

# The Arlington Connection

## Yorktown Alums Create Tool to Track Corona Virus

NEWS, PAGE 3

Soukarya Ghosh, Yorktown alum and UVA student, developed [www.TrackCorona.live](http://www.TrackCorona.live) with three other Yorktown alums.

## WELLBEING

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## Parishioners and Tree Stewards Save Tall, Handsome Neighbors

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

MARCH 4-10, 2020

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## Monte Carlo Night for Junior League

**T**he Junior League of Northern Virginia is putting on our 4th Annual Monte Carlo Night on Friday, March 6.

Try your hand at casino night featuring gaming favorites, open bar, hors d'oeuvres, dancing and a chance to win. There will also be a raffle for great prizes and an exclusive silent auction.

Proceeds from the event support the JLN's ongoing efforts to improve the Northern Virginia community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers and educational programming. Come on out and party for a good cause.

Tickets are on sale until March 4. Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/events/212135279818920/>

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## Yorktown Grads at UVA Develop Coronavirus Tracker

Former Yorktown classmates now at Stanford and Virginia Tech join in the massive undertaking.

BY ASHLEY SIMPSON  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

It all started with a school-wide email alert that students Soukarya Ghosh and James Yun received from the University of Virginia's administration: the 2019 coronavirus (COVID-19) hadn't yet claimed any American lives, but, there were no guarantees — or any cure in sight for this severe respiratory tract disease.

"We realized we knew almost nothing about this global epidemic, so we seized the opportunity and decided to start working on an informative platform that is as accurate as possible and accessible to everyone," Ghosh, a third-year student at UVA, said. "This is a human-to-human transmitted virus, so it would be ideal if the public are informed about the tendencies of the virus, as well as the urgency of it. Being able to have a centralized hub where they can find all the information about the virus, as well as be able to visualize the data in intuitive ways, helps with this."

So Ghosh and Yun, both Yorktown High School alumni and current Computer Science majors, got to work on an online live coronavirus tracker — TrackCorona ([www.trackcorona.live](http://www.trackcorona.live)). Having launched in early February, TrackCorona is not only one of the first virtual tools of its kind, but it is also one that gives a comprehensive view of COVID-19.

"Our main purpose is to inform people correctly, and for there to be a central hub to populate information with reliable and verified sources," Ghosh explained. "We came across a lot of misinformation about the state of COVID-19, so we want people to have a central source to get correct information. We also want to differentiate ourselves in being more than just a dashboard of uncontextualized numbers. Instead, people need to understand what the numbers mean with respect to past outbreaks."

Currently, when visitors pull up TrackCorona, they immediately see a dashboard that shows all the pertinent information about COVID-19 cases worldwide: the number of occurrences, deaths, and recoveries. The information, updated hourly, is



Yorktown alums Soukarya Ghosh and James Yun at UVA.



Austin Stout, a junior at Virginia Tech, and Yorktown alum.



Bilguunzaya Battogtokh, a junior at Stanford, and Yorktown alum.

broken down in a few ways, too — with a worldwide map, as well as numbers as percentages, by country, and through charts and graphs.

Less than five minutes on the site, and you'll clearly see that there have been nearly 90,000 confirmed cases (as of Monday,

nearly 99 percent have also been in China.

In addition to these fast facts, the site also provides overarching information about the coronavirus alongside summaries of symptoms, tips for avoiding contraction, and updates about ongoing treatment and research.

**"Many people don't have the time to read through all the latest reports, so we prioritize displaying this information in digestible chunks perfect for a quick read."**

—James Yun

March 2) among 54 (out of 195) countries. Those affected have overwhelmingly been in China — accounting for more than 97 percent of confirmed cases — where this coronavirus was first identified. Of the more than 2,800 lives claimed by COVID-19,

important for those who travel overseas. Spending a little more time on the site, users can read up on a curated list of notable events in the virus' history and even quiz themselves on some of the common misconceptions about COVID-19. We aim for

TrackCorona to be the information hub for COVID-19, providing a wide range of insightful visualizations and statistics on a single site."

As to whether knowledge is power or a recipe for mass hysteria, Ghosh and Yun insist that this constantly updating information is empowering — so long as it's unequivocally accurate.

"With the coronavirus having big numbers, like more than 80,000 confirmed cases and more than one thousand deaths, we wanted to diminish hysteria and present pertinent information through smart data analysis," Ghosh said. "We do not want the public to be unnecessarily alarmed. ... However, we want people to acknowledge the threat it may pose in the near future and be sufficiently prepared for it. Our goal is to raise awareness and be as informative as possible, without causing mass hysteria, so people can be smarter about hygiene and daily tasks."

As they got the ball rolling, Ghosh and Yun quickly realized that they needed more brain and manpower to fuel their live tracker site.

"Two days into development, we realized we needed more hands on deck and decided to invite our friends Bilguunzaya Battogtokh, a junior at Stanford, and Austin Stout, a junior at Virginia Tech," Ghosh said. "We caught them up with the progress and the mission, and they were immediately on board with the idea and ready to start contributing. And, while we have had experience working together in high school physics labs, this is the first project where all four of us have worked on an end-to-end web application together. ... It has been nostalgic reconnecting with them on this level and the chemistry is still as strong as ever as we all settled into the workflow within a few days."

Despite juggling demanding course loads and all the other commitments that college students these days take on, these four Yorktown alumni have put together something for people all over the world.

"What began as a pet project quickly turned into a social mission," Yun said "As the concern for the coronavirus grew, so did the need for a site like TrackCorona. The website was well received by the community and featured in various news articles, public radio, and television interviews. This recognition helped propel TrackCorona's exposure. As of February 28th, TrackCorona has over 30,000 visitors from over 140 different countries and continues to grow dramatically. With the rise in popularity came increased operating costs, but TrackCorona continues to run on the generous support of the University and donors."

This innovative college quartet has found collaboration with each other invaluable, and ideas have also come out of feedback

SEE TRACKCORONA.LIVE. PAGE 6

ARLINGTON CONNECTION ♦ MARCH 4-10, 2020 ♦ 3



# TLC for Trees at Trinity Presbyterian Church Arlington

Parishioners and Tree Stewards pair up to save tall, handsome neighbors.

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

It's not often Arlingtonians get to save a tall, handsome neighbor from a slow and agonizing death. But that is what about 20 parishioners of the Trinity Presbyterian Church on North 16th Street, along with Tree Stewards and Master Gardeners, did on Saturday. Their neighbors were the trees in the church's grounds - many of them choking to death from an English Ivy infestation.

The effort at the church was spearheaded by Diane Allard and Romana Campos. Trinity recently signed on to become an "Earth Care Congregation."

