

The Birds Weren't Even Up Yet

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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From left: Outside of Nature House in Reston, bird counters, Joanne Bower of Reston, Barbara Ehst, Avery Ehst, 7, and Mike Ehst of Arlington, Jay Hadlock of Herndon, and David Bower look toward the treetops searching to sight the group's first feathered friend to tally in the 2020 Reston Association Winter Bird Count held Saturday, Jan. 4.

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SPORTS

Seahawks Break Records During the Winter Break

South Lakes High School Indoor Track and Field Team set new school records.

The South Lakes High School indoor track team capped a busy winter break meet schedule by setting four school records and qualifying several athletes for the postseason.

Competing in the Ocean Breeze Freedom Games Jan. 4, 2020 in Staten Island, N.Y., the Seahawks set a meet record and broke five school records. Seniors Hannah Waller, Mary Gregory, junior Juvianadean Mullings and sophomore Jillian Howard ran a 6A State Championship Meet qualifying time of 1:42.23 in the preliminaries of the 4x200 meter relay. They topped that in the finals by winning the event in 1:40.00, which eclipsed the meet record as well as the school record and is the fastest time run in the event this year. The school record of 1:41.49 was set last season by Waller, Gregory, Mullings and Rhema Konadu.

Though they did not win their event, the boys 4x200 meter relay team also qualified for the state meet and broke the school record. Seniors Jackson Cooley, Branden Tirona and sophomores Tyler Benett and Joshua Gregory ran a 1:32.86 in the pre-



South Lakes High School senior Hannah Waller.

PHOTO BY DERRICK DINGLE

liminaries. In the final, Cooley, Benett, Gregory and junior Malcolm Coker finished fourth with a 1:32.02, breaking the school

record of 1:32.18 set by Timiebi Ogobri, Eric Kirlaw, Anas Fain and Skander Ballard during the 2015-2016 season.

State meet qualifying and school records were also set in the field events at the Ocean Breeze Track and Field Complex.

Senior Caleb Miller won the shot put with a throw of 52-01.00, breaking the school record of 51-07.00 set by Ronak Cuthill during the 2017-2018 season. Miller also finished 13th in the high jump with a Liberty District championship qualifying height of 5-08.00.

Junior Amelia DiBiase finished second in the pole vault with a 10-00.00 breaking her own school record - again. She opened the season with a winning vault of 9-00.00 at the David Cannon Memorial Polar Bear Invitational December 7 at James Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, breaking the school record of 8-09.00. Then at the Liberty Christmas Invitational December 21 at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., she was fourth but her clearance of 9-06.00 broke her own record. She tied that mark at the =PR= Holiday Invitational Dec. 28 at the Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex in Landover, Md. in finishing second. In every meet she has competed in this season, she has either tied or broken the school record.

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The Birds Weren't Even Up Yet

Dedicated avian enthusiasts tabulate Reston's winter birds.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

While most people enjoyed the first Saturday morning of the New Year sleeping in or slowly sipping a cup of coffee, dedicated bird enthusiasts got up well before dawn to participate in the first of Reston Association's two yearly bird counts. The annual tallying of population and species by observers helps the association monitor the success of its community in supporting a variety of wildlife.

"The counts ... give people the opportunity to see the diversity of avian species that call Reston home, and why preserving habitat is so important for the health of all our residents - human and bird alike," said Abby Stocking, Naturalist at Reston Association Walker Nature Center. According to Audubon.org, bird observations can also be used to look for trends such as increasing or decreasing numbers of a given species and whether species' ranges shift, expand or contract under increased global temperatures.

Volunteer birders of all levels and ages met inside Nature House before sunrise Jan.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Hearing a birdsong, counters for the 2020 Reston Association Winter Bird Count held Saturday, Jan. 4 search the skies and trees for a visual to identify it.

4. Assembled in groups, each with a designated leader, they headed out to multiple sectors across Reston to create a real-time snapshot of bird species and numbers. One sector group led by Joanne Bower and her husband David stuck close to the woods, lakes and paths surrounding Nature House. Lisa Mackem of Reston, the Ehst family of Arlington, Dad Mike, Avery, 7, and Grandma Barbara, along with Jay Hadlock of Herndon, joined the Bowers.

Heading down the path, Joanne Bower softly said, "Counting in the winter gives us a population. The summer count is a breeding survey. A lot of us count the birds by hearing; that is one way to locate them." Bower looked over at Avery and said, "We depend on sharp young eyes too."

"I love birds," said Avery. "They're my favorite animals." Birding by ear, Bower identified a singer. "That's a Carolina Wren," she said.

