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Springfield

CONNECTION

Franconia ♦ Kingstowne ♦ Newington

Springfield residents Wendy Rebera and Jenna Amendez put food items in their car at the loading dock behind Koinonia.

Priority: Saving Lives
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**Life in a Time of
Health Emergency**
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**Communities
In Time of Need**
NEWS, PAGE 2

COVID-19 Puts Some into a Time of Need

Area charity organizations are ready to lend a helping hand, donations needed.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

As the covid-19 pandemic impacted nearly every facet of people's lives in March, Judy Davis manned the front desk at the Koinonia Foundation, going from one phone call to the other, and working with a family in the lobby.

All the residents of Virginia are being directed to stay at home, avoid others, and to not gather in groups of 10 or more, which means no work and no paycheck for some.

"We're scrambling," said Davis. Koinonia was only accepting food and monetary donations, and the table in the backroom was covered with canned goods but it was not much compared to the level of donations at other times. Since people are staying in, they were short staffed.

"Phones are ringing a lot," said Davis.

Koinonia is a Christian-based organization that provides food and monetary assistance to those in need. Their motto is "We all need a helping hand sometimes."

Donations come in from all over the Franconia and Kingstowne area. "Churches really help out a lot," Davis said.

With the coronavirus closing facilities all



The table in the back room of Koinonia is covered with canned items.

PHOTOS BY
MIKE SALMON/
THE CONNECTION

over the area, including the dining area of restaurants where hourly wage employees work, the needs at places like Koinonia are going up. They don't mention the virus by name on their website, but an upcoming pancake dinner was postponed. "This event has been postponed due to health concerns," the posting read. On Davis's desk was a big bottle of hand sanitizer for any-

one that needed a dab.

On the other side of I-95, where Franconia Road turns into Old Keene Mill Road, ECHO, the Ecumenical Community Helping Others, is doing the same thing for residents.

ECHO is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) charity that gives food and financial help to people with short-term emergencies, and provides clothes and household items to

people with low incomes. In mid March, their needs were listed as food and personal care items, including "Cleaning supplies/wipes/sanitizer." They have a drop off area in the parking lot, right on Old Keene Mill Road, and to minimize contact with others, "Donation Door volunteers will come out to your car and carry in the donations so you will not have to come in close contact with anyone else," they state on the website. The coronavirus precautions are not mentioned though.

Presently, ECHO is only accepting donations of food, health/cleaning products, and financial contributions until further notice, it stated on the website. They are asking people to hold off on donations of clothing and housewares until volunteer staff is able to process these items once again.

Need info on volunteering or donating?

ECHO

Call 703-569-7972
7205 Old Keene Mill Road
Springfield, VA 22150
admin@echo-inc.org
Fax 703-455-2763

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'Our Priority Is to Save Lives'

Governor Northam orders statewide closure of certain non-essential businesses: all public and private schools K-12 closed for the rest of the academic year.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

“COVID-19 is serious, and we must act. Unfortunately, the virus does not respect national borders or state borders. It is now everywhere, or it will be soon. That is what happens when a global pandemic hits a nation. With this pandemic, states have been left to figure out this on our own, and I’m acting to protect Virginians,” said Virginia Governor Ralph Northam who issued statewide Executive Order Number Fifty-Three (2020) in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Monday, March 23. It ordered the closure of certain non-essential businesses, bans all gatherings of more than 10 people, and closes all K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year. The Order goes into effect at 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. It remains in place until 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2020.

Northam said, “Nonessential retail establishments can remain open if they allow 10 or fewer patrons and adhere to social distancing and increase sanitizing procedures. Essential services like grocery stores, health services and businesses in our supply chain will remain open, but they must adhere to social distancing and increased sanitizing procedures. Gatherings of more than 10 are banned. We do not make these decisions lightly.” He stressed there would be expectations for essential businesses that remained open. Social distancing mattered, and businesses that remained open had a responsibility to adhere to social distancing recommendations. “You need to step up sanitizing practices on common service surfaces...Make no mistake. If you are essential and open, you have a special responsibility to do the right thing,” he said.

AS FOR SCHOOLS, Northam said that closures were necessary to minimize the speed at which COVID-19 spread and protect the capacity of the healthcare system. Northam said, “By tomorrow, our Department of Education will issue guidance to help school divisions think through those decisions and ensure that every student is served equitably. We’re already working on waivers to relieve testing requirements and ensure that our students who were on track to graduate can do so.” He added that according to a Yale study estimate, 80,000 of students statewide may be the children of health care workers and urged a public-private response. “Today I’m calling on our



Gov. Ralph Northam, COVID-19 Briefing. March 23

local communities, private daycare providers, community childcare partners, and public schools to rally together to provide childcare for the young children and school-aged children of essential personnel. Our childcare providers are also essential personnel,” Northam said.