"It's basically a commitment to use the resources we have wisely and take good care of what we have," said Allard. "We have a number of members who are com-

mitted to the environment in professional and other ways."

The ivy clean-up and mulching took two shifts of workers - with food and coffee in between - on what turned out to be one of the coldest days of the winter. "I like it cold like this," said a relatively new tree steward, Jenny Johns. "It's better than working in the heat of the summer." Johns said she became a tree steward because she doesn't have a yard, but loves nature, and this gives her a chance to work in a garden and give something back to the environment.

"This project is typical of our church," said St. Pierre. "We do positive things through projects like this and get involved in the community; it's what I like about Trinity."

For more information about tree stewards or Trinity Church, see: [www.treestewards.org](http://www.treestewards.org) and <http://www.trinityarlington.org>



PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

Nora Palmatier- who is present at almost every tree steward event - helped yank ivy, handed out vests and tools, encouraged the group, and applauded the idea of blowing a bugle when the tree is completed, a novel idea she might start using with all her ivy removal projects.



Jim St. Pierre and Geoff Townsend dig into the immense mulch pile. By the end of the day, the pile was gone, and the trees were clean and cared for.



Jenny Johns, a tree steward for the past year, tackles ivy while another "tree steward" named "Juno" helps out nearby.

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# TrackCorona.live Developed by Yorktown Grads

FROM PAGE 3

from people who have visited the site.

“Opening ourselves up to feedback is how we got the idea to build a predictive model, which we are working on with UVA researchers,” Ghosh said. “We realized that what we have is a golden opportunity to have a tangible impact on the world. Even if we can educate and help one person avoid being infected, we would consider ourselves successful. We want to cater to the people that use our website for information, so any and all criticism is openly welcomed. If there are any suggestions and collaboration ideas, please do not hesitate to reach out.”

Ghosh, Yun, Battogtokh, and Stout have big plans for this site, even after the world has conquered the coronavirus. It will likely be a platform that these four Yorktown alums will be working with even when they become alums of their respective universities.

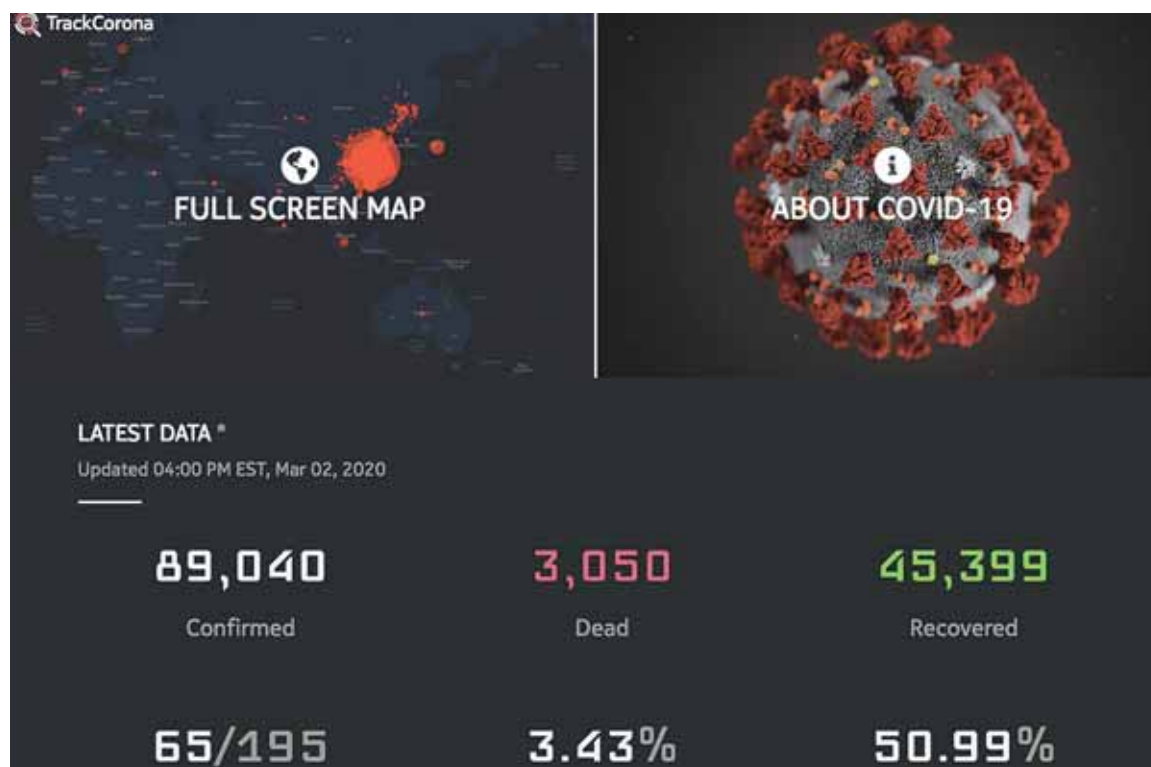


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

“We have short term goals which include improving certain features, having more outreach, and informing more people,” Ghosh

said. “However, we also have long term visions of making this solution modular with respect to any global catastrophes. We realize

there is a market need for trackers like this and a central hub where people can get information from. However, these goals are far

“We came across a lot of misinformation about the state of COVID-19, so we want people to have a central source to get correct information.”

— Soukarya Ghosh

off in the future, so right now we are focused on optimization of the website and creating more accessible visuals to give people more perspective on the epidemic.”

To learn more, and to contact the TrackCorona team, visit the site at [www.trackcorona.live](http://www.trackcorona.live).

## FLOURISHING AFTER 55

### Flourishing After 55 from Arlington's Office of 55+

55+ Centers: Lee, 5722 Lee Hwy.; Langston-Brown Senior Center, 2121 N. Culpeper St.; Walter Reed, 2909 S. 16<sup>th</sup> St.; Arlington Mill, 909 S. Dinwiddie St.; Aurora Hills, 735 S. 18<sup>th</sup> St.

#### 55+ Center Adult

**Transportation**, pre-arranged taxicabs to and from Centers, \$5 round trip. Details, 703-892-8747.

#### 55+ Travel :

National Theatre, D.C., “Bandstand,” matinee, Saturday, Mar. 7, \$120. P.J. Skiddos, Fairfax, Sunday, Mar. 8, \$8 (trans. only); Renwick Gallery, D.C., Tuesday, Mar. 10, \$6; Riverside Center, Fredericksburg, “Grease,” matinee, Wednesday, Mar. 11, \$69 (incl. lunch); Amazon Fulfillment Center tour, Baltimore, Friday, Mar. 13, \$8. Berkeley and Shirley Plantations, Charles City, VA, Monday, Mar. 23, \$68 (includes lunch); Horseshoe Casino, Baltimore, Friday, Mar. 27, \$9. Call Arlington County 55+ Travel, 703-228-4748. Registration required.

