

Burke CONNECTION

Thursday, March 12, 2020:
Restaurants are empty
shortly after 7 p.m.



Supervisors Approve Declaration of Emergency

NEWS, PAGE 3

Generational Divide

NEWS, PAGE 7

Burke Scouts Pass Eagle Scout Board of Review

NEWS, PAGE 6

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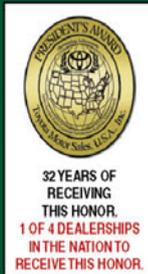
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Supervisors Approve Issuance of Declaration of Emergency

Resolution empowers County Executive to make decisions.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**
THE CONNECTION

On Tuesday, March 17, during a special meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, at which a quorum was present and voting, all ten supervisors, considered and approved a resolution of a Declaration of Local Emergency Management effective immediately, March 17, 2020, in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D) opened the emergency session. “As people can see, we are spacing, in adherence with CDC (Center for Disease Control) guidelines, and we have limited skeleton staff here today because frankly, our folks are working hard out there in the community to make sure our community remains safe. What you will see at the dais today, you can see us, but also with us, of course, we have a full board here, all ten members, Supervisor Walkinshaw and Supervisor Alcorn, and because of the spacing, are down here in front of us.” McKay read the resolution and made a motion to approve. Vice Chairman Gross (D) took the role of Chairman.

Before the supervisors voted on the resolution and during board consideration of the Declaration of a Local State of Emergency, County Attorney Elizabeth D. Teare said that under Virginia code, the Declaration of Local Emergency would be signed by County Executive Bryan Hill as the Director of Emergency Management and as defined in code provision. “The Board of Supervisors’ role is to confirm the issuance of that Declaration of Emergency and essentially approve it and consent to it,” Teare said.

According to Gross, this was the same procedure used for natural disasters. Whatever the cause, the Board had to ratify what the County Executive does. “We (the Board of Supervisors) don’t have individual powers to create, to do that. It’s all devolved upon the County Executive,” said Supervisor Gross.

Supervisor Walter L. Alcorn (D- Hunter Mill) asked what the Board’s role was in terms of oversight. Teare said the issuance of a Declaration of Local Emergency set an Emergency Operations Plan in motion. It also facilitated applications for federal and state disaster planning efforts, among other things. “And really, the third bullet point that I would add is that it serves as the foundational document for additional actions if



Board Consideration of a Declaration of a Local State of Emergency in Response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

SCREENSHOT

Sitting six feet apart, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors considers and unanimously approves a resolution of a Declaration of Local Emergency Management effective immediately, March 17, 2020, in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19).



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Jeff McKay

any, that the Board may wish to take to address this emergency. It sort of sets the stage for anything you might wish to do with regard to this emergency going forward.”

ANOTHER BENEFIT or value to the declaration said John W. Foust (D-Dranesville) was that it sent a message to the community that this was an emergency situation. “This is all hands on deck,” Supervisor Foust said.

Calling the attention of new members of the Board, Gross said that the Board did not have nearly as much authority “as some people thought” it did. She underlined the Board’s limit. “The Mayor of the District of Columbia is able to do a lot of things, as the mayor. People think we should be able

“I don’t believe that there’s any better place in this country or this world to make it through trying times than in Fairfax County.”

—Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

to do the same thing. And that’s not the case. By making this declaration, the County Executive is the person who is empowered to make some of those decisions, but it shows that he has the backing of the Board.”

Gross cited as an example that the Board did not have the authority to close down a store. “We can’t do that,” she said. However, the Board could go to the County Executive who could make the decision, “perhaps,” she said. “We’re also at the mercy of the governor, who has taken a tremendous lead in Virginia, in addressing this emergency,” she said.

Summarizing what the Declaration of an Emergency would do, Chairman McKay said: “What this does is allows the County Executive obviously authorizes him to act on behalf of the Board in several ways. It does not allow him (County Executive Bryan Hill, as the Director of Emergency Management) to do anything that’s inconsistent with state law or orders that the governor has put out. And so I just want to be clear, on the idea of ordering a store closed, that’s not something that the County would be doing. If the governor made that

declaration, obviously, that’s something we all would be adhering to. But we don’t make that determination.”

After recognizing County staff for all their efforts and thanking them, Chairman McKay said, “I don’t believe that there’s any better place in this country or this world to make it through trying times than in Fairfax County. I think we have to reflect on the starting point that we have here with our resources, with our county staff, with our engaged community, with our business community with really everyone who is pitching in to help... We will have battle scars without a doubt... And so while there’s a lot of uncertainty, and we’re declaring an emergency today, there should be a lot of satisfaction and knowing that we are well resourced and ready to take this on.”

GROSS called the motion. “All those in favor of the motion, please say aye. ‘Aye’. Any opposed say, nay. That motion carries.”

In his release later that evening, Chairman McKay said, “This declaration is very important for small businesses. Now that our jurisdiction is officially under ‘emergency’ status, they can apply for emergency loans from the Small Business Administration.”

Fairfax County Latest Update

March 17: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Daily Update, Posted at 5:30 p.m. A summary of recent news about COVID-19 for March 17, 2020:

LATEST DATA

- ❖ March 17: New Presumptive Positive Cases Today: 2
- ❖ Total Presumptive Positive Cases: 12
- ❖ (Health District includes Fairfax County, City of Fairfax, City of Falls Church and towns within the County)

Source: Fairfax County Emergency Information

Unprecedented Virus Crisis

Cash reserves will help buffer the coming recession.

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL
(D-36)



On Thursday, we passed the Senate Budget and nearly as soon as it was passed, the coronavirus situation exploded. While this virus crisis is unprecedented, our budget was well-structured and balanced as required by our constitution, and we are prepared for a recession.

Virginia has its largest cash reserves in the history of the Commonwealth – over \$2 billion. We have been building this reserve both because of constitutionally required deposits to our Revenue Reserve or “Rainy Day” Fund, but also because analysts have been warning us about a likely recession for years even though until last week, we were in the longest economic expansion in American history.