By 7:25 a.m. and not done yet, the seven hardy Nature House birders had counted 15 birds with a species count of 6. Initial Tally: 1 Fish Crow, 4 Carolina Wren, 2 Titmouse, 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 1 Mourning Dove, 6 American Crows. The complete 2020 Reston Association Winter Bird Count by all sectors was not available by press time. Visit www.reston.org for updates.

Pool Reopening Delayed **New reopening date: Jan. 27.**

Reston Community Center announced on Dec. 30 that the reopening of the Terry L. Smith Aquatics Center is delayed until Jan. 27 due to issues uncovered in recent inspections and permitting processes.

RCC Executive Director Leila Gordon said a meeting with project leaders from Fairfax County's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services included news that a pair of critical systems paths held unforeseen obstacles. The project construction team had originally forecasted opening the two pools on Jan. 6, capping a year-long renovation project of the 40-year-old facility.

"During testing of new fire alarm system components in the project area last week, it was discovered that our existing system and the pool system were on two separate relay paths," said Gordon. "The strobe lights used in the pool are different from those in the rest of the building. Fire regulations require all building systems to be identical and on the same relay processes. We will have to replace existing strobe units inside the pool environment and connect those new ones to the building system. This will add time needed to order the parts and install them."

Gordon also noted that a similar start-up testing issue revealed that the electrical power service original to the old pool venue is now insufficient to power up the new lighting and emergency lighting in total, necessitating another replacement and installation timeline not originally forecast as needed.

In the interim, punch list and further equipment systems testing, including HVAC and pump issues,

will be ongoing to ensure there will be no further issues.

"We are going to use the time delay to assure that we run the pool systems sufficiently long enough to expose anything that needs to be tweaked before we reopen," Gordon explained. "We are reaching out to our registered patrons, swim team users and to the public to help them plan accordingly."

As a small way to offset the pain of the prolonged closure, RCC will be providing their swim team users with complimentary team practice time when the pool reopens. Patrons may count on the month of February for the special \$1 access price for drop-in use. All patrons enrolled in affected classes will receive full refunds. Any questions about the project or future use of the pools should be directed to RCCContact@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Gordon added, "We know this has been an enormous burden to our regular swimmers and those wanting to enroll their family members in learn-to-swim programs. The two new pools are beautiful, and we are confident that swimmers will find them exciting to use. We are as eager to get the space open as the public is, and we hope this is the final delay in getting to that happy state."

The project team includes Branch Build project manager Bill Ruschaupt. For RMM Lukmire Architects: Brandon Hughes; for Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES): Martha Sansaver, Karen Davis and Geoff Kimmel; for RCC: Executive Director Leila Gordon, Deputy Director John Blevins, Matt McCall, Aquatics Director and Fred Russo, Building Engineer.

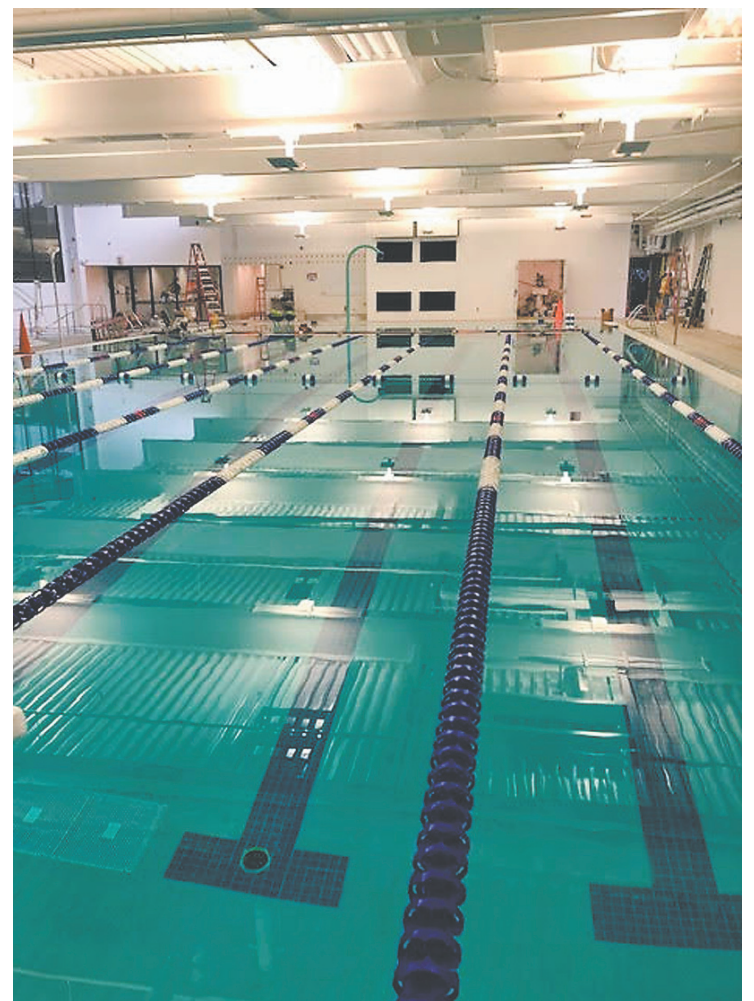


PHOTO COURTESY OF RCC

OPINION

Promises Kept

None of us came to Congress to impeach a president, but each of us took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