#### NEW PROGRAMS: 3/1-7/20

**Photography** interest group meets Sundays, 3-5 p.m., Arlington Mill. Details, 703-228-7369.

**Bocce games**, Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30

p.m., Walter Reed. Details, 703-228-0955.

**Ukelele strumming class**, Tuesday, Mar. 3, 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, Mar. 4, 11 a.m., Walter Reed. Details, 703-228-0955.

**Local history** group to discuss Arlington Trolleys, Wednesday, Mar. 4, 12:30 p.m., Lee. Details, 703-228-0555.

**Intro to line dancing**, Wednesday, Mar. 4, 11:30 a.m., Aurora Hills. Register, 703-228-5722.

**Arlington Walking Club** to walk along the C&O Canal, D.C., Wednesday, Mar. 4, 9:30 a.m., \$4. Register, 703-228-4771.

**Beaded bunch** repurposes old costume jewelry, Thursday, Mar. 5, 1 p.m., Lee. Details, 703-228-0555.

**Arlington Mill Trekkers**, Thursday, Mar. 5, 9 a.m., Details, 703-228-7369.

**Basic drawing class**, bring unlined 5.5x8.5 sketchbook, Friday, Mar. 6, 1 p.m., Aurora Hills. Register, 703-228-5722.

**Volunteer storytellers** (Arlington Spellbinders), Friday, Mar. 6, 9:30 a.m., Langston-Brown. Newcomers welcome. Details, 703-228-6300.

**Traveling through Japan** with Lowell Nelson, Friday, Mar. 6, 11 a.m., Aurora Hills. Details, 703-228-5722.

**Ballroom Dance**, Friday, March 6, 1-3 p.m., Lee. Details, 703-228-0555.

**Lee Walkers** to walk in LBJ Park, Arl., Friday, Mar. 6, 10 a.m., \$4. Register, 703-228-4771.

**Fast paced walkers**, Friday, Mar. 6, 9 a.m., Aurora Hills. Details, 703-228-5722.

#### NEW PROGRAMS: 3/8-14/20

**Mexican artists Kahlo and Rivera**, Monday, Mar. 9, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., \$6, Aurora Hills. Register, 703-228-5722.

**Stay Active and Independent for Life (S.A.I.L.)**, begin Monday, Mar. 9, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill. 24 sessions, free. Register, 703-228-7369.

**Practice badminton, billiards, bocce, croquet and table tennis** for Senior Olympics, Walter Reed. Free to 55+ members. Call for days and times, 703-228-0955.

**Pickleball, absolute beginners**, Mondays, 9-10 a.m., Arlington Mill; 9:45-10:30 a.m., Walter Reed. Details, 703-228-7369 (AM), 703-228-0955 (WR).

**Healthy ways to eat potatoes**, Tuesday, Mar. 10, 1:30 p.m., Lee. Details, 703-228-0555.

**History roundtable topic**, How U.S. State boundaries were Formed, Tuesday, Mar. 10, 11:15 a.m., Lee. Details, 703-228-0555.

**Origami class**, Tuesday, Mar. 10, 10 a.m.-noon, Arlington Mill. Register, 703-228-7369.

**Two Arlington women who worked to achieve school desegregation**, Wednesday, Mar. 11, 11 a.m., Aurora Hills. Details, 703-228-5722.

**Springtime quilling workshop**, Wednesday, Mar. 11, 1-2:30 p.m., \$18/1 session, Lee. Supplies provided. Register, 703-228-0555.

**Arlington Walking Club** to walk along the SW Waterfront, D.C., Wednesday, Mar. 11, 9:30 a.m., \$4. Register, 703-228-4771.

**Women's Rights Monument, Belmont-Paul House, D.C.**, Thursday, Mar. 12, 11 a.m., Lee. Details, 703-228-0555.

**Stroke prevention**, Thursday, Mar. 12, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown. Presented by Dr. Edward Allcock, DO, Virginia Hospital Center's Inpatient Rehab Center. Register, 703-228-6300.

**Overview of ride sharing apps**, Uber and Lyft, Thursday, Mar. 12, 11 a.m., Arlington Mill. Details, 703-228-7369.

**Arlington Mill Trekkers**, Thursday, Mar. 12, 9 a.m., Details, 703-228-7369.

SEE FLOURISHING, PAGE 7

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

### WEDNESDAY/MARCH 11

**EcoAction Arlington Meeting**, 6:30-9 p.m. At Washington-Liberty High School Cafeteria, 1301 N. Stafford St., Arlington. Speakers will provide an overview of the biophilic cities concept and a preview of Arlington's plan for integrating the natural world into our community as we develop, grow, and thrive. Featuring local and regional organizations, agencies, and companies whose work focuses on biophilia, nature education, and connecting people to the natural world. The reception will be followed by an overview of programming for 2020, the election of the board of directors, and the featured presentations.

### SATURDAY/MARCH 28

**Getting Back on Track:** Your Questions about Living in a Community Association Answered. 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. At Fairlington Community Center, 3308 S Stafford St, Arlington. Call 703-746-4990, email Brandi D. Collins at [brandi.collins@alexandriava.gov](mailto:brandi.collins@alexandriava.gov).

### DONATIONS

The **Arlington Food Assistance Center** seeks local gardeners and farmers willing to grow and donate fresh produce to the AFAC food pantry for local families in need as part of the Plot Against Hunger program. Each week, approximately 2,400 client families visit AFAC to pick up supplemental groceries and fresh fruits and vegetables are in high demand. AFAC will provide free vegetable seeds to those who pledge to donate produce from community or personal gardens. Visit <https://afac.org/plot-against-hunger> or contact [puwen.lee@afac.org](mailto:puwen.lee@afac.org) or 703-845-8486. Seeds are available now at AFAC, 2708 S. Nelson St., during regular business hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Saturdays 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Produce can also be donated at AFAC at the hours listed above or at:

afac.org/plot-against-hunger or contact [puwen.lee@afac.org](mailto:puwen.lee@afac.org) or 703-845-8486. Seeds are available now at AFAC, 2708 S. Nelson St., during regular business hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Saturdays 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Produce can also be donated at AFAC at the hours listed above or at:

- ❖ Arlington Courthouse Farmer's Market, Saturdays 8 a.m.-noon (look for the AFAC cooler near the Master Gardener information table).
- ❖ Rock Springs UCC Church, 5010 Little Falls Road, Sundays 9 a.m.-noon only. (Look for the donation bin on the Rock Spring Drive side of the church).

