages and cultures for the 18th Annual Reston Multicultural Festival. The festival will be held Saturday, Sept. 22, 2018 at Reston's historic Lake Anne Plaza. Applications will be accepted through June 8, 2018. Interested groups or individuals should fill out an Entertainment Application Form, now available at www.restoncommunitycenter.com/reston-multicultural-festival.

Application Deadline. Leadership Fairfax announces the second round of applications for the Emerging Leaders Institute & Leadership Fairfax Institute Classes of 2019. Learn more at an informational webinar on June 6, at noon. Applications and webinars are available at leadershipfairfax.org or call 703-752-7555.

SUNDAY/JUNE 10

Registration Deadline: RSTA. 9 p.m. The Reston Swim Team Association (RSTA) is a year-round swim league open to all swimmers between the ages of 6 and 18. The summer league brings together swimmers from the greater Reston area who practice and compete on eight teams with up to 110 swimmers per team from late May to the end of July. Visit www.rsta.org.

TUESDAY/JUNE 12

Primary Elections. The last day to vote an absentee ballot in person is Saturday, June 9, 2018. Election day voting is Tuesday, June 12 from 6 a.m.-7 p.m. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/upcoming for more.

WEDNESDAY/JUNE 13

Business Education Series. 8:30-10 a.m. at Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, 1886 Metro Center Drive, Suite 230, Reston. Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce presents "Branding and Marketing are Not the Same, and It Matters." Jen Dalton, owner of BrandMirror, will discuss steps in the branding process and what it means to an organization. Free, members; \$15, non-members/guests. Visit www.restonchamber.org.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/JUNE 15-16

Volunteers Needed. Taste of Reston is hoping to fill 300+ volunteer positions for this annual two day event. Network, team build, give back to the community and just have fun volunteering. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old. Garage parking will be free all day Friday and Saturday. Opportunities for teams or individual volunteers. Earn t-shirts and taste tickets. Each volunteer serving alcohol or checking IDs must attend a mandatory alcohol service training. Sign up for the training at www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0d49afa82eabff2-taste. Call 703-707-9045 or visit RestonChamber.org for more.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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Creature Comforts



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Can you hear that? Of course you can't. You're there and I'm here. And exactly where am I? As usual on a Saturday morning, I'm sitting at my desk, staring out my window onto to "Belly Acres" (our two acres) waiting for creative lighting to strike.

What it is that you can't hear is the sound of Chino, one of my three male, domestic shorthair cats (there are two other females making for a total of five), purring. Purring so loudly, in fact, and positioned so strategically that I can't look across to my computer screen, grab a tissue from atop my printer or press any keys on my keyboard without seeing him, touching him and/or most definitely, hearing him.

Lying on his side with his back to the computer and his front facing me, I am semi-entranced by the heave-ho of his stomach, the alertness of his ears and the occasional stare and gradual closing of his eyes. Still the purring persists.

Knowing cat behavior, as I've come to after 40-plus years of ownership/cohabitation, I've learned to appreciate their sights and sounds and signs of affection (Chino has now rolled over with his back now facing and touching me, yet another sign of affection and trust, and dare I say, love and devotion). The purring has now stopped because Chino has fallen asleep in his "rocking chair, good buddy," to invoke some old-fashioned CB-Radio-type chatter. Perhaps in Chino's serenity will I find some creative juices to flow.

If you're a cat owner/cat "understander," this behavior is as good as it gets: proximity and tolerance. Cats may not exactly come when you call them, sit on command or fetch, but they most definitely can express love. And it's in these behavioral expressions of love that us cat owners find the greatest joy and the most comfort, so long as we interpret it as such. Nor should we get mad when they exhibit contrary behavior, like ignoring you or walking away when approached or occasionally biting/scratching/clawing the hands that feed, pet and play with them. That's par and it's their course we're playing.

As an experienced "feline," I am accustomed to and mostly amused by, this behavior. It is a behavior, among many that cats exhibit where you have zero (I was going to say minimal, but let's be honest) control. Accepting that may give you a greater sense of anticipation concerning their behavior. And it's when you can correctly anticipate that behavior where you can find some real satisfaction.

Not that correctly anticipating said behavior will become a reliable part of future interactions, nevertheless; it is understanding that being equal parts right and wrong concerning their behavior – and finding humor in it, is what will make you an enlightened cat owner. It's somewhere between expecting the unexpected and accepting that being wrong twice doesn't necessarily make you right once – and appreciating the difference. It's possible that this awareness may help clarify the cat's meow. Then again ... ?

But so what? Because of their frequently inexplicable shenanigans, I am continually bemused, and as an aside, with five cats in the house full time, never alone. And it's that never being alone that I find the most comforting.

Whether it's feeding time, litter time, petting/playing/sleeping time, shopping time or veterinarian time, I am regularly engaged. Now, whether they're happy about any of it or not, I can't say for sure. Still, it gives us all something to do, someone to see – and something to hear.

Chino has now awakened from his nap. He has positioned himself so that he is laying across my writing tablet, resting almost entirely on my non-writing left hand and purring as loudly as he was at the beginning of this column. But now that I'm nearly finished, I guess he figures he can get in my way, which doesn't bother me in the least. After all, he is a cat; I wouldn't expect anything less.