BY U.S. REP. GERALD E. CONNOLLY (D-VA)



In 2018, Democrats reclaimed our majority in the House of Representatives with a promise to deliver on bold, progressive solutions to the most pressing issues we face as a nation. Now, one year into the 116th Congress, that promise has been kept.

The House approved more than 400 pieces of legislation last year alone, more than 275 of which are bipartisan. Each of these bills is important and many are even life-changing, but there are several that are particularly worth highlighting.

I cannot go anywhere in our community without hearing how access to healthcare is affecting people's lives. While the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion have increased access, Virginians are still struggling with skyrocketing prescription drug prices. That is why I am so proud the House passed the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act, legislation that will lower prescription drug costs by increasing competition and would allow Medicare to renegotiate lower prices for more than 250 prescription drugs.

Conversations about our gun violence crisis are equally unavoidable. Like far too many communities across America, Northern Virginia is no stranger to the pain and loss wrought by mass shootings. I was Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors during the Vir-

ginia Tech massacre. I, like so many of our neighbors, will never forget the six young people we buried in the wake of that horrific day.

We need to pass gun control that makes our communities safer. That is why I was so proud the House passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act and the Enhanced Background Checks Act. These long overdue bills would close dangerous loopholes and ensure that no American can purchase a gun without first clearing a federal background check. We are in the middle of a national crisis, and this legislation is the least we can do to address it.

We have also had important successes for our region — particularly for federal employees. Thanks to Democratic efforts, we finally secured 12 weeks of paid parental leave and a 3.1 percent pay raise for federal employees. As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Government Operations, I successfully led the fight to stop the Trump administration's disastrous proposal to abolish the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). We secured back pay for federal employees following the President's damaging 35-day shutdown, and I held a hearing on the need to provide equal protections for federal contract workers.

Of course, despite our achievements, the last several months of 2019 were not easy for the Congress or the country. None of us came to Congress to impeach a president, but each of us took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. That oath de-

manded we take action in the face of unprecedented wrongdoing by an out-of-control executive. To extort a foreign country to investigate your political opponent is an unconstitutional abuse of power. To solicit foreign interference in an American election is an unconstitutional abuse of power. And the delicate balance of power that underpins our democracy is threatened when a President disregards the Constitution by obstructing Congress to cover up these unconstitutional abuses of power.

Impeachment is a uniquely serious issue, but it isn't the only issue. Through even the most difficult moments, our legislative work never stopped. Last month, the House voted on a bipartisan basis to replace NAFTA with the United States - Mexico - Canada Agreement (USMCA). After months of tough negotiating, Democrats secured a deal that includes the strongest enforcement mechanisms of any U.S. trade agreement, as well as critical victories for workers, lower prescription drug costs, and much-needed environmental protections. We also adopted a bipartisan appropriations agreement to fully fund the government for fiscal year 2020.

These successes are a reminder of the incredible progress our country can make. But they also bring into focus the stark reality that the House of Representatives cannot make laws on its own. Leader McConnell has unilaterally blocked the Senate from debating and voting on 80 percent of the bills that we in the House have sent to his desk — most of them bipartisan, and all of them worthy of consideration. His failure of leadership, however, will not deter us from doing the business of the American people.

As we say goodbye to 2019, you can rest assured that we will build upon the progress we've made and continue to hold the Trump administration accountable in the New Year.

General Assembly Session 2020 Underway

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

COMMENTARY

Last Sunday I made my annual winter trek south to Richmond for the General Assembly session. My two-hour trip is not far enough to get me to sunny weather, but it is far enough for me to be in some hot debates. I stay in a hotel with such proximity to my office that my daily commute is just a walk of a couple of minutes. Going south in the winter may be a vacation for some but for the next 60 days, it is the most intense period of work that one can imagine. Fortunately, I get home most weekends for a brief reprieve.