**Pet Food Bank.** AWLA is establishing a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit [goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYwDZm4tPw2](http://goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYwDZm4tPw2).

### GET MORE WITH SNAP

**Arlington and Alexandria Farmers' Markets** accept SNAP/ EBT (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) cards for purchases. SNAP/EBT customers can purchase farm fresh produce at local area farmers' markets and get matching bonus tokens to add to their purchases. Virginia Cooperative will be on-site at several local farmers' markets of Alexandria and Arlington to provide more information on SNAP and offer food tastings, prizes and more at the Arlington Farmers' Market, N. 14th and Courthouse Road (second Saturday of the month) and

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)







# ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at [www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/). The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

## ONGOING

**Virginia Hospital Center Fitness Classes.** Begins March 9. Virginia Hospital Center conducts fitness classes for all ages and abilities — so take the first step to improve your strength, flexibility or balance. Visit [www.virginiahospitalcenter.com/healthy](http://www.virginiahospitalcenter.com/healthy) to view the full schedule and register online. If you need guidance, call the Health Promotion Department at 703-558-6740.

**Registration Open for AAC's Summer Camps.** At Arlington Arts Center, 3550 Wilson Blvd, Arlington. Thematic and technique-focused camps return this summer for children and teens, ages 5-18. Campers explore the fundamentals of the visual arts through creative projects in various two- and three-dimensional media. Line, color, shape, texture, space, and form will all be emphasized through creative projects based on campers' observations and imaginations. AAC's camps meet weekly, Monday-Friday, from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1:30-4 p.m. Families have the option to participate in one or both sessions of camps that meet during the week. For families interested in the full day option, add the morning and afternoon camp sessions to your shopping cart. Extended day options are detailed below. Call 703-248-6800 or email [information@arlingtonartscenter.org](mailto:information@arlingtonartscenter.org) or visit the website: [www.arlingtonartscenter.org](http://www.arlingtonartscenter.org).

**Easy Women Smoking Loose Cigarettes.** Now thru March 29. At Signature Theatre, 4200 Campbell Ave., Arlington. The latest Heidi Thomas Writers' Initiative is a surprising comedy about opening your home, occasionally your wallet, and always your heart. Marian, the matriarch of a far-flung Jewish family, had happily settled into retirement life with her new husband Richard. However, when a pregnant niece, the troubled boy next door and a distressed daughter with a secret show up at her door, Marian's empty nest ends up a little fuller than she imagined. This firecracker play by DC area playwright Dani Stoller takes the dysfunction, puts it back in the family, then gives it a hilarious-and subversive-stir.

Contains sexual content and herbal smoking. Visit the website: <https://www.sigtheatre.org/events/201920/easy-women-smoking-loose-cigarettes/>

**Forty+ Dance Project.** Now thru March 10. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At Theatre on the Run, 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive, Arlington. Forty+ celebrates the collective creativity of people past the age of 40. Each project features a different choreographer and results in a unique tapestry of collaboration. Forty+ is frequently seen in concerts presented by Jane Franklin Dance and for organizations serving older adults. This project culminates with a performance at Theatre on the Run on April 25, 2020. The project is open to people of all physical facilities. No previous performance experience is necessary. Cost is \$160. Visit the website: <https://www.janefranklin.com/adult-dance/forty-plus>

## WEDNESDAY/MARCH 4

**Northern Virginia Bird Club Walk.** 8:30 - 11 a.m. At Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Join members of the Northern Virginia Bird Club for



**The Junior League of Northern Virginia hosts Monte Carlo Night on Friday, March 6.**

## Monte Carlo Night

Friday/March 6, 8-11 p.m. At Army Navy Country Club of Arlington, 1700 Army Navy Drive, Arlington. Dress to the nines, put on your poker face and get your tickets! Try your hand at gaming favorites, enjoy beer, wine, signature cocktails, light hors d'oeuvres, and plenty of dancing. Feeling lucky? Enter our raffle to win great prizes and visit our exclusive silent auction. Proceeds from the event support the JLVN's ongoing efforts to improve the Northern Virginia community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers and educational programming. Come on out and party for a good cause. To purchase tickets, visit <https://www.jlnv.org/montecarlonight/>

informal walks through Glencarlynn Park in search of resident and migratory birds. Experienced and beginning birders welcomed. Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Call 703-228-6535.

**Coffee and Conversation.** 10-11 a.m. At Westover Market & Beer Garden, 5863 Washington Blvd., Arlington. Former Washington Post columnist Bob Levey will discuss "The Golden Era at The Washington Post" and also his new novel, Larry Felder, Candidate. Everyone is invited to join the conversation. Bring your own coffee, learn interesting things about our community and hear from the speakers listed below.

## THURSDAY/MARCH 5

**Grow What You Eat.** 7 – 8:30 p.m. At Arlington Mill Community Center, 909 S. Dinwiddie Street, Arlington. Learn easy to implement practices for selecting a site, evaluating and improving your soil. We will discuss which plants grow best locally, which are best planted as seeds and which are typically transplanted as seedlings. Discover how to attract pollinators and other beneficial insects while identifying and managing pests, weeds and diseases. Get free seeds and a vegetable garden calendar customized for our region. This class is offered by Extension Master Gardeners. Free. Advance registration requested at [mgnv.org](mailto:mgnv.org). Questions? Telephone 703-228-6414 or email [mgarialex@gmail.com](mailto:mgarialex@gmail.com).

## SATURDAY/MARCH 7

**Fort C.F. Smith Park Walking Tour.** 9 - 10 a.m. At Fort C.F. Smith Park & Historic Site, 2411 N. 24th Street, Arlington. Families ages 7 and up. Register children and adults; children must be accompanied by a registered adult. Fort C.F. Smith was one of the last Union forts built to

protect Washington during the Civil War. We'll learn about the park's history, the role of the fort and the soldiers stationed there in the Civil War. Dress for the weather. Terrain will be uneven and possibly muddy. For information: 703-228-4775.

**Service Project/Outreach Leader Training.** 10 a.m. - noon. At Fairlington Community Center, 3308 S Stafford St., Arlington. Are you interested in getting more involved with EcoAction Arlington? Would you like to learn how to lead outdoor service projects from start to finish or be an EcoAction Arlington ambassador for outreach events? Then take the Outreach Leader Training.

**Spring Garden Kick Off.** 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. At Arlington Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy Street, Arlington. Plot Against Hunger 6th Annual Spring Garden Kick-Off. Learn how you can support our partner, the Arlington Food Assistance Center, with fresh produce donations from your garden or community plot. There will be growing tips for new and experienced gardeners. Hear from community garden coordinators about lessons learned. Join a team that harvests bamboo for garden structures. So much more at <https://afac.org/afac-events/plot-against-hunger-spring-garden-kick-off-2020/>.