Our outside bond rating agencies have been warning us that much of American economic growth has been generated by government stimulus versus underlying solid economic fundamentals. For example, the Trump tax cuts from 2017 and additional federal government spending accounted for about 1.1% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product over the last three years. Some of Virginia’s productivity was generated by the \$1 billion annually invested through Medicaid Expansion.

There have been warning signs present for the last twelve months. For example, the “inverted yield” curve – when short term money can be borrowed at higher interest rates than long term money – has predicted every recent

recession. The American yield curve inverted in January, and the markets briefly paused and then went on speculating. We cautiously budgeted and planned for a recession with significant reserves.

While legislators are beginning to talk among ourselves and with the Governor’s Office about next steps, the Governor has significant authority to make budgetary decisions without legislative approval if revenues do not meet forecasts. There some actions that could require a special session such as unemployment benefit extensions, temporary Medicaid expansions, limitations on liability, minimum income payments or sick leave expansions. We will see where things go.

Unfortunately, the final budget has some important policy changes in it which are now likely in jeopardy. It assumed three-percent revenue growth which allowed for a two percent pay increase for teachers in the first year and a two percent increase in the second year, plus a two percent bonus for state employees this year and a two percent raise next year along with increased State Trooper compensation. It also contained an historic \$84 million investment in early childhood education, \$46 million for new school counselors, and \$180 million in school construction, plus \$80 million in free community college tuition for the Governor’s “G3” program for low income students studying certain fields.

Overall, Fairfax County was poised to receive an additional \$185 million for K-12 over the next two years, Prince William is budgeted for

\$122 million and Stafford \$56 million. This could be in jeopardy if revenues fail. We also budgeted major investments in higher education, increases in Medicaid reimbursements and water quality funding.

The budget also contained several of my requests for the 36th District prerogatives. First, it requires the Commonwealth to collaborate with Fairfax and Prince William Counties to study the extension of the Blue Line from the Franconia-Springfield Station to Lorton, Woodbridge, Potomac Mills and potentially Quantico. Second, the budget funds the creation of the Prince William County Public Defender’s Office creating twenty-five new attorney positions along with ten support staff. Third, there is a \$3 million grant for the U.S. Army Museum which was saved largely due to the efforts of Del. Mark Sickles.

The budget also funds my request to remove a barge from Belmont Bay which is a navigation hazard. It also included my request to restore two staffing positions at Mason Neck State Park and to require the Virginia State Parks to collaborate with Stafford County Public Schools on a new environmental education program at Widewater State Park.

The Governor is continuing to take actions to make more testing for COVID-19 available and coordinate our response to this crisis. Please stay tuned to my twitter feed (www.twitter.com/ssurovell), official Facebook (www.facebook.com/surovell) and my blog, The Dixie Pig (scottsurovell.blogspot.com), where I will post continued updates.

Please stay safe over the coming weeks and if you have any questions, feedback or ideas, please email me at scott@scottsurovell.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Pattern That Can't Be Ignored

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to the article titled “Wellbeing: Inflicting Pain to Gain Relief” (Connection, March 4-10, 2020.) As mentioned in the article, there has been a rise in teen self-harm over the years. I think it is important to take a step back and recognize the causes of the increases in self-harm. This isn’t something that is randomly affecting people but rather something that is largely affecting teens, starting as early as middle school. This is a pattern that cannot be ignored.

Why is it that so many teenagers are experiencing self-harm? Could it be our school environments? Could it be that screen time is replacing in-person contact? Perhaps teenagers find that their only outlet left is to turn to self-harm. It’s vital that we help

the individuals going through self-harm, but it is just as important that we take a step back and try to understand the outside forces that have caused this disproportionate pattern in teenagers. I believe that there is something more significant going on than individual events but rather a group of people situated in a society that could be an outside force causing this problem. It is up to us to address this.

Lianna Williams
Vienna

Inspirational Fight for Women’s Rights

To the Editor:

This year’s Women’s History Month is particularly special because Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the Equal Rights

Amendment (ERA). The ERA is designed to guarantee equal rights for all American citizens, regardless of gender. While it’s disappointing to know that it took so long to ratify women’s equality, we have seen women, such as, Malala Yousafzai, fight for justice in all parts of the world. As a college student and young Muslim women, seeing someone like her who is not afraid to fight for women’s rights while maintaining her Muslim identity is inspirational.

It is disappointing that Pakistan and other Muslim countries deny women the access to education, which is what Malala Yousafzai bravely fought for. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) emphasized the importance of education for both genders. He said, “It is the duty of every Muslim man and every Muslim woman to acquire knowledge.”

This Women’s History Month, as we celebrate Virginia’s historic

achievement, let us also not forget about Muslim women role models such as Malala Yousafzai or political leaders, such as, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib. Let’s come together to celebrate the achievements of women from all nationalities and religions.

Sabiha Basit
Centreville

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

Letters to the Editor
The Connection
1606 King St.
Alexandria VA 22314
Call: 703-917-6444.
By e-mail:
editors@connectionnewspapers.com



VIEWPOINTS

How is the coronavirus pandemic affecting your life and business?



"I don't think about it here too much, just made things busier in the area, I'm not worried"
- Griffin Nickels, student in Springfield



"It didn't affect my life at all, still do the same things"
- Essam Koren, retired, Burke



"Media will drive you crazy"
- Farouk Ali, retired, Springfield

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/ THE CONNECTION



"We went grocery shopping all day, trying to scramble all day"
- Jasmine Knuckles, student, Springfield



"It's affecting school a lot, all the closings is a major big deal for me"
- Emma Skog, South County High School student

"I usually go to the gym every day, now it's a ghost town so I work out from home"
- Mark Skog, consultant, Springfield

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Gary Kramer, D.D.S.
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THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

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PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

With bicycling events gaining popularity in Fairfax County, such as the Tour De Mount Vernon here at the Workhouse in Lorton, lawmakers are looking for ways to increase safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

House Passes Bike and Pedestrian Bills Aimed at Safety

New Assembly makeup allows for more safety legislation.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Stopping for a pedestrian or bicyclist in the crosswalk may be Driving 101 for most drivers, but not all. It's become such an issue, Del. Kay Kory (D-38) partnered with Del. Ken Plum (D-36) to address the issue with House Bill 1705. That bill was among seven bills passed recently to increase the safety for pedestrians and bicyclists across the state.