This trip south has been one filled with great anticipation. For the first time in two decades I am not in the minority! I chair a committee now, the Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee, that will be acting on many environmental

bills. I can expect that bills I introduce will get a fair hearing and most of them will pass. My colleagues and I reflect the population of the Commonwealth more than any previous General Assembly session ever. Not only do we have more women in the legislature, but we have the first ever woman Speaker of the House!

Being a member of the majority party brings enormous responsibility. As the party "in power," we must exercise our duties in ways that are judicious and fair. There is no time for political pay-back. We must shift from campaigning mode to governing mode. Although it may be tempting to do otherwise, we must conduct ourselves in ways towards the minority party members that would be the way we want to be treated in the distant future when we may find ourselves the minority again. Yes, the golden rule should apply even in the legislature.

How exciting it is to realize that in a few

short months we will be able to add Virginia to the list of states that have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment even if we are the last needed for ratification. We will strengthen our existing antidiscrimination laws and add to them. We will make our communities safer from gun violence. We will add essential funding increases to our educational and human service programs. We will make critical decisions on protecting our environment and responding to climate change. And more. When all this work is done we have a governor who has pledged to sign our bills into law!

Last Saturday's public hearing by the Fairfax General Assembly delegation reminded us that there is not total accord on what we will be doing. About half the audience of around 300 people in attendance seemed to be there to shout down those with

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What is Coming Down the Tracks in 2020?

BY JOHN LOVAAS
RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST

Hope your holidays were all that you and yours wished them to be and that 2020 will be equally satisfying. Despite the drag by the corrupt dark side of the force in our nation's capital, 2019 was a productive year for the forces of good, progressive politics. Impeachment was a fitting final note, although we know there are grounds for at least ten articles of impeachment, rather than the charitable two finally agreed upon by the House of Representatives.

In early 2019 Virginia Dems' outlook for General Assembly elections was bleak. Governor Northam was dogged by an old medical school yearbook picture which had Democratic pols wetting their britches and calling for him to step down, and Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax was plagued by sexual assault accusations, leading to demands that he quit. Both proclaimed innocence, stood their ground. Northam proved he could govern and moved Virginia forward. Fairfax kept a low profile and the storm seemed to pass, playing little role in pivotal state elections. In fact, the Democrats not only kept huge 2017 House of Delegates gains, but took four more seats and control of the House. They also won control of the Senate!

Now, what will the Democrats do with their newly consolidated power? Progressives want to attack issues most vital to the people of Virginia, such as economic equity—specifically increasing Virginia's pathetic minimum wage and ending the union-killing Right to Work law. Not far behind for me are strengthening underpinnings of our deteriorating democracy, i.e., redistricting reform to end gerrymandering and doing real campaign finance reform. Other priorities would include approving the ERA, sensible gun safety laws including universal background checks and banning assault weapons, climate action such as carbon pricing, and expanding protection for women's right to choose.

Reston Del. Ken Plum and Senator Janet Howell, with a total of nearly 70 years seniority, should be able to help guide efforts to get it done.

Del. Plum is offering a major bill to raise the minimum wage (from \$7.25/hour immediately to \$11, rising to \$15 over a couple of years). He also supports doing away with "Right to Work," approving the redistricting reform constitutional amendment that has already passed the General Assembly once and will take effect if passed again this year, genuine gun control, and carbon pricing to address greenhouse gasses. No word on campaign finance reform.

Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership

is more timid, favoring less heavy lifting that might face corporate and special interest opposition. They are OK with ERA passage (more symbolic than effective), very modest gun reform, some easing of abortion restrictions and increased education funding. However, the crucial constitutional amendment for redistricting reform, regarded as a slam dunk before Dems took control of the Senate, is in jeopardy of being killed despite being rated one of the top such reforms in the country and having already passed last year. Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw and others seem more interested in exercising their new power to draw the lines than in reform. They are according no priority to increasing the scandalous minimum wage. Furthermore, the Democrats, including our

own Senator Howell, do not plan to address the union-killing "Right to Work" law or to take on climate change by using the most effective tool available, carbon pricing. It will be interesting to see if they can muster the courage to support even Gov. Northam's proposed modest, long overdue, increase in the gasoline tax... just 4 cents/gallon. We will soon know....

Closer to home, 2019 Fairfax County Board of Supervisors elections saw the Democrats add two more seats. They now hold all but one of 9 Board slots. Lots of new blood — four new Supervisors — may bode well for a board which could stand reinvigoration, fewer lowest common denominator decisions. New Chairman Jeff McKay trounced his opposition.

Plum

FROM PAGE 4

whom they disagreed. Their efforts to show support for what they define as their second amendment rights was to violate the first amendment rights of others. The lack of civility in public discourse across the country has found its way to Virginia. What a shame.