**Animal Art: Deer.** 10-11 a.m. At Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Ages 6 to 12. Learn the distinguishing features of male and female White-tailed deer and draw them in their late winter habitats. Drawing supplies will be provided, but participants are welcome to bring their own. Call 703-228-6535. Cost is \$5.

**Civil War Discoveries: Infantry Drills.** 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. At Fort C.F. Smith Park & Historic Site, 2411 N. 24th Street, Arlington. Ages 7 to 11. We'll drill like Union soldiers by practicing our marches and turns, as well as how to "load in nine times" with replica wood rifles. Call 703-

228-4775. Meet at Fort C.F. Smith Park. Cost is \$

**Civil War Discoveries: Artillery Drills.** 1-2 p.m. At Fort C.F. Smith Park & Historic Site, 2411 N. 24th Street, Arlington. Ages 7 to 11. Work as a team practicing the steps to load and aim a replica Civil War cannon. We'll talk about different types of artillery and put our skills to the test. For information: 703-228-4775. Cost is \$5.

**Vanishing Vernal Pools.** 2 - 3 p.m. At Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Families age 6 and up. Register children and adults; children must be accompanied by a registered adult. For wood frogs, spring peepers and spotted salamanders, spring comes early! They lay eggs in pools that dry out by summer, so they need to start the next generation before the last frost. We'll meet these animals up close, then look for them and their eggs in our vernal pool. Cost is \$5. Call 703-228-6535.

## SUNDAY/MARCH 8

**Drawing in Nature.** 3 - 4 p.m. At Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. Families ages 5 and up. Register children and adults; children must be accompanied by a registered adult. Join us for lessons in nature drawing and art. We'll construct our own nature art journals, hone our drawing skills and talk about the season while connecting with nature on a hike. For information: 703-228-6535.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 18

**32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup.** 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Hosted by the Alice Ferguson Foundation, 2001 Bryan Point Rd, Accokeek. The Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup has become a catalyst for progress that ignites people's interest and passion for the environment and community action. The largest regional event of its kind, the Cleanup provides a transforming experience that engages residents and community leaders and generates momentum for change. The Potomac River Watershed Cleanup has grown from a small shoreline cleanup at Piscataway National Park to a watershed wide network. What started as a few cleanup events along the Potomac River is now a regional event spanning Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. If you can't make this date or location check out [PotomacCleanup.org](http://PotomacCleanup.org) to find another cleanup near you.

## MORE ONGOING

**Arlington Historical Museum.** Wednesdays, 12:30-3:30 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays, 1-4 p.m. Arlington Historical Museum, owned and operated by the Arlington Historical Society, is located at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road. The two-story brick structure was built in 1891 as the Hume School, named for Frank Hume who gave some of the property for the school. It is the oldest school building in Arlington County.

Now a museum, it houses permanent and temporary local history exhibits ranging from pre-1607 to Sept. 11, 2001. Visit [arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](http://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org).

**Civil War Historical Display.** Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Fort C.F. Smith Park Visitor Center, 2411 24th St. N. The New Fort C.F. Smith Park Visitor Center features displays about Union soldiers and the Defenses of Washington between 1861 and 1865. Artifacts from archaeological studies from Forts Ethan Allen and C.F.

Smith are on display. Kids can try on replica Civil War uniforms and learn about camp life. Visit [parks.arlingtonva.us/locations/fort-cf-smith-park/](http://parks.arlingtonva.us/locations/fort-cf-smith-park/).

**Arlington Farmers Market.** Every Saturday, 8 a.m.-noon at the corner of N. 14th Street and N. Courthouse Road. A weekly celebration of local food including fresh produce, meats, dairy, cheese, baked goods, free range eggs, specialty items, cut flowers, plants and herbs. Email [csingiser@cfwdc.org](mailto:csingiser@cfwdc.org) or call 917-733-6402.

**FRESHFARM Market.** 3-7 p.m. on Tuesdays at 1900 Crystal Drive. Shop from local farmers and producers with seasonal fruits and vegetables, fresh-cut flowers, container plants and herbs, farm-raised eggs, all-natural meats, artisan baked goods, and specialty foods. Visit [www.crystallcity.org](http://www.crystallcity.org) for more.

**Mobile Bike Repair.** 8 a.m.-3 p.m. on Thursdays at 1900 Crystal Drive. Drop off your bike on Thursday morning and have it tuned up and ready to ride before heading home. Email [DC@velofix.com](mailto:DC@velofix.com), or phone 855-VELO-FIX for more.

**Food Truck Thursdays.** 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at 1900 Crystal Drive and 201 12th St. Actual truck schedules are subject to change so be sure to follow your favorites. Visit [www.crystallcity.org](http://www.crystallcity.org) for more.

**Healthy Lifestyle Runs.** Saturdays, 9 a.m. at Roosevelt Island, George Washington Memorial Parkway. American Cancer Society partners with parkrun USA to promote fitness in the fight against cancer. Free. Visit [www.parkrun.us/rooseveltislanddc/](http://www.parkrun.us/rooseveltislanddc/) for more.

**Friday Night Live.** 8 p.m. Fridays at the Church at Clarendon, 1210 N. Highland St., Suite A. Local musicians perform. Free. Visit [1bc.org](http://1bc.org) for more.

**Arlington's Historical Museum Open on First Wednesdays.** The Arlington Historical Museum is open to the public on the first Wednesday of every month from 12:30-3:30 p.m. The museum consists of exhibits chronicling Arlington County's history from Native American settlements up to the present day. The museum will continue to be open on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m. Admission is free. The museum is located in the former 1891 Hume School building at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road. Visit [arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](http://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org).

**Open Mic Comedy.** Wednesdays 8-10 p.m. at Ri Ra Irish Pub, 2915 Wilson Blvd. Doors open at 7 p.m. Age 21 and up only. Free show, \$25 cash prize for best joke. Call 703-248-9888 or Visit [www.RiRa.com/](http://www.RiRa.com/) Arlington for more.

**Invasive Plants Removal.** Work parties are held every month to keep the parks free of destructive invasive plants. Teens, adults and families welcome. Every second Sunday of the month 2-4:30 p.m. at Gulf Branch Nature Center, 3608 Military Road; call 703-228-3403. Every third Sunday of the month 2-5 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road; call 703-228-6535 or visit [registration.arlingtonva.us](http://registration.arlingtonva.us). Free, no registration required.