Northam said individuals were moving into a period of sacrifice. “Most of us have already begun to experience this. Many businesses are closed already because their owners have done the responsible thing...Today, thousands, thousands of people are without work here in our Commonwealth. About 40,000 people have filed for unemployment just last week. That number will, unfortunately, go up. More families will be out of work that has serious health consequences too. It will lead to anxiety; it will lead to fear. It is difficult to live with uncertainty. We can expect to see more depression, alcoholism and domestic violence. But the sooner we all take these necessary steps to slow the spread, the sooner we will all get through this,” said Northam.

In closing, Northam acknowledged the health crisis and economic crisis and said that the sooner that we can get this health crisis under control, the sooner our economy will recover. “So I asked every Virginian to stand with me as we fight this battle. Do your part. Stay home, when you can, and social distance and wash your hands when you must go out for supplies. I know that the next several weeks, the next several months will be difficult. They will require everyone to change the way that we live and the way we interact with each other.

We have not been called upon to sacrifice this in many, many years. But I am calling on you to do just that. We must put aside what we want and replace it with what we need... It will take time, but we can, and we will get through this together.”

According to the Executive Order, violation of paragraphs 1, 3, 4 and 6 of the Order shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor pursuant to § 44-146.17 of the Code of Virginia.

Paragraph 1-Effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020, all public and private in person gatherings of 10 or more individuals are prohibited.

Paragraph 3-Closure of all dining and congregation areas in restaurants, dining establishments, food courts, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, tasting rooms, and farmers markets effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020. Restaurants, dining establishments, food courts, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, tasting rooms, and farmers markets may continue to offer delivery and take-out services.

Paragraph 4-Closure of all public access to recreational and entertainment businesses, effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020 as set forth below:

- ❖ Theaters, performing arts centers, concert venues, museums, and other indoor

entertainment centers;

- ❖ Fitness centers, gymnasiums, recreation centers, indoor sports facilities, and indoor exercise facilities;

- ❖ Beauty salons, barbershops, spas, massage parlors, tanning salons, tattoo shops, and any other location where personal care or personal grooming services are performed that would not allow compliance with social distancing guidelines to remain six feet apart;

- ❖ Racetracks and historic horse racing facilities; and

- ❖ Bowling alleys, skating rinks, arcades, amusement parks, trampoline parks, fairs, arts and craft facilities, aquariums, zoos, escape rooms, indoor shooting ranges, public and private social clubs, and all other places of indoor public amusement.

Paragraph 6 Effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020, any brick and mortar retail business not listed in paragraph 5 may continue to operate but must limit all in-person shopping to no more than 10 patrons per establishment. If any such business cannot adhere to the 10 patron limit with proper social distancing requirements, it must close.

Paragraph 5

- ❖ Grocery stores, pharmacies, and other retailers that sell food and beverage products or pharmacy products, including dollar stores, and department stores with grocery or pharmacy operations;

- ❖ Medical, laboratory, and vision supply retailers;

- ❖ Electronic retailers that sell or service cell phones, computers, tablets, and other communications technology;

- ❖ Automotive parts, accessories, and tire retailers as well as automotive repair facilities;

- ❖ Home improvement, hardware, building material, and building supply retailers;

- ❖ Lawn and garden equipment retailers;

- ❖ Beer, wine, and liquor stores;

- ❖ Retail functions of gas stations and convenience stores;

- ❖ Retail located within healthcare facilities;

- ❖ Banks and other financial institutions with retail functions;

- ❖ Pet and feed stores;

- ❖ Printing and office supply stores; and

- ❖ Laundromats and dry cleaners.

To read Executive Order visit [https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/EO-53-Temporary-Restrictions-Due-To-Novel-Coronavirus-\(COVID-19\).pdf](https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/EO-53-Temporary-Restrictions-Due-To-Novel-Coronavirus-(COVID-19).pdf)

Worried about not being able to get food or unsure where your next meal will come from, text “food” or “comida” to 877-877 to connect with nearby resources & help.

OPINION

Keep Calm and Social Distance!

Ways you can help in COVID-19 time.

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK
(D-MT VERNON)

“Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today,” said Abraham Lincoln. Well, today, our community needs your help.

It is a strange and ever evolving new reality we find ourselves in as a result of the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Three weeks ago, we never imagined we would find ourselves with schools, parks, libraries and businesses closed; being asked to stay home; empty groceries store shelves or financial instability. However, we are all in this together and we will work to get through this together. Adversity drives us to find new ways to do things and that is just what



the County is doing. As our Board Chairman Jeff McKay said last week, “I don’t believe there’s any better place in this country or this world to make it through trying times than in Fairfax County.” We have the resources and we are prepared. For updates on all the County is doing and resources available, visit: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/> and sign up for text alerts by texting FFXCOVID to 888777.