I am honored to be here, and I am go-

ing to do my best to fairly represent your interests. Make a trip south to see me and the legislative process over the next couple of months. To live-stream the legislative sessions, go to <https://viriniageneralassembly.gov/house/chamber/chamberstream.php> for the House and to http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/senate/granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=3 for the Senate sessions. To follow the progress of bills, visit <http://lis.virginia.gov/>.

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Employment

TECHNOLOGY

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Obituary



NANCY ELLEN KIDWELL
September 20, 1961 – December 11, 2019

Nancy was born in Kansas City North, Kansas City, MO to Maryellen (McKelvey) Bashioum and Douglas L. Bashioum. In 1963 the family moved to Plainview, Long Island, NY and in 1972 moved to Reston, VA. Nancy graduated from Herndon High School in 1979. She married Ronald Leigh Kidwell of Vienna, VA and they settled in Orange, VA.

Nancy had three great loves in life—her children; her animals, especially wolves—she spent many years raising and caring for wolf mixes; and teaching disabled children in the Orange school system as a substitute teacher and aide.

Nancy is preceded in death by her father, Douglas L. Bashioum; aunt, Patricia M. Pugh; and sister, Lea-Anne Bashioum. She is survived by her estranged husband, Ronald L. Kidwell, and their children Lucas Kidwell (Esmerelda) of Louisa, VA; Shenoah Kidwell of Orange, VA; Morgan Kidwell of Glen Allen, VA; and Dylan Kidwell of Madison, VA; her mother, Maryellen Bashioum of Ashburn, VA; her brothers Christopher D. Bashioum (Leslie) of Purcellville, VA; Michael E. Bashioum (Jennilynne) of Sterling, VA; and Jonathan A. Bashioum of Glenn Allen, VA; her aunt, Joy Cary of Richmond, VA; her great-aunt, Kay McCormack of Edison, NJ; and beloved grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and grand nieces and nephews.

Nancy's family and friends will miss her beautiful smile, her warmth, her generous spirit, and her very caring and loving heart.

Mass will be held at St. Isadore the Farmer Catholic Church in Orange, VA at noon on January 11. A reception at the church will follow after the Mass.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the American Stroke Association at stroke.org or the Wolf Conservation Center in South Salem, NY at www.nywolf.org.

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WELLBEING

Dry January?

The benefits of and strategies for taking a month-long booze break.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

After a season filled with Champagne, Whiskey Sours, Gingerbread Martinis and other libations, some might need a break from booze. Dry January, a public health campaign that encourages giving up alcohol until the first of February – can help with that effort. The health benefits of staying dry for a month range from thinner thighs to a fatter wallet.

"It's very common for people to come home after a stressful day and unwind with a glass of wine or two," said Alexandria-based substance abuse counselor Sarah Brewer, Ph.D. "But the reality is that while alcohol does seem to make you more relaxed at first, it can lead to anxiety or a depressed mood."

Weight loss can be a pleasant side effect of abstaining from an evening pour, says nutritionist Kathryn Armstrong, who cites a report by the National Institutes of Health that showed a strong link between weight gain and alcohol. "Basically, the cocktail or wine that you're drinking has empty calories," she said. "Also, many people tend to eat, especially junk food when they drink."

"Another benefit of being alcohol-free for a month is that people often find that they don't need that glass of wine to relax and unwind from a stressful day," added Brewer. "Giving up alcohol for a month might give you an opportunity to find explore other relaxation methods like meditation or



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Giving up alcohol during "Dry January" can have positive health benefits.

going for a walk or some other type of exercise."

For those who regularly attend happy hours with friends or have a glass of wine to relax, abstaining during one of the longest months of the year might seem unpleasant or unappealing, says Bethesda-based therapist Carol Barnaby, LCSW. "You might find things to distract you," she said. "If you're used to having a drink or going to a happy hour at the same time every day, you can schedule something else during that time so you're mind isn't on alcohol. People who enjoy the taste of alcohol might try eating fruit or drinking a fruit flavored sparkling water."

Attempting to take a break from alcohol might unmask deeper issues, suggests Brewer.

"If you find that you can't stop drinking, it could mean that you have a problem with alcohol consumption," she said. "By not drinking you might find

that you've been using alcohol to help deal with other issues like depression, PTSD or anxiety. In those cases you should get help from a medical or mental health professional."

"If you're used to having a drink or going to a happy hour at the same time every day, you can schedule something else during that time so you're mind isn't on alcohol."

— Carol Barnaby, LCSW

Employment

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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.

FRIDAY/JAN. 10

Reston Chamber Open House. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, 1886 Metro Center Drive, Suite 150, Reston. Stop by to see the new space; they will be serving cake and light refreshments, and have a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11:30 a.m.