Kory has been working on a crosswalk bill since 2011, and finally found an opportunity to get it passed with new Democratic majorities in office. "There were no objections," she said.

The bill contains language that clarifies the duties of vehicle drivers to stop when yielding to pedestrians at clearly marked crosswalks, whether at midblock or at the end of any block; any regular pedestrian crossing included in the prolongation of the lateral boundary lines of the adjacent sidewalk at the end of a block; or any intersection when the driver is approaching on a highway where the maximum speed limit is not more than 35 miles per hour.

"It's a big issue," said Shawn Newman of the Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling (FABB). "We've had a number of incidents," he added, noting that cyclists and pedestrians are "vulnerable road users."

Plum got some safety ideas from Reston cyclist Bruce Wright who discussed the unsafe situation at the W&OD Trail and Wiehle Avenue. "Some people stop and some people don't stop," Plum said. With HB 1705, he's looking at the educational function to go along with enforcement. It's not all about penalizing. "We're trying to educate people as well," he said. Kory mentioned the possibility of signs at the crosswalks, or looking into other methods that signal drivers. In Charlottesville, she said, they use a flashing light at crosswalks. "I think it makes sense, I want to look into it," she said,

Speed Photo Enforcement Comes to Virginia

HB 1442 authorizes state and local law-enforcement agencies to operate photo speed monitoring devices, defined in the bill, in or around school crossing zones and highway work zones for the purpose of recording images of vehicles that are traveling at speeds of at least 10 miles per hour above the posted school crossing zone or highway work zone speed limit within such school crossing zone or highway work zone when such zone is indicated by conspicuously placed signs displaying the maximum speed limit and that such photo speed monitoring devices are used in the area. The bill provides that the operator of a vehicle shall be liable for a monetary civil penalty, not to exceed \$100, if such vehicle is found to be traveling at speeds of at least 10 miles per hour above the posted highway work zone or school crossing zone speed limit by the photo speed monitoring device.

Senator Scott Surovell sponsored another vulnerable road users bill (SB 437) that increases the penalty for drivers who carelessly injure or kill a vulnerable road user and also prohibits using bike lanes to pass other vehicles.

Other bills included HB 874 by Del. Jeffrey M. Bourne (D-71) which prohibits any person from holding a handheld personal communications device while driving a motor vehicle.

SB 871, Sen. David Marsden's bill, clarifies the rules on e-bikes and helps ensure e-bikes have a place in the future of Virginia's transportation mix. Plum also sponsored HB 886 that continues the State Trails Advisory Committee's work to improve our state-wide trail network through 2027.

HB 1442, the Automated photo speed enforcement bill will give localities a new tool to help prevent speeding-related crashes in school zones and highway work zones.

FABB calls the bills "a slew of important and bipartisan bills that will make bicycling in Fairfax and across the state safer and more enjoyable." Although FABB is a local group, they want to highlight bike issues across the state. "We work very closely with other bike and pedestrian groups across the state," Newman said.

At the county Board of Supervisors meeting, a group of bicyclists made their presence known when the bills were passed. "They were just thrilled," said Kory.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF G.C. GARY' BLACK III

Jacqueline (mom), Dylan, newest Eagle Scout, and Richard Jones (dad).



Members of the Eagle Scout Board of Review and the Jones family: Mark Blanchard, Former Scoutmaster, Phil Sternberg, Former Scoutmaster and current Chair of the Troop Committee, Jacqueline (mom), former Treasurer of the Troop Committee, newest Eagle Scout, Dylan, Richard (dad), and C.P. Watkins, Patriot District Eagle Scout Representative. Not in photo: G.C. 'Gary' Black, III.

Burke Scouts Pass Eagle Scout Board of Review

Dylan Connor Jones passed his Eagle Scout Board of Review to become the 221st Eagle Scout in Boy Scout Troop 1131 at St. Stephen's UMC, Burke.

Dylan's parents are Richard and Jacqueline Jones. In the troop, he has served as a Patrol Leader and the troop's Quartermaster. Currently, he has an application pending at George Mason University. His major is undecided at this point.

John Allen Modder is the 220th person to earn his Eagle Scout rank in Boy Scout Troop 1131 at St. Stephen's United Methodist Church, in Burke.

John's parents are Donald and Elizabeth Modder. They live in the Wakefield Chapel area of Annandale.

John is a 16 year old junior at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax, where he plays defense

on the Lacrosse team and enjoys soccer. He is a member of the National Honor Society, as well. John attends Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Annandale.



John Modder saying the Boy Scout Oath.

In the troop, he has served as the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL). In the summers, he works as a LifeGuard at his local community pool. His goal is to someday own his own Home Services company.

Generational Divide

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

When Democrats won both chambers of the General Assembly in November, hopes were high that the new majorities in the House and Senate would move forward with a progressive agenda that had been rejected when Republicans were in power. Labor groups were particularly excited about the prospect of passing a \$15 minimum wage, collective bargaining for public employees and a requirement that all employers offer five paid sick days. But the General Assembly session ended this week without fully accomplishing these goals.

Standing in the way: a trio of conservative Democratic senators from Fairfax County.

Majority Leader Dick Saslaw (D-35) who blocked collective bargaining for state workers. Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37) blocked a \$15 minimum wage by 2025. And Sen. Chap Petersen (D-35) blocked guaranteed paid sick days. Saslaw, Marsden and Petersen are some of the most senior Democrats in the Senate, and their approach to labor issues offers a stark contrast with the approach taken by the more progressive and younger members of the House of Delegates.

"In many ways, I think we're talking about a generational change," said Stephen Farnsworth, political science professor at the University of Mary Washington. "If you're looking at the vision of what a Democrat was in the days of Mark Warner, and you're looking at the vision of what a Democrat is today, you see significant changes and significant differences."

Saslaw was first elected to the House in 1975 then was elected to the Senate in 1979. He is the longest serving senator in the chamber, and he's already announced that he does not plan to run for reelection in 2023. Petersen was first elected to the House in 2001 then was elected to the Senate in 2007. He is the eighth longest serving Democrat in the Senate. Marsden was elected to the Senate in 2009. He is the tenth longest Democrat in the Senate.