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

OPINION

Potential for Progress on Pension Reform

BY PAT HERRITY
SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT SUPERVISOR
(R)



The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors finally appears poised to make additional changes to the county's unsustainable pension plan. After delaying action for the last three years, a number of options have been put on the table for the board to consider at its June 26 Personnel Committee meeting. There has been some board support for adopting the entire package but the outcome is far from certain. If the package is adopted it will reduce pension costs for new employees by 19 to 25 percent and will still leave county employees with a pension plan better than any of our surrounding jurisdictions. While I believe the board missed the opportunity to develop an overall compensation plan that would provide a mix of salary, pensions, and benefits that would attract the best employees and teachers, these changes are meaningful and I support all of the changes to the general county employee pension plan and most of the changes to the public safety plans.

Currently, employees that begin employment with the county right out of school can retire as early as age 55 with a full pension benefit

that is higher than those of surrounding jurisdictions. On top of that pension benefit they get a benefit unheard of today — a pre social security supplement — as early as age 55. The pre social security supplement is an additional county paid supplement that equals the social security payment they would have received if they were 67. Unlike real social security payments that increase with

cost of living (less than 1 percent last year), this county paid benefit increases at a guaranteed 3 percent. These retirement benefits are far in excess of what is typical in today's work environment — even in the public sector.

Fairfax County currently has an unfunded pension liability in excess of \$5.5 billion. Pensions alone currently cost the county 30 cents on top of every payroll dollar (about 70 cents if you include all benefits). Funding our pension liabilities competes with employee and teacher salary increases and our ability to fund the high quality of services county residents have come to expect. Since joining the board in 2008 I have been advocating to address our compensation and pension issues.

County staff did an outstanding job of simplifying this very difficult material. Here a link to the details: [https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-personnel-commit-](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-personnel-committee-meeting-may-22-2018)

tee-meeting-may-22-2018. The changes are anticipated to take effect for new employees hired after July 1, 2019 and because they appropriately impact new employees only, the savings will be in future years.

The proposed changes are summarized below:

- ❖ Increasing the Minimum Retirement Age from 55 to 60 and set it at 50 for public safety employees

- ❖ Increasing from the Rule of 85 to the Rule of 90 – full retirement at salary plus age for general county employees

- ❖ Increasing the Salary Averaging Period from 3 years to 5 years

- ❖ Eliminate the Provision that increases the retirement annuity by 3 percent annually

- ❖ Increase the Employee Contribution Rate by approximately 1 percent

The changes were presented as a package and there was some support for enacting the entire package of reforms; however, the board may advance a more limited package of reforms at its meeting on June 26. Unfortunately, it appears as though the public will not have a formal opportunity to weigh in on the reforms until after the package has been selected and it comes to public hearing in September or October this year. It is important that supervisors hear from residents before the Personnel Committee meeting on June 26 with their opinions on the package.

Green for Medicaid

BY EILEEN FILLER-CORN
STATE DELEGATE (D-41)



Pressing the green “yes” button at my desk on the floor of the House of Delegates last Wednesday night was literally the most consequential vote I have ever taken. It truly was the best day for me, ever, in the Virginia House of Delegates.

People often ask me why I serve, and I always respond “because I truly want to make a difference.” The fact is, if I were ever in doubt, I can look at this vote and say, yes we can and yes we do make a difference, in this case, to over 300,000 Virginians who had no insurance. These people are not just statistics, they are neighbors, family members and friends.

As I drove back from Richmond that night, I think it finally sunk in: Medicaid expansion will become a reality in Virginia. We passed a budget that reflects our values, providing well-deserved access to healthcare for over 300,000 people, teachers and state employees will receive raises, there will be additional money for mental health and for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities and insurance will be provided for people with autism up until age 21, while funds will be added to our rainy-day fund.

I have always gone to Richmond with a goal to listen and get things done, working with everyone, finding areas of commonality. This budget is a perfect example of Democrats and Republicans coming together to do what is

right for the Commonwealth and its citizens. Gov. Ralph Northam, former Gov. Terry McAuliffe, all of our Democratic members of the House and Senate, as well as a number of Republicans and so many others: individuals, groups and stakeholders worked earnestly in support of Medicaid expansion for over five years and we finally did it.

We were victorious because everyone came together and because we elected so many new diverse but like-minded voices into the House of Delegates in November of 2017. As our Democratic leader aptly put it, we showed “the power of 49.” But 49 is not 51; we needed leadership on the other side of the aisle, as we had through Speaker Kirk Cox, Appropriations Chairman Chris Jones and Commerce and Labor Chairman Terry Kilgore who were instrumental in leading support among Republicans in the House. Senators

The most important vote I have ever taken.

Emmett Hanger, Dick Saslaw, George Barker, and Janet Howell were essential in leading the Senate as well, and Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax broke a number of ties in the Senate to block hostile amendments to our budget. This was truly a team effort.

Thanks to the passage of this budget there will also be funding for more judges and additional individuals with disabilities will have access to Medicaid waivers. Investment was increased in economic development while additional money will be provided to expand broadband and preserve our AAA bond rating. Through this budget, we will create opportunities for working families to thrive. We will build a better, healthier, stronger Virginia.

I will always remember pressing that green button on my desk on May 30, 2018 while watching the vote board light up green in support of a budget we can all be proud of. During my time in office, this was truly the most important vote I have ever taken.

Send Father's Day Photos

Father's Day is Sunday, June 17, and once again this newspaper will publish a gallery of Father's Day photos.

Every year at this time, we put out the call for photographs of fathers and their children, grandfathers and their children and grandchildren.

Send in photos with the following information: the town where you live, the names of everyone in the picture, the approximate date the picture was taken, the ages of the children and a sentence or two about what is happening and where the photograph was taken. Be sure to tell us your town name and neighborhood. Photos are due by June 12.

You can submit your photos online at www.connectionnewspapers.com/fathersday. You can also email photos to editors@connectionnewspapers.com.

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