**Karaoke.** 8 p.m. on the first Sunday every month at Galaxy Hut, 2711 Wilson Blvd. Visit [www.galaxyhut.com](http://www.galaxyhut.com) or call 703-525-8646.

**Pub Quiz.** 8 p.m. every Sunday at Whitlow's on Wilson, 2854 Wilson Blvd. Prizes for first place. Free. Visit [www.whitlows.com](http://www.whitlows.com) or call 703-276-9693.

**Storytime.** Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:30-11 a.m. at Kinder Haus Toys, 1220 N. Fillmore St. Storytime with Ms. Laura. Call 703-527-5929.



# Inflicting Pain to Gain Relief

Self Injury Awareness Month is a time to learn about the condition and erase the stigma.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**M**arch is self-injury prevention month, a time when mental health professionals work to raise awareness of the condition, recognize the signs and work to remove the stigma. Known by clinicians as non-suicidal self-injury, the behavior is described as intentionally harming oneself without intending to end one's life. The population most likely to engage in self-harm behaviors range from middle school through college, according to the American Psychological Association.

"When teens begin engaging in cutting behavior it is typically because they are feeling overwhelmed by intense feelings or emotions and don't have the coping skills to manage or respond to how they feel, said therapist Carol Barnaby, MSW, LCSW.

"Adolescents might self-injure to distract themselves from intense negative emotions of sadness or anger, or emotional numbness, added Jerome Short, Ph.D., Associate Profes-

**"Self-injury may be a sign of depression, anxiety, substance use, or post-traumatic stress disorders."**

— **Jerome Short, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology at George Mason University**

sor of Psychology at George Mason University. "They may also want to punish themselves or express a need for help."

Cuts and burns on the wrists or thighs are among the most common signs of self-injury. "Parents may notice their children have unexplained cuts, burns, or bruises," said Short. "Adolescents may wear clothing or bracelets to cover themselves even in very warm settings. Parents may find knives or razors in their children's rooms or notice they are missing from the home."

"Other signs that your child may be cutting include marks on the skin from scratching, using a paper clip or skin picking, advises Barnaby. "Multiple similar marks on the skin in close proximity for which your child has no explanation," said Barnaby.

While cutting and burning oneself causes pain initially, that pain can evolve into relief. "Sometimes cutting can be habit-forming or become compulsive, said Barnaby. "This in simple terms, means that the more the person cuts the more they feel the need to do it and their brain associates cutting with relief."

Teens might turn to self-injury as a way of regulating their emotions. "For teens who are feeling a lot of strong and intense emotions,



**Stacie Isenberg**



**Jerome Short**

self-harming releases the body's natural opiates and endorphins that help them manage their feelings," said Joanne Bagshaw, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Montgomery College. "On the flip side, a teen who is shut down or who feels numb might self-harm to feel their feelings. Alternatively, self-harm may be for the teen to communicate that they need help."

Several factors might trigger self-inflicted injuries. "Childhood abuse and conflicted parental relationships may trigger self-injury," said Short. "Self-injury may be a sign of depression, anxiety, substance use, or post-traumatic stress disorders."

Parents who suspect that their child might be engaging in intentional self-injury should avoid criticism and seek mental health treatment. "Parents should not ignore the problem," said Short. "If children engage in life threatening behavior, they should take them to a hospital."

Noticing those marks, however, could require careful attention. "Teens who self-injure often hide the marks that self-injury might cause," said Child Psychologist Stacie Isenberg, Psy. D. "For example, they may wear a long-sleeved shirt in hot weather if there are marks on their arms or multiple bracelets if there are marks on their wrists."

"If parents feel that their teen is engaging in self-harm behaviors they should show compassion for their child and get help, added Barnaby. "Self-harm behavior is very treatable with early intervention."

**"Self-harm behavior is very treatable with early intervention."**

— **Carol Barnaby, LCSW**

## Arlington County Board Advertises No 2020 Real Estate Tax Rate Increase

**S**hould the Arlington County Board adopt the current tax rate and other proposed fee increases as expected, the average Arlington homeowner would see their fees and taxes increase by \$376 from what they paid in FY 2020, based on a home value of \$686,300.

The Arlington County Board, citing increased assessments and increased revenues, voted not to increase the real estate tax rate for Calendar Year 2021.

The Board voted 4-0 to advertise a tax rate of \$1.013 per \$100 of assessed value for Calendar Year 2020 (\$1.026 including stormwater). By law, the Board can adopt a tax rate no higher than the advertised rate, although it may adopt a lower rate.

With no increase in the property tax rate, the County expects \$51.1 million in additional ongoing revenue.

"The Board appreciates that the Manager has followed our guidance and proposed a budget that is able to provide more funding for affordable housing, schools, and stormwater management, and restore some cuts made during the worst of the Great Recession, with no increase in the real estate tax rate," Arlington County Board Chair Libby Garvey said. "Now it is the Board's turn to carefully review the budget, hear from the public, and work with Schools to close their expected budget gap."

"This year's higher assessments mean that even without an increase in the tax rate, most homeowners still would see the biggest jump in their real estate taxes since 2016," Garvey said. "Facing that reality, we will certainly be looking for ways to adopt a lower rate than what we have advertised today when we finalize the budget in April."

### Proposed Fee Increases

The Board approved advertising all tax rates at the current rate, along with increases to several fees after the Manager formally presented his proposed \$1.40 billion General Fund Fiscal Year 2021 Budget. The Manager's proposed budget

includes a 2.9 percent increase in ongoing and one-time spending over FY 2020.

Close to 40 percent of the proposed budget (\$550 million) would fund Arlington Public Schools (APS).

In November 2019, the Manager projected no budget gap with revenue growth of three to four percent for FY 2021. The Manager cited increased real estate assessments, growth in business taxes, and cost efficiencies as helping to improve the County's overall financial picture, but cautioned that spending pressures are coming from Metro, affordable housing, employee compensation, stormwater, and schools.

### Next Steps

The Board will review the Manager's proposed budget through a series of work sessions with the Manager, County departments and County advisory commissions in the coming weeks.

The work sessions will be held in the County Board Room on the third floor of the Ellen M. Bozman Government Center, 2100 Clarendon Blvd. All work sessions are open to the public and will be live-streamed on the County website and broadcast on the County's cable channel.

The Board will hold a public hearing on the budget at 7 p.m. on March 31. You can sign up to speak at this hearing from 8 a.m. five days in advance.

The Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed tax rate at 7 p.m. on April 2. You can sign up sign-up online to speak at this hearing from 8 a.m. five days in advance.

Both hearings will be held in the Board Room and will be live-streamed on the County website.