There is also much you can do in this time of great uncertainty and need. Look out for your neighbors, offer to pick up groceries for the elderly or facetime those you might normally visit. In our broader community, many are facing financial or food insecurity. As our human services and non-profit providers are seeing increased demand, they are also receiving less donations. Blood banks are running low and many organizations still need volunteers – with safety and social distancing precautions. We have put together a comprehensive list of those offering services in our

community, both for those in need and those looking to help on our website: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/>. We will continue to update this information as we receive updates.

Businesses are also facing hardship and uncertainty, especially our small, local businesses. Please consider continuing to support those you can through ordering take out and delivery, purchasing gift cards or making donations to their employees.

We have a very strong, engaged and caring community. It has been amazing to see so many great examples of charity and assistance. It is also encouraging to see so many wonderful new healthy habits – families jogging and riding bikes daily, spending family time playing board games and using social media to connect with each other. These new habits, enhanced interactions and pathways will make each of us and our community stronger when this crisis is over.

Our destiny is in our own hands.

P.S. Don’t forget to complete the 2020 U.S. Census: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/census/>!

VIEWPOINTS

Life in a Time of Health Emergency

The Connection asked two questions of people met in area parks this week: “How is the health emergency impacting you” and “What positive have you noticed during these changed times?”

—SUSAN LAUME



Walter Nockett, portfolio manager, Alexandria

“Working from home, which we had not done before. {Our} business is based on face to face interaction, but transition has been seamless. Like being able to separate from work and have more time for walks with the dog.”



Karin Drinkhall, new mother, Springfield

“I was already isolating and on leave, having a newborn with having to build up her immune system. So I’m a little paranoid, like a lot of people. Not really seeing any positives.”



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Chuck Dereck, Retired Environmental Engineer, Fairfax Station, and wife Joan

“We had a number of planned trips cancelled, and can’t go to the gym every day. Can’t go to brew pubs. Can’t go back to finish dental work.”

Joan added, “Yard looks amazing with gardening hours every day; our relationship with the little girl next door who comes over to read, and bake, and play cards while her mom works at home; and time for watching movies every night.”



Michael Crossin, systems engineer, Dumfries

“Now on mandatory work from home, but otherwise not much has changed. More family time and neighborhood coming together to help each other, and the school system providing meals for those who need them.”



Heather Filipunas, surgical dental assistant, Lorton

“Surgical procedures are on hold except for emergencies. Hours at work are cut back which leads to stress and the worry of how you’re going to pay your bills; it brings financial burdens to families. I have more family time at home. The most likely one to bring it [the virus] home would be me, so it’s keeping me [taking precautions] from catching it and giving it to my family.”



Danny Reighard, graphics designer, Alexandria

“Working from home now, but other than that not much effect. More time to go for walks outdoors and exercise.”



Terri Everett, registered nurse anesthesiologist, Alexandria

“Educating people about social awareness and how serious this is. We think about bad things but people mean the most and we want to keep them safe.”

Springfield CONNECTION

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
south@connectionnewspapers.com

Kemal Kurspahic
Editor ♦ 703-778-9414
kemal@connectionnewspapers.com

Andrea Worker
Contributing Writer
aworker@connectionnewspapers.com

Jean Card
Production Editor
jcard@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
e-mail:
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Steve Hogan
Display Advertising, 703-778-9418
shogan@connectionnewspapers.com

Debbie Funk
National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunc@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment Advertising
703-778-9431

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Executive Vice President
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Managing Editor
Kemal Kurspahic
Art/Design:
Laurence Foong, John Heinly,
Ali Khaligh
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com



NEWS

Food Resources Available

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency continues to evolve, we understand that individuals and families in our communities may have food assistance needs.

Fairfax County and Fairfax County Public Schools have worked together to develop a searchable map that includes community food distribution sites, including FCPS grab and go locations, community meal distribution sites, food pantries, and other related services.

Please view the map <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maps/food-resources>.

FCPS is committed to providing information to assist families that rely on free and reduced price school meals and is providing grab and go meals at no cost for students at several sites throughout the county. FCPS students are welcome to come to any of the sites to pick up a meal during these time periods. All FCPS students are eligible for free grab and go breakfast and lunch. All other county children, under the age of 18, can also receive a meal. Adults may pay \$2 for the meals as well. Students must be present to request the meals.

FCPS is providing grab and go meals at several schools and community centers, including pop-up locations, and along several bus routes throughout the county.

Two school sites offer curbside pickup. Breakfast and lunch will be available from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Follow the kiss and ride signage for traffic flow at the school; FCPS staff will deliver meals to children and adults while they wait in their cars.