"The three of them, although from the political party and region of Virginia from which much of the populist energy has come in recent times, are also from an earlier era of Virginia Democratic Party politics when Virginia Democrats were by and large more business friendly," said Quentin Kidd, political science professor at Christopher Newport University. "We not only have partisan differences on things like collective bargaining and minimum wage, but we also have generational differences within the Democratic Party itself."

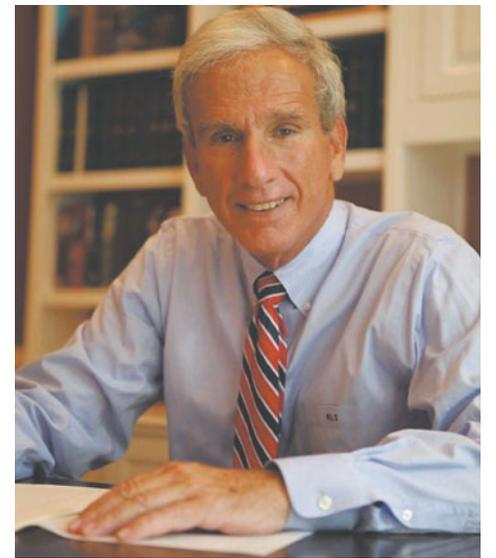
RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE was one of the major agenda items for Democrats when they arrived in Richmond for the opening of the General Assembly session in January. When the bill was consid-



Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37)



Sen. Chap Petersen (D-35)



Sen. Dick Saslaw (D-35)

ered in the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, Marsden unsuccessfully tried to create a regional variation. When the bill made its way to the Senate floor, Marsden held out for regional variation, and enough conservative Democrats joined him that the bill was only able to pass by delaying \$15 an hour until 2023 in Hampton Roads.

"I just want to slow this down a bit and give the business community an opportunity to adjust," said Marsden. "I'm very concerned this will have a huge impact on the state budget, and it'll have a huge impact on Virginia's economy."

The House held out for \$15 an hour across Virginia, although the Senate version retained that regional variation. That sent the bill into a secret closed-door conference committee, where lawmakers hashed out a deal shielded from public view. They emerged with a plan that would raise the minimum wage to \$12 an hour by 2023 then pause to study how a regional minimum wage might work. It also carved out exemptions for young people and farmworkers.

"Virginians across the Commonwealth work hard and deserve a raise," said Anna Scholl, executive director of Progress Virginia. "We will keep working to make sure that all families in our communities, regardless of what kind of work they do, make \$15 an hour and have the ability to raise their families with dignity."

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING for public employees was another top-tier issue for Democrats as they arrived in Richmond this year for the General Assembly session. Virginia is one of only three states that prohibits public service workers the right to negotiate together for fair wages and safe working conditions. Del. Elizabeth Guzman (D-31) passed a bill out of the House that allowed collective bargaining for local government employees and state employees.

Trio of senior conservative Democratic senators from Fairfax undermines parts of progressive agenda.

"We not only have partisan differences on things like collective bargaining and minimum wage, but we also have generational differences within the Democratic Party itself."

— Quentin Kidd, political science professor at Christopher Newport University

Her bill also gave workers the ability to decide to unionize rather than the leaders of the local government.

"My bill will empower workers like teachers, firefighters, social workers, police officers to have a seat at the table during the decision making process," said Guzman. "And it is my belief that if we are going to take care of a group of public employees, we have to take care of all of them, and that include state employees. They also deserve to have a voice at the table and advocate for better resources, better equipment and better salaries."

Across the hall in the Senate, Saslaw was working on a much more conservative approach. His bill allowed collective bargaining for employees of local governments but not state workers. His bill also took the decision to unionize out of the hands of workers and put it instead into the hands of the local government leaders. If members of a county board of supervisors decide they don't want to deal with a union, they'll be able to block their workers from collective bargaining under Saslaw's version of the bill. When asked by a reporter what's wrong with allowing state workers to unionize, Saslaw said it wasn't going to happen.

"We don't have the votes," he said, ducking into a closed-door caucus meeting. "There's nothing more to say. We don't have the votes."

Part of the reason the Senate didn't have the votes was that Saslaw didn't support it, which is why it ended in a closed-door conference committee where a final version of the bill was crafted in secret. Saslaw's version of the bill is what emerged from that secret process, and that's the version now

on the governor's desk.

PAID SICK DAYS have suddenly become a major political issue because of the coronavirus. But even as lawmakers arrived in Richmond earlier this year, many progressive Democrats were hopeful about a bill that would

have required employers offer five paid sick days. The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy initially wanted this to apply to businesses that had five employees or more. Gov. Ralph Northam suggested that the mandate should apply to businesses that have 25 employees or more, a threshold advocates worried would exempt 90 percent of businesses in Virginia.

"Employers who are employing 25 individuals or more are already offering five paid sick days to their employees," said Sen. Barbara Favola (D-31). "So we're perplexed because we don't believe that many employers would be affected by the governor's bill."

Lawmakers started by compromising at mandating five paid sick days for businesses that have 15 employees or more. Northam declined to answer questions about whether he would amend the bill to exclude 90 percent of businesses in Virginia. But he never got the chance. In the closing hours of the General Assembly session, Petersen killed the bill by making a case on the Senate floor that part-time workers didn't deserve paid sick days.

"So once they have vested, and once they have accumulated the 30 hours and they work for me eight hours a week and the other 160 hours are their free time and they need to take a child to the doctors office or what have you, they can use the eight hours they're working for me to run that errand as opposed to the 160 hours they have of their own free time," said Petersen.

The bill died in an unrecorded vote to delay the bill, which had the effect of killing the bill for the year because lawmakers were on the verge of closing the session and leaving town.

CALENDAR

Editor's Note: Be aware that many events could be cancelled as precaution to the spread of COVID-19. Please check before heading to events. Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

ONGOING

Monday Exercise Classes. Now thru March 30. 9:30-10:30 a.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke offers exercise classes for older adults designed to build strength and improve balance and flexibility. All levels of ability are welcome. Call the SCFB office, 703-426-2824, for class information.