The Board will adopt the FY 2020 Budget at its April meeting. The FY 2020 fiscal year begins July 1, 2020. To view the Manager's complete FY 2021 Budget proposal, visit the County website.

To submit a comment on the proposed budget, email the Board at [CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us](mailto:CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us).



**Employment**

**SENIOR MANAGER-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT.** (Arlington, VA) Leads Regional Admin Org (HQ) team supporting Admin Teams across Regional Distribution Centers (RDC), ensuring admin processes adhere to country standard operations procedures & Lidl's int'l standards. Resp editing, reviewing, & updating regional admin processes & procedures, job aides, & training materials w/other teams, incl Sales, Logistics, IT, Supply Chain, Controlling, & Accounting. Travel req'd less than 25% of the time. Resume to: Lidl US Operations, LLC Attn: Henar Marron, Director - Talent Acquisition & Global Mobility, 3500 S Clark St. Arlington, VA 22202 USA. job #SA085006.

**Legals**

**ABC LICENSE**  
Quincy Hall LLC trading as Quincy Hall, 4001 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 100, Arlington County, Virginia 22203-1614. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and Beer On and Off; Mixed Beverage (seating capacity 151 or more persons) license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Peter Bayne, Member authorizing advertisement. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at [www.abc.virginia.gov](http://www.abc.virginia.gov) or 800-552-3200.

An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.  
-Werner Heisenberg

**Announcements**

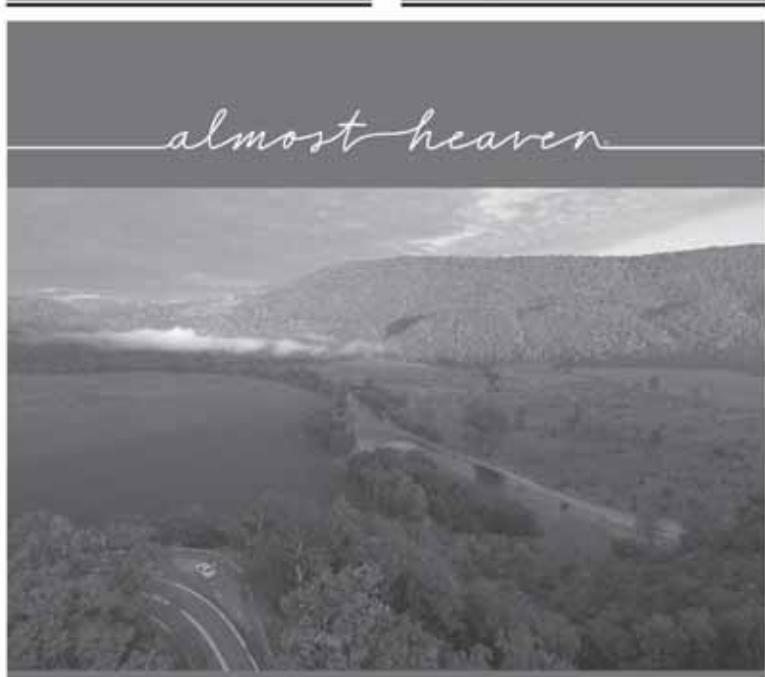
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**WEST VIRGINIA**

## OPINION

# We Both Deserve \$15. Why Don't Our Senators Think So?

BY NICK RIVIERE AND TONY HEDGEPEETH

**L**ike millions of Virginians, we work hard. As home care providers, we work every day to help older adults and people with disabilities live independently at home and in the community. By keeping people out of costly nursing homes and institutions, we save taxpayers money and deliver quality care.

We do the same work but in different parts of Virginia – Fairfax County and City of Richmond – and have different backgrounds. One of us is a 21-year-old assisting young adults with developmental disabilities and one of us is a 61-year-old Army veteran helping his fellow vets who suffer from PTSD.

However, we both love what we do. It's a blessing to be able to help others live with dignity.

We both deserve to make at least \$15 per hour and live with dignity ourselves.

Unfortunately, our Virginia state Senators seem to disagree.

Earlier this month, the Virginia House of Delegates passed a bill to raise the minimum wage to \$15 for all workers by 2025. They recognized that working families are falling behind no matter how hard we work, and that we need to build an economy that works for everyone.

The Senate, however, passed a bill which would create different minimum wages in different regions, even for workers who do the exact same jobs like

us. Their bill also forces workers to wait even longer to get a raise.

If the Senate bill becomes law, people working in Fairfax won't make \$15 until 2027, while those in Richmond won't make \$15 until 2032. Our fellow homecare providers and others working in Hampton Roads won't make \$15 until 2034.

Delaying the minimum wage increase for 14 years, and paying different wages for the same work, is not only unfair; it's unacceptable.

Every person who works hard and plays by the rules in Virginia deserves equal respect. We deserve living wages, paid sick days, affordable health care, a secure retirement, and the right to join together in a union. While the cost of living varies in different parts of Virginia, we all feel the same pain when we struggle to pay rent, buy groceries and pay utilities. Housing costs are skyrocketing in both Richmond and Northern Virginia. Health care costs, food costs and transportation costs are all increasing. We need a statewide \$15 minimum wage to ensure that no one gets left behind.

To our Senators, we ask: why should a home care worker in Richmond or Roanoke make less than a home care worker in Fairfax when we make the same contribution to Virginia's families?

We elected Democratic majorities to the House and Senate because they promised to deliver a brighter future for working Virginians. It's time that our Senators delivered on that promise.

**Announcements**

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.  
-Werner Heisenberg

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**For Sale**

**For Sale:** Conference room table w/6 chairs, executive desks, executive chairs, bookcases, file cabinets, white boards, end tables, wood kitchen table w/6 chairs, map cabinet, and more. Contact Tom, 703-299-4050, to view all items.

**Legals**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
AT&T proposes to replace an existing 17.3' street light pole with a new 20' street light pole and install a top-mounted antenna at 26' at 2300 Columbia Pike, Arlington, VA (20200209). Interested parties may contact Scott Horn (856-809-1202) (1012 Industrial Dr., West Berlin, NJ 08091) with comments regarding potential effects on historic properties.

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# BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

/arlingtonrotaryclub.org/

**Job Seeking Help.** 5-9 p.m. at Columbia Pike Branch Library, 816 S. Walter Reed Drive. Receive job-related help from the staff and volunteers with applications. Free, but requires registration. Visit [www.arlingtonva.libcal.com](http://www.arlingtonva.libcal.com).

**The Jewish Council for the Aging** has launched a new initiative called Tech Tuesday. Windows 7, Windows 8, Excel, iPad and iPhone, Email, photos, and social media will be covered in these classes held at 1750 Crystal Drive Shops, Suite 1638B Crystal Square Arcade. Visit [www.accessjca.org](http://www.accessjca.org).