Commemorative Brick Program.

The Reston Historic Trust & Museum will be celebrating its commemorative brick program. Members of the community are encouraged to support not only the Reston Historic Trust & Museum on Giving Tuesday – but to do so by ordering a commemorative brick which is a great way to leave your mark on Reston or give as a gift to friends, family, teachers, neighbors, organizations, or even a pet. Commemorative bricks can be ordered at <https://www.restonmuseum.org/bricks>. The bricks are ordered only once a year. Bricks to be installed in 2020 must be ordered by Jan. 8, 2020. Bricks are then reviewed by the Lake Anne Condominium Association and Reston Historic Trust & Museum. They are displayed and dedicated on Founder's Day, which will be April 18, 2020 and installed shortly thereafter dependent on weather.

SUPPORT GROUPS

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.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

ONGOING

STEM Professionals Needed. Volunteers are needed to assist K-12 STEM teachers in northern Virginia as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2019-20 school year. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488 or donaldrea@aol.com.

Assistance League of Northern Virginia, a volunteer nonprofit, invites community members to join the organization to participate in its Reading Express program. Volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring to first grade students during the school year.

To learn more contact VP Membership Mary Gronlund at gronbiz@aol.com or Program Coordinator Lynn Barron at lynnieb517@verizon.net.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for 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 Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-4547.

Herndon High School Library needs volunteers. Training available to help with re-shelving books, pulling books for teacher use, helping to check passes, or other special projects. To learn more, email hhs_library@fcps.edu.

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

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OMG



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Are you sitting down? I wasn't when I got the call from my oncologist after hours this past Thursday. He was calling me with the results from the previous week's biopsy. He said he had "exciting news." He said the biopsy was not only "typed" (genetic mutation/biomarker) but, as he continued to bury the lead using medical jargon about the slide and stain, finally got around to it: I may not have (or have had, still to be discussed/possibly determined) non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV. Instead, I may have (always had) thyroid cancer, specifically, papillary thyroid cancer, referred to as "the friendly cancer," by my oncology nurse the following infusion when I shared with her these preliminary findings. 'Friendly' referring to one's survival/life expectancy after diagnosis.

Moving forward to begin/confirm this new working diagnosis, I had an ultrasound of my thyroid the next day and Friday the following week, Team Lourie will be meeting with an endocrinologist. She (I saw her picture on the wall outside her office) presumably will have had a discussion, or at the very least, received an email/referral from my oncologist citing chapter and a few verses about who I am, how I've been treated, what scan/results I've had and of course, the news of this most recent biopsy, explaining why he reached out. I really don't expect, given my oncologist's excitement, and the fact that he called me (only the second time in nearly 11 years) that the endocrinologist will be likewise informed and possibly even excited to share a similar diagnosis with a previously-characterized as "terminal" patient who (yours truly) might not be "terminal" after all. 'Might not' being the operative phrase I'm still having difficulty grasping.

Somehow, I have to slow my roll and pull back on the reins. We're still early days here. Right now, I don't know anything definitive, so I'm not quite ready to call this a "Festivus miracle." Though at present it all sounds fairly promising, it's not exactly cast in stone, and neither has a revised Thyroid-cancer-treatment plan been put in place. I'm still a lung cancer "diagnossee" and one still waiting for the other shoe to drop. Therefore, until I'm told otherwise, as of now, I'm scheduled for my bi-weekly opdivo immunotherapy infusion on Jan. 3, 2020.

Now, why all of this is worth writing about, prematurely as it is, is that oncologists, almost by definition, are typically not the bearer of "exciting news." Generally speaking, they are giving bad news and saying it very directly at that. As was said to me in late February 2009: "Why not take that vacation you've always dreamed of while you're still feeling good?" The implication being quite clear that it's likely to get worse from here. To receive a call like I did Thursday from my oncologist now implying that it might get better from here is completely out of the ordinary. Moreover, if he initiated such a communication, I should probably take him at his words and take him very seriously.

Right now, I am possibly elated to be over the moon. However, it's not as if I've been given a clean bill of health. Cleaner, yes, but one still with a significant balance. And until I look the endocrinologist in her stethoscope and hear some magic words, I am keeping my powder dry and not shouting off my mouth - too much.

Cancer is a funny business. There are twists and turns and unexpected results, much of it not controlled by the doctors. And though I may be on the precipice of being blessed with some amazing, life-altering news, this time for the unbelievably good, I am still a week, maybe even weeks away from knowing with any certainty. In the interim, however, I am certain of one thing. If this change in my status does occur and I'm given back my life expectancy, somehow, I will try and return the favor.