Wednesday Exercise Classes. Now thru May 27. 9-10 a.m. At The Lutheran Church of the Abiding Presence, 6304 Lee Chapel Road, Burke. Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke offers exercise classes for older adults designed to build strength and improve balance and flexibility. All levels of ability are welcome. Call the SCFB office, 703-426-2824, for class information. (20 weeks @ \$2.50/class = \$50)

Friday Exercise Classes. Now thru April 3. 9:30-10:30 a.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke offers exercise classes for older adults designed to build strength and improve balance and flexibility. All levels of ability are welcome. Call the SCFB office, 703-426-2824, for class information. (8 weeks, \$20).

THURSDAY/MARCH 19

Lunch N' Life. Noon to 2 p.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. Are You 50 or Better? Sponsored by the Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke. Jim Radigan, U.S. Navy Retired will discuss his experiences as the Commanding Officer, U.S. Navy Antarctica Squadron. For reservations, call Bea Stephenson at 703-273-5730, by March 13. The cost is \$10.; checks payable to SCFB. If transportation is needed, call the SCFB office 703-323-4788. See www.scfba.org.

FRIDAY/MARCH 20

GAMEmason. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. At GMU, Fairfax Campus, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Battle against friends in a Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Tournament for a chance to find yourself on the big stage for the finals. Relive childhood fun with an expanded arcade filled with favorites like Pinball, Donkey Kong, and many more. Experience AR/VR demonstrations, attend education panels, Q&A sessions, and keynote sessions and meet and greets with major power players in the gaming industry including Tara Stong (Canadian-American actress and voice actor for Rikku in both Final Fantasy X and the popular "Kingdom Hearts" video game series) and Angela Hession (Head of XBOX Safety at Microsoft, who has helped launch more than 100 games on Xbox 360 and Kinect). Visit: <https://si.gmu.edu/gamemason>. Admission General Public: \$25 general admission.

MARCH 20, 21 & 22

"Anything Goes." At The Church of the Good Shepherd, 9350 Braddock Road, Burke. Tickets: \$10/\$15. The Good Shepherd Players and the Church of the Good Shepherd present "Anything Goes."

SATURDAY/MARCH 21

Women as Changemakers. 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. At Springfield Golf and

Country Club, 8301 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Luncheon, silent auction, and guest speaker Joan Michelson, speaking on "Women as Changemakers". Sponsored by the Springfield-Annandale branch of AAUW.

All are welcome. Reservation required by March 14. Cost is \$45/person. To make a reservation, e-mail SpringFlingAAUW@gmail.com. Call 703-560-1760.

Fantasy and Fun. 1 p.m. At Annandale United Methodist Church, 6935 Columbia Pike, Annandale. Featuring The Great Zucchini and the Da Capo and Lyric Youth Choruses of the Fairfax Choral Society. Tickets are \$15/adults; \$5/students; children 13 and under free.

Artists' Reception. 1-5 p.m. At the Artists' Undertaking Gallery, 309 Mill Street, Historic Ocoquan. The Artists' Undertaking Gallery in Historic Ocoquan presents "Spring's Palette". This exhibit features Paintings and Ribbon Embroidery by Tatiana Harr of Fairfax Station, and Salt-Fired Pottery by Marianne Cordyack of Reston. The exhibit runs March 3 through April 6. The gallery is open 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily. Contact the gallery at 703-494-0584 or at info@artistsundertaking.com.

The Dash Duo. 3-5 p.m. At Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 8336 Carrleigh Parkway, Springfield. Dash Duo has thrilled audiences across the United States with virtuoso performances. Both stellar trumpet players in their own right, this concert will feature both players and will be joined by organist Michael Lodico. Free — donations welcomed. Visit www.kirkwoodpres.com.

MARCH 21-22

Hearth Cooking Workshops. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At George Mason's Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck. Join in the hearth kitchen at Gunston Hall for the ultimate experience in slow food as you learn to employ 18th-century cooking techniques and recipes to create period dishes. Use your hearth skills to investigate complex recipes while cooking over an open flame, take a tour of the house and meet other food enthusiasts. The Beginning and Intermediate Hearth Cooking Workshops are now open! Up for a challenge? Register for both classes and experience a full weekend of 18th century cooking. Cost: \$100 - \$225. Visit the website: <https://gunstonhall.org/event/hearth-cooking-workshops/>

SPRINGPEX Stamp Show. Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. At Robert E. Lee High School (Cafeteria), 6540 Franconia Road, Springfield. The Springfield Stamp Club hosts the 50th annual SPRINGPEX. There will be 26 dealers from throughout the Eastern US and Mid-Atlantic region, 50 frames of exhibits, specialized club and society meetings and display tables, a U.S. Postal Service booth, and a special kids table with lots of free material for young stamp collectors. Event covers (special envelopes) will commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, and the 100th Anniversary of Woman's Suffrage/19th Amendment. Admission and parking (at the front of the building) are free. Visit <http://www.springfieldstampclub.org>

TUESDAY/MARCH 24

Poetry of Music: It Takes a Whole Village. 7 p.m. At Annandale United Methodist Church, 6935 Columbia Pike, Annandale. Featuring the Master Singers, Concert Choir and Treble Choruses of the Fairfax Choral Society. With Patrick Vaughn, Director, Youth Choruses of the Fairfax Choral Society. Tickets are \$15/adults; \$5/students; Kids 13 and under free.

Fairfax County Public School Buildings Closed Until Further Notice

COVID-19 continues to be a fast-moving event. This weekend, we have been continuing to evaluate our options going forward with the health and well-being of our students, employees, and community remaining the top priority. In consideration of these developments, FCPS is announcing the following actions:

- ❖ All FCPS school buildings are closed until further notice. Food distribution at FCPS sites will continue as scheduled. More details about the food program are below.

- ❖ With the school buildings closed, the laptop distribution scheduled for Monday, March 16, is postponed.

- ❖ All FCPS administrative offices are closed until further notice.
- ❖ Only essential personnel as defined by FCPS program managers and supervisors will be asked to report to work until further notice. All other employees will work remotely. It is expected that all FCPS personnel reporting to work will practice social distancing to the greatest extent possible.