**Vajrayogini Buddhist Center** offers "Meditations for a Meaningful Life" for the general public Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. George's Episcopal Church, 915 N. Oakland St., Arlington. Gen Kelsang Varahi, an American Buddhist nun, leads teachings and guided meditations on life. \$10 (\$5 unemployed, full-time students, 65 and older). Visit <http://meditation-dc.org/arlington/> for more.

**Arlington PFLAG Community Group.** 7:30-9 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, PFLAG promotes the equality and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people and their families. Meets at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, 4444 Arlington Boulevard. Contact [arl.pflag@gmail.com](mailto:arl.pflag@gmail.com) for more or go to [www.pflagdc.org](http://www.pflagdc.org)

**Helmsmen Toastmasters** meet Thursdays, 7:30-8:45 a.m. at Pentagon Library and Conference Center. Toastmasters is an international organization that helps everyone speak, think, lead and listen better. Contact Carl Sabath [carl.e.sabath.civ@mail.mil](mailto:carl.e.sabath.civ@mail.mil) or 703-695-2804 or Elizabeth Femrite [elizabeth.m.femrite.civ@mail.mil](mailto:elizabeth.m.femrite.civ@mail.mil) or 571-256-8674.

**Donations Needed.** Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 2700 South 19th St., is seeking to replenish its food pantry. Particularly needed are rice (large bags appreciated, the pantry will rebag), dry beans, canned vegetables, soup, small jars of peanut butter, small jars of jelly, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations are collected during Mass each Sunday. Visit [www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org](http://www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org) for more.

**Soil Testing.** Virginia Cooperative Extension is offering soil testing services to analyze soil and determine what is needed to condition soil for plantings. The routine soil test is all one normally needs for a fertility evaluation. Recommendations generated usually within three working days of receipt. Pick up soil sampling box at the Virginia Cooperative Extension Arlington office, 3308 S. Stafford St., 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Send filled soil sample box with form and fee to the Virginia Tech Lab for analysis. Fees vary, visit [www.soiltest.vt.edu/Files](http://www.soiltest.vt.edu/Files).

**Alzheimer's Association Support Group** has meetings on the third Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. at Carlin Springs Health Pavilion, 601 S. Carlin Springs Road and also the first and third Thursday at 10 a.m. at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane. They are open to people with Alzheimer's, their caregivers, family members and friends. Free. Call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline at 703-359-4440 or 800-272-3900 before attending a group for the first time to verify meeting information, obtain directions or other information about the group. A complete list of all groups in the National Capital Area region can be found at [www.alz.org/nca](http://www.alz.org/nca).

**Pentagon Legacy Toastmasters** meet Tuesdays 5:15-6:30 p.m. in the Pentagon Main Cafeteria/food court, left of Dunkin' Donuts. Toastmasters is an international organization that helps people speak, think, lead and listen better. Call 703-695-2604 [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).

The **Friends of the Planetarium** has relaunched its official website. Visit [www.friendsoftheplanetarium.org](http://www.friendsoftheplanetarium.org) to find up-to-date show times, a schedule of future events, information about Friends of the Planetarium membership, astronomy news and events, the history of the David M. Brown Planetarium, a link to the Friends' store, and more.

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority announces that cyclists and pedestrians will now have access to the **W&OD Trail** beyond normal daylight hours. The new W&OD Trail hours are from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., from Shirlington in Arlington County, to the western town limit of Herndon in Fairfax County.

**Gentle Pilates.** Saturdays at 9 and 11:15 a.m. A non-traditional mat Pilates class with modifications to suit all abilities. Learn proper form, strengthen core muscles and improve posture. \$78. Virginia Hospital Center, 1701 N. George Mason Drive.

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## Money For What, Exactly?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

*Kenny is currently out of the office. Please enjoy this previously written article from July 2019:*

Presumably, most of you readers are aware that many supermarkets have a rack located somewhere near the rear of the store that is stocked with off-price merchandise: discontinued items, items with damaged packaging, out of season products, etc. Over the years, I have been a regular checker of this rack looking for such bargains. I have purchased breakfast cereal, soup, cookies, candy, and miscellaneous other non-perishables. I've even purchased two bags of Kingsford charcoal. In addition, I've seen household products, health and beauty, school supplies; and everything else you can imagine, running the gamut from "A" to "Z," for sale. Recently however, in this rack I saw a product I'm not sure I even thought was available to the general public, and if it was, would not have thought buying it from the discontinued merchandise rack at the supermarket would not have been the way to go. But what do I know? As has been proven many times: not much.

The item? A DNA Paternity Test Kit. I guess I thought, if this test was necessary, it would involve a physician or at least be administered by a health care professional and/or involve witnesses/legal representation (at least a notary). Going to the supermarket or even the drug store? And then testing yourself without necessarily knowing the precautions and proper procedures appropriate for the task at hand? There seems as if there's a bit more at stake here than an at-home pregnancy test, a test with which many of us are familiar. But DNA testing at home? What is this, the Maury Povich Show?

Having not traveled down this particular road myself, perhaps I'm unaware of the realities. All I know is what I've seen on television or read about in the papers. I guess I just assumed (generally a bad thing), that the steps one takes to verify/confirm/resolve paternity-type issues were a bit more involved than a visit to the supermarket. Apparently, this subject is just another where I know very little about, like tools and how to use them, automobile repair, home maintenance, lawn and garden, cooking, and on and on and on. But enough about me.

What about those wanting answers to extraordinarily important questions: Who's the father? And is that my child? Looks can be deceiving so a professional, or so I thought, incorrectly, is brought in to oversee the process. Nope. No professional need apply. Just go to your local "chemist," as they say in England. No need to visit "the surgery," as they also say over there. Just find a box with the right letters on it and go back to your home/work and swab, stick, pin-prick or whatever and the results will be known soon enough if you or someone else is whomever they claim to be or not to be. That is the question which begs an answer. Shakespeare notwithstanding

It seems only fair that one's birthright should be gotten wrong. And not that home-testing can't be trusted. Just the opposite. Nevertheless, some things, like circumcisions, though they can be performed at home (see "Shaky the mohel" from a long ago Seinfeld episode). I would have thought, a DNA Paternity test, given the need/want of a resolution/clarification which could possibly impact multiple individuals/families over generations, be similarly performed in the most careful of conditions. This kind of test has no margin for error - or humor. "Bought the kit in the discount rack at my local supermarket." Is that the answer you want to give when all eyes are on you? And saying how much you saved over regular price is unlikely to endear you to any and all of the interested parties on hand. After all, money really isn't the issue.

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



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