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

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

NOW THROUGH FEB. 2

"The Mountaintop." At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. "The Mountaintop" is a historical drama taking place in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s hotel room the night before his assassination. He meets a young maid who forces him to consider exactly who and what he is fighting for. Full of vivid theatricality, poetic language, and surprising twists, this drama takes us to the summit of a man's historic life and offers a stunning view of his dream for our nation. Visit the website: www.nextstoptheatre.org/shows/mountaintop

FRIDAY/JAN. 10

Baby & Me Yoga. 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Bring your baby for a nurturing yoga workshop designed for the two of you. No experience needed. Bring a mat or blanket. Cosponsored FRRL. Age 6 weeks—16 months with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

SATURDAY/JAN. 11

Sing! Books with Miss Emily. 10:30 a.m. At 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Join Miss Emily for singing storytime with illustrated songs. Cosponsored by the FRRL. Age 2-5 with adult. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

SUNDAY/JAN. 12

Sunday Funday. 1-4 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Drop by the Children's desk on any Sunday for a fun independent activity. Perhaps you will create a flannel board, or play Book Bingo, or explore the library with a scavenger hunt. We will have a new activity each month. Age 5-11. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Michael Cleveland & Flame Keeper. 7 p.m. At Bluegrass Barn at Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. Put some toe-tapping fun into your gift-giving this holiday season by treating friends and family to a musical performance at Bluegrass Barn at Frying Pan Farm Park. Cost is \$18/advance; \$20/door. New this season is the Half Season Pass — four shows and reserved seats for \$68. Food and drinks, including beer and wine, are available for purchase at the performances. Tickets can be purchased online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-pan-park/ or by phone at 703-222-4664 or 703-437-9101.

MONDAY/JAN. 13

Baby Lapsit. 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Enjoy nursery rhymes and songs while building early literacy skills for your child. Age Birth to 11 months with adult. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Preschool Storytime — Fairy Tales. 2 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. This month we will foster your little one's love of reading with stories, songs, and crafts focused on our favorite classic fairy tales! Age 3-5 with adult. NO Registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

TUESDAY/JAN. 14

Baby Play and Explore. 11 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Join in an hour of unstructured play and social time for babies. Cosponsored by Friends of the Reston Regional Library. Age birth-18 months with adult. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Read to the Dog. 7 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Read aloud to a trained therapy dog. Bring your own book or choose one from the Library. First come, first served - one 15 minute session per child. Age 5-11. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Focusing on Unfinished Business of Civil Rights

Reston observes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s, works and achievements.

By DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Continuing its long tradition of commemorating the birthday and life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Reston Community Center (RCC) observes its 35th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Celebration. It will be three-days of events and participatory opportunities.

"Reston Community Center's MLK celebration weekend has always sought to focus the community's attention on the unfinished business of the civil rights movement. We began seeking the commentary of the new generation of warriors in the movement a few years ago," said Beverly Cosham, RCC Board of Governors Chair. "They are carrying forward the work that is unfinished and must be done to make us all truly free."

The inspiring events include special performances by the Reston Community Orchestra, the musical group Liner Notes with "Music of the Movement," as well as community service projects. The Voices of Inspiration Program sponsored by the Reston Martin Luther King, Jr.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER

Bakari Sellers, who will deliver Keynote Address at Reston's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday Celebration on Jan. 20, 2020.

Church hosted by the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation will perform and there will be special activities available for youth

The annual MLK Keynote Speech will be delivered by Bakari Sellers to be followed by the Reston community luncheon. Sellers made history in 2006 when, at 22 years old, he became the youngest member of the South Carolina state legislature. At the time, he was the youngest African-American elected official in the nation. Sellers was named to TIME Magazine's "40 Under 40." He was named to "The Root 100" list of the nation's most influential African-Americans. He is a CNN commentator.

"Bakari Sellers, like so many of the young leaders today in the fight for equity and social justice, is someone whose sense of urgency has compelled him to run for office, to fight for the marginalized, to point out that the unfulfilled promise of the civil rights movement will hobble the nation,"

Where and When

Reston Community Center 2020 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Celebration runs three days; Jan. 18 to 20, 2020. Locations at various Reston venues. Details for the full 3-days of events celebrating Dr. King are at www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-476-4500.