Grab-and-Go Breakfast and Lunch; New Locations Added

Beginning, March 16, FCPS is expanding the grab-and-go food distribution sites to a total of 18 locations. The food distribution is set up outside the schools. Breakfast will be served from 8-10:30 a.m. and lunch from 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

FCPS is providing grab and go meals at no cost for students at 18 sites. We are coordinating with community partners to ensure the locations and timing of food centers and pantries are being communicated with FCPS families.

All FCPS students (regardless of age) are eligible for free grab and go breakfast and lunch. The food must be received directly by a student or paying adult. Adults may pay \$2 for their meals.

All eighteen sites are available to pick up breakfast or lunch. The food distribution is set up outside the schools. Breakfast will be served from 8 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. and lunch from 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the locations listed below:

New sites serving food beginning tomorrow, March 17:

Bren Mar Park ES, 6344 Beryl Rd, Alexandria
Cameron ES, 3434 Campbell Dr., Alexandria
Forest Edge ES, 1501 Becontree Ln., Reston
Glen Forest ES, 5829 Glen Forest Dr., Falls Church
Herndon ES, 630 Dranesville Rd., Herndon
Hollin Meadows ES, 2310 Nordok Pl., Alexandria
Irving MS, 8100 Old Keene Mill Rd., Springfield
Coates ES, 2480 River Birch Rd., Herndon
Parklawn ES, 4116 Braddock Rd., Alexandria
Pine Spring ES, 7607 Willow Ln., Falls Church
South County HS, 8700 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton

Original Sites Will Continue:

Annandale Terrace ES, 7604 Herald St.,
Bailey's Primary ES, 6111 Knollwood Dr., Falls Church
Braddock ES, 7825 Heritage Dr., Annandale
Brookfield ES, 4200 Lees Corner Rd, Chantilly
Burke School, 9645 Burke Lake Rd., Burke
Centre Ridge ES, 14400 New Braddock Rd., Centreville
Crestwood ES, 6010 Hanover Ave., Springfield
Cunningham Park ES, 1001 Park St., Vienna
Dogwood ES, 12300 Glade Dr., Reston



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

At Crestwood Elementary School in Springfield, Wednesday, March 18: Ginger Swiger handing out breakfast to Kevin and Bridny Serrano.

Garfield ES, 7101 Old Keene Mill Rd., Springfield
Graham Road Community Center, 3036 Graham Rd., Falls Church
Fort Belvoir Upper ES, 5980 Meeres Rd., Fort Belvoir
Hutchison ES, 13209 Parcher Ave., Herndon
Hybla Valley ES, 3415 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria
London Towne ES, 6100 Stone Rd., Centreville
Mount Vernon Woods ES, 4015 Fielding St., Alexandria
Providence ES, 3616 Jermantown Rd., Fairfax
Weyanoke ES, 6520 Braddock Rd., Alexandria

Fairfax County Public Schools is expanding the number of grab and go meal sites beginning Wednesday, March 18. A total of 38 sites will serve food to FCPS students.

In addition to the sites currently providing grab and go meals, these school locations will also be serving food. Breakfast will be served from 8 to 10:30 a.m. and lunch will be served from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the following locations:

Bucknell Elementary School, 6925 University Dr., Alexandria
FCPS Energy Zone Office, 6840 Industrial Dr., Springfield
Falls Church High School, 7521 Jaguar Trail, Falls Church
Lorton Station Elementary School, 9298 Lewis Chapel Road, Lorton
(Twain MS will not be a grab and go site on March 18)

In addition to school sites, five additional sites located in the community will serve as pop-up locations. The sites will serve both breakfast and lunch during the designated times beginning Wednesday, March 18:

Audubon Park, 7955 Audubon Ave., Alexandria, from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Bailey's Community Center, 5920 Summers Lane, Falls Church, from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Gum Springs Community Center, 8100 Fordson Road, Alexandria, from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
James Lee Community Center, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church, from 12 noon to 12:30 p.m.
Willston Multicultural Center, 6131 Willston Dr, Falls Church, from 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Talking to Children about Coronavirus

Sharing developmentally appropriate information can ease fears.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

From school closures to travel bans, the rapid spread of coronavirus has led to a time of unprecedented uncertainty. Feelings of anxiety and fear are rampant, particularly in children, say educators. Helping them feel grounded and having open and honest conversations can soothe feelings of angst.

“Stick to routines and schedules when possible,” said Karen Kunz, Middle School Counselor at St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School. “Children thrive with clear structure and schedules. Even with school closures, start to imagine what a schedule might look like at home.”

A child’s age will affect the approach that a parent might take. “Keep in mind, depending on their developmental level, children will comprehend and be concerned about different things regarding the coronavirus,” said Linda McKenna Gulyn, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Marymount University.

Those who are of kindergarten age or younger might feel an unrealistic fear of the virus because of the ego-centrism and magical thinking which are common for that age group, says Gulyn.

“School-aged children probably have a concrete understanding of how this virus is transmitted and understand well the importance of washing their hands,” said Gulyn. “Their frustration will come from refraining from favorite activities such as sports or music events, school, or socializing in groups of kids.”

Assuring children that there will be a return to normalcy soon and answering their questions honestly, logically and respectfully is the approach Gulyn suggests.

“Teenagers understand the basics of the virus, but they could get caught up with myths associated with coronavirus, especially because there is a lot of true and false information online,” she said. “I’ve observed that in my own teenage sons. Monitor and discuss what they are hearing and help them learn to distinguish fact from fiction about corona.”

For this age group, living with a heightened level of uncertainty can evoke strong emotions. “Teens will be very frustrated and annoyed by restrictions placed on group activities that they love, especially those

that involve time with peers,” said Gulyn. “Be sympathetic to your teen about those frustrations.”

“For older children, monitor the amount of social media and internet access they are consuming,” added Kunz. “Social media sites can easily aggravate and heighten anxiety and worry by sharing misinformation.”

While information about the virus is moving rapidly and details are evolving, maintaining a sense of normalcy can be challenging. “Stay calm and carry on,” said Susan DeLaurentis, Director of Counseling and the Lower School Counselor at St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School. “Modeling calm and reasoned reactions to stressful events help children manage their own anxiety. They look to parents and other adults to see their verbal and non-verbal reactions, and will often follow suit.”

“School nurses, school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers can support these discussions and follow up with students who may need additional support,” added Lucy H. Caldwell, director of news and information, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). “In addition to talking with children about the importance of washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes.”

When discussing COVID-19, stick to basic facts in a developmentally appropriate fashion, advises DeLaurentis. “Reassure your children that we are doing exactly what we should do right now,” she said. “Also, using the fact that children don’t seem to be as affected by the virus is a fact that can be reassuring to children.”

“As a parent or caregiver, your first concern is about how to protect and take care of your children and family, added Kurt Larrick, Assistant Director of the Arlington County Department of Human Services “Some basic knowledge is a great place to start.” It can be comforting to highlight the actions that children can take to protect themselves, suggests DeLaurentis. “Emphasize what children can control in the situations they are in,” she said. “They can wash their hands, and even turning that into a game or a competition for younger students can help them find some joy in a stressful situation.”

Find a balance between staying informed and information overload and monitor the amount of time children are exposed to news about COVID-19, says DeLaurentis.

“Younger children often cannot comprehend the information they hear on the news,” she said. “They may misunderstand or misinterpret the news they hear, and often this misinformation can lead to more fear and anxiety.”

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NEWS

Fairfax County Updates on COVID-19

Releases & Alerts, as of March 16, 2020.

Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman, Board of Supervisors Fairfax County, has issued the following update to the Fairfax County Community on Monday, March 16, 2020:

"Today I had the opportunity to stop by the Health Department to see the excellent work of our response teams answering the questions of residents. In the last week, 17,000 people signed up for the County's text notifications and separately, the call center received 265 calls this morning.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Jeff McKay, Chairman, Board of Supervisors

Local Declaration of Emergency

What are you doing? (At 10 a.m. Tuesday) the Board is holding an emergency session to consider making a local Declaration of Emergency.

What does this do? This does two things primarily: 1. This declaration streamlines and expedites Fairfax County Government's access to emergency disaster funding and 2. It allows the County to use its authority to procure goods to address the emergency.

How can I watch? The online live stream, on TV on Cox channel 1016 or Verizon/Comcast channel 16, listen by dialing 703-324-7700, or view following the meeting on demand.

Information on Fairfax County Services

The Health Department has a number of resources on COVID-19:

- ❖ Visit the County site on COVID-19, Health Department Website, see their FAQs, and tips for social distancing.
- ❖ Sign up for text message alerts: text FFXCOVID to 888777
- ❖ Call the Health Department from 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays and 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. 703-267-3511
- ❖ Email: ffxcovid@fairfaxcounty.gov. This account will be staffed Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

If you have further questions or are in need of services, below are some good references:

Neighborhood and Community Services provides access and referrals to both government and community-based resources for assistance with, but not limited to: food, shelter, employment, financial assistance, and healthcare.

❖ Call: 703-222-0880, TTY 711; Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Community-based resources for food assistance and donations can again be found here.

For small businesses in need of relief, we have created a web page that we will continue to update with guidance.

Mass Gatherings and Community Events:

- ❖ Fairfax County now recommends cancelling public events with 50 or more people, per the CDC.
- ❖ All public events in Virginia with 100 or more people have been cancelled by Governor Northam.
- ❖ For events of any size (public or private), organizers and participants each have a responsibility to reduce the chance of disease transmission.
- ❖ Persons considering attending any event, regardless of the number of people attending should consider the risks and benefits in deciding to attend. In particular, those who are at high-risk of severe disease if they become infected – persons who are older than 60 years old, have chronic illness, have a compromised immune system, are pregnant - should know the status of COVID-19 in the community and not attend the event if local infection is widespread.

Here are County guidelines for those planning an event. Fairfax County Government

All County agencies have been directed to identify core functions that we must continue to carry out. We are shifting resources to those essential functions, as needed.

We strongly encourage residents to conduct County business online if possible.

Taxes

❖ The deadline for seniors and people with disabilities to apply for tax relief has been postponed to June 1.

The following programs have been extended:

- ❖ Real Estate Tax Relief for the elderly (65+)
- ❖ Tax Relief for People with disabilities
- ❖ Personal Property or "Car Tax" Relief
- Fairfax County Parks, Libraries, and Community Facilities
- ❖ Fairfax County parks (indoor), libraries, and community facilities are closed for two weeks.
- ❖ This includes: recreation, nature, community, resource and teen centers, golf courses, historic sites, athletic fields, and picnic shelters.

Senior Centers and Adult Day Health Care Centers

- ❖ All Fairfax County Senior Centers and Adult Day Health Care Centers are closed until further notice.

- ❖ Fairfax County is providing meal delivery services to registered participants who wish to obtain them.

Utilities

We have reached out to area utility companies to assure that they are working to protect those at risk of utility disconnection. We have received confirmations from:

- ❖ Verizon, Comcast, and Cox, have pledged to keep customers connected for the next 60 days and not terminate services to any residential customer or small business that are unable to pay their bills. Read more.
- Dominion Energy suspended disconnections. Read more.
- Washington Gas will be waiving late fees and suspending disconnections. Read more.

Fairfax Connector Bus

- ❖ There have been no changes to Fairfax Connector services, however cleaning protocols have been reviewed and updated.

- ❖ Increased vehicle cleaning cycles are occurring with a special focus on bus interiors and critical touchpoints. These cleanings incorporate disinfection procedures indicated to be effective against COVID-19.

Metro

Metro is reducing service:

METRO RAIL service:

- ❖ Monday-Friday: Trains will operate every 12 minutes on each line throughout the day. The rail system will maintain normal hours, opening at 5 a.m.

- ❖ Saturday: Trains will operate every 12 minutes on each line, with service from 7 a.m. until 1 a.m. (normal Saturday service).

- ❖ Sunday: Trains will operate every 15 minutes on each line, with service from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. (normal Sunday service).

METROBUS service:

- ❖ On weekdays, bus service will operate on a Saturday supplemental schedule.
- ❖ Weekend bus schedules are unchanged.