Several highlights include:
Keynote Address by Bakari Sellers at Reston Community Center, Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Event on Monday, Jan. 20, 2020 at 11 a.m. Tickets: \$5 (Reston)/ \$10 (Non-Reston). Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-476-4500 Community luncheon to follow Mr. Sellers' keynote. Liner Notes: "Music of the Movement" — Exploring music inspired by the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s; songs that informed the struggle for universal human rights in America. Reston Community Center, Hunters Woods, CenterStage, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Performance Sunday, Jan. 19, 2020 at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$15 Reston/ \$20 Non-Reston. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-476-4500

noted Reston Community Center Executive Director Leila Gordon. "We chose him because of the clarity of his vision and the power of his call to action."

In an interview Sellers described himself as "a child of The Movement." He plans to focus on Dr. King as "a revolutionary." He will provide "a holistic view of Dr. King ... to challenge listeners to a break away from their normal ways of thinking; to no longer think in silos."

Reston's celebration of Dr. King has events meant to inspire, to think what has been learned, and to consider what more still needs to be accomplished.

A Lecture on 'Strength Through Struggle'

Chabad of Reston - Herndon is inviting area residents to join them in welcoming Mrs. Dina Hurwitz to Reston this Sunday evening, Jan. 12, where she will present a lecture open to the entire community titled "Strength Through Struggle." She has an amazing story to tell, one you will find very inspiring. Proceeds to benefit ALS research.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 15

Teddy Bear Tea Party. 2-4 p.m. At Herndon Community Center, 730 Elden Street, Herndon. Bring your favorite teddy bear or stuffed friend, dress in your tea time best, and enjoy tea, treats, stories, and a special craft. Cost is \$18 per child/adult couple; \$10 per add'l person. Pre-registration required. Visit the website: <https://www.herndon-va.gov/recreation/special-events/teddy-bear-tea-party>.

THURSDAY/JAN. 16

Toddler Storytime — I Want My Hat Back! 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Join in this enchanting tale by Jon Klassen. If you have a special hat, wear it for our storytime. Age 2 with adult. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Magic Tree House Book Club. 4:30 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Read to discuss: Winter of the Ice Wizard by M.P. Osborne. Copies available at the Children's Desk. Grade 3-4. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Details: Sunday, Jan. 12, 6:30 p.m. at Reston Community Center Lake Anne, 1609-A Washington Plaza N, Reston. Suggested Donation: \$18; Evening Sponsorship: \$72; Gold Sponsorship \$180. For more information or to reserve visit www.chabadrh.org/ALS or email rabb@chabadrh.org.

FRIDAY/JAN. 17

Gymboree Music. 10:30 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Discover melody pitch and rhythm while building a repertoire of joyful songs. Cosponsored by FRRL. Age 6-18 months with adult. Please register. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

Gymboree Music II. 11:15 a.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Dance and sing to a new musical style each month, including Latin, Rock 'n' Roll and Classical. Cosponsored by FRRL. Age 18-24 months with adult. Please register. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

JAN. 17 TO FEB. 1

Ken Ludwig's "The Game's Afoot." 8 p.m. At Reston Community's CenterStage, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. The Reston Community Players presents this murder-mystery comedy featuring real-life 1930s Broadway star William Gillette, admired the world over for playing Sherlock Holmes. Mystery and hilarity in equal parts ensue in this murderously funny whodunit production that will keep you guessing until the

final curtain. Tickets: \$28/adult, \$24/seniors and students. Performance Dates: Jan. 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 30, Feb. 1. Tickets at www.restonplayers.org.

SATURDAY/JAN. 18

Reston Festival: Lunar New Year. 1 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston. Celebrate Lunar New Year with the library and the Northern Virginia Experimental Chinese School. Festivities for all ages will include crafts, games, and performances. All Ages. No registration required. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/reston-regional>

MLK Tribute. 4-5:30 p.m. At Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through Negro Spirituals performed by Jasmine Marshall Lizama, Bryan Jackson, and Beverly Cosham. Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech performed by students from Al Fatih Academy. Free admission. Visit the website: <http://www.restoncommunityorchestra.org>

Curator's Talk and Opening Reception. 4-6 p.m. At Greater Reston Arts Center. For the exhibit Moira Dryer: Yours for the Taking, which runs Jan. 18–April 18. GRACE will present a selection of works by artist Moira Dryer (b. 1957, Toronto, Ontario; d. 1992, New York, NY) in conjunction with the major exhibition of Dryer's early work at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., entitled Moira Dryer: Back in Business. Both exhibitions are curated by GRACE Executive Director and Curator Lily Siegel. Dryer is primarily known for her large abstract paintings on wood panel.

Country-Western Dance. At Galilee United Methodist Church, 45425 Winding Road, Sterling. The Northern Virginia Country-Western Dance Association will hold a dance. Lessons, 6-7 p.m. Open dancing, 7-9:30 p.m. A DJ provides music. Couples and singles of all ages welcome. Visit the website www.nvcwda.org.