- ❖ WMATA also asks that customers do not use Metro to go to healthcare appointments if you are showing signs of illness.

Other changes:

- ❖ Fairfax County has cancelled the secure document shredding event for Saturday, March 21, at the Gerry Hyland Government Center. It will be rescheduled at a later date.

- ❖ The Supreme Court of Virginia has declared a judicial emergency. All non-essential state court proceedings are suspended effective March 16 to April 6, 2020.

Finally, we received questions about how to detect coronavirus in its early stages. According to the CDC the following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure: • Cough • Fever • Shortness of breath

We have more information to share, my office and Fairfax County Government will continue to update residents. Thank you for your support and patience as we work to manage this challenging, complex, and rapidly evolving situation. Jeffrey C. McKay Chairman, Board of Supervisors

BULLETIN BOARD

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

CORONAVIRUS INFO CENTER

Fairfax County activated a Joint Information Center in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on March 13.

❖ **Fairfax County Health Department COVID-19 webpage** – www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus

❖ **Emergency Information Blog** (you can subscribe by email or follow by RSS) – www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog

❖ **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Call Center** – The community may call 703-267-3511 with questions. The call center is open from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.

❖ Residents may also text FFXCOVID to 888777 to receive updates from Fairfax County about COVID-19.

❖ **Twitter** – @fairfaxcounty and @fairfaxhealth

❖ **Facebook** – www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty and www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyhealth

CLOSURES DUE TO COVID-19

Effective Monday, March 16, Fairfax County park (indoor), library and other community facilities will be closed for two weeks. The impacted facilities include recreation (RECenters), nature, community, resource and teen centers, as well as golf courses, historic sites and (permitted use of) athletic fields and picnic shelters. The county has also closed all senior center and adult day health care facilities. Some of these facilities will be used as meal distribution centers to serve the community as needed. As the coronavirus situation continues to unfold the status of these facilities will be continuously re-evaluated.

❖ Learn more about COVID-19 on the Health Department Coronavirus (COVID-19) Webpage: (<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus>)

❖ Call 703-267-3511 with questions. The call center is open from 9:30 a.m. until 9 p.m. weekdays and 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends

❖ Residents may also text FFXCOVID to 888777 to receive updates from Fairfax County about COVID-19

❖ Follow the Fairfax County Government Facebook Page and Health Department Facebook Page

❖ Follow @fairfaxcounty and @fairfaxhealth on Twitter

SATURDAY/APRIL 4

CASA Info Session. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Fairfax CASA Office, 4103 Chain Bridge Road, Suite 200, Fairfax. Fairfax Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) provides volunteer advocates to abused and neglected children referred by the Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. The first step to becoming a CASA volunteer is to attend an information session. RSVP to sgoldberg@casafairfax.org as space is limited.

SUNDAY/MAY 17

Psychic Fair. 9-5 p.m. At Arlington-Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Boulevard, Fairfax. Psychic Fair for both those who are serious and for those who are just curious. Event can be a life-changing experience or just a fun time. Many of the best psychics, mediums, healers, and readers of all types, along with related arts and crafts vendors from Virginia and the surrounding areas. Note: 75% of tables offer some type of readings, 25% of tables offer related arts, crafts, books, oils, crystals, sage, herbs, information, jewelry, etc. There will be 44 vendors, All under one roof, all in one room, indoor event, free parking. Cost: \$5 in advance \$10 at the door. Visit the website: <https://va-psychic-fair-2020.eventbrite.com>

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.

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Feeling Pale By Comparison



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

In a peculiar way, my cancer treatment and all has sort of gotten lost in the coronavirus talk. With so many changes to our regular lifestyle occurring on a daily basis, it feels as if nothing else matters. Granted, one's health is the most important consideration, but now the talk is about everybody's health. Nevertheless, how do I throw caution to the wind and interact with my environment when doing so might endanger the very stability I've worked over 11 years to maintain? I mean, I have to live my life, but will there be a cost to do so? I realize that the good of the many outweigh the good of the few but Spock was speaking from outer space. How do I, while in and out of treatment down here on Earth not worry about myself?

I realize life will go on for almost all of us, but will there be consequences for those unable to secure proper care? Will decisions be made about allocating resources because demand has far outstripped supply? How does life for cancer patients undergoing treatment fit into this new paradigm where so many people might need some kind of medical care? Will there even be enough health care professionals to administer the kind of life-sustaining treatment many of us seriously-diagnosed patients have come to expect and need?

Unfortunately, only time will tell, and there may very well be little of it in the interim, during which we can anticipate and plan accordingly. So many decisions will likely be made by the powers that be that might not exactly consider my set of cancer circumstances. In a way, I might be collateral damage. There simply might not be enough room and medicine and staff and all to accommodate my needs. It's nothing personal. It's just business, or rather the lack thereof. With so much of the world's population affected while going about their usual and customary routine, who, what, where and how will there be any prioritization? Moreover, what about people who are already sick and challenged by a weakened immune system (like yours truly), will the competition from newly diagnosed coronavirus patients overwhelm our health care system?

I can't assume that life will go on as it always has. That would seem to be incredibly naive. I need to proactively make the necessary arrangements and/or contingency plans. I can't presume that being a cancer patient will always get me through the door. I'd like to think I take priority. But it might not be about priority, it might be about availability and a dwindling supply not able to keep up with demand.

Still, going down this rabbit hole of fear, anxiety and worry doesn't help either. As I have since the date of original diagnosis, back in late February, 2009, I need to make the best of a bad/challenging situation. I need to roll with the punches and be prepared for any eventuality and take the good with the bad and vice versa. Normal left the building a long time ago for me. The problem is that building to which I metaphorically refer is the very building where I get my ongoing medical treatment. And though I don't anticipate being kept away from that building, the reality is that it's out of my control.

As with anticipating the results of CT scans and lab results, all in good time, or bad. I need to keep the same positive attitude as I always have because though I might be at greater risk than many of you regular readers, we are all at risk, apparently. As such, if there is indeed anything to be gained by so many people being so similarly affected, the reality is that there are strength in those numbers and even though it may feel that right now the whole world is upside down, things eventually will right themselves. They always do. I just hope I'm still smiling when the dust settles.

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



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