❖ Westgate Elementary, 7500 Magarity Road, Falls Church

❖ Oak View Elementary, 5004 Sideburn Road, Fairfax
The FCPS sites, locations, bus routes, and curbside service are available Monday-Friday only.

FCPS sites

Effective Tuesday, March 24, FCPS is changing the time for grab and go meal service at 34 school locations. The grab and go meals will be available from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. beginning March 24. Breakfast and lunch will be available at the same time.

❖ Annandale Terrace ES, 7604 Herald St., Annandale
❖ Bailey's Primary ES, 6111 Knollwood Dr., Falls Church
❖ Braddock ES, 7825 Heritage Dr., Annandale
❖ Bren Mar Park ES, 6344 Beryl Rd., Alexandria
❖ Brookfield ES, 4200 Lees Corner Rd, Chantilly
❖ Bucknell ES, 6925 University Dr, Alexandria
❖ Burke School, 9645 Burke Lake Rd., Burke
❖ Cameron ES, 3434 Campbell Drive, Alexandria
❖ Centre Ridge ES, 14400 New Braddock Rd., Centreville

❖ Coates ES, 2480 River Burch Road, Herndon
❖ Crestwood ES, 6010 Hanover Ave., Springfield
❖ Cunningham Park ES, 1001 Park St., Vienna
❖ Dogwood ES, 12300 Glade Dr., Reston
❖ Edison HS, 5801 Franconia Rd, Alexandria
❖ Falls Church HS, 7521 Jaguar Trail, Falls Church
❖ FCPS Food and Nutrition Services, Energy Zone Center, 6840 Industrial Rd, Springfield
❖ Fort Belvoir Upper ES, 5980 Meeres Rd., Fort Belvoir
❖ Forest Edge ES, 1501 Becontree Ln, Reston
❖ Garfield ES, 7101 Old Keene Mill Rd., Springfield
❖ Glen Forest ES, 5829 Glen Forest Dr., Falls Church
❖ Graham Road Community Center, 3036 Graham Rd., Falls Church

❖ Herndon ES, 630 Dranesville Rd., Herndon
❖ Hollin Meadows ES, 2310 Nordok Place, Alexandria
❖ Hutchison ES, 13209 Parcher Ave., Herndon
❖ Hybla Valley ES, 3415 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria
❖ Irving MS, 8100 Old Keene Mill Rd., Springfield
❖ London Towne ES, 6100 Stone Rd., Centreville
❖ Lorton Station ES, 9298 Lewis Chapel Rd, Lorton
❖ Mount Vernon Woods ES, 4015 Fielding St., Alexandria
❖ Parklawn ES, 4116 Braddock Road, Alexandria
❖ Pine Spring ES, 7607 Willow Ln., Falls Church
❖ Providence ES, 3616 Jermantown Rd., Fairfax
❖ South County HS, 8700 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton
❖ Weyanoke ES, 6520 Braddock Rd., Alexandria

Pop-Up Locations

These "pop-up" grab and go sites serve both breakfast and lunch within the hours listed by site:

❖ Audubon Apartments, 10-10:30 a.m., 7930 Audubon Ave., Alexandria
❖ Bailey's Community Center, 10-10:30 a.m., 5920 Summers Ln, Falls Church
❖ Gum Springs Community Center, 11-11:30 a.m., 8100 Fordson Rd, Alexandria
❖ Hunters Woods ES, 10-10:30 a.m., 2401 Colts Neck Road, Reston
❖ James Lee Community Center, 12-12:30 p.m., 2855 Annandale Rd, Falls Church
❖ Luther Jackson MS, 11-11:30 a.m., 3020 Gallows Rd, Falls Church
❖ Mason Crest ES, 10-10:30 a.m., 3705 Crest Dr, Annandale
❖ Mosby Woods ES, 12-12:30 p.m., 9819 Five Oaks Rd, Fairfax
❖ South Lakes HS, 11-11:30 a.m., 11400 South Lakes Dr, Reston
❖ Willston Multicultural Center, 11-11:30 a.m., 6131 Willston Dr, Falls Church

Food Distributed Along 10 Bus Routes

Fairfax County Public Schools buses are delivering grab and go meals along some bus routes. School buses will stop at designated intersections to deliver these meals. All FCPS students are eligible for free grab and go breakfast and lunch. All other county children, under the age of 18, can also receive a meal. Adults may pay \$2 for the meals as well. Students must be present to request the meals. This service is available Monday - Friday only.

Bus Route 1: Serving the Virginia Run and Bull Run areas

Meal distribution information for the Bull Run ES, Virginia Run ES, Liberty MS, Stone MS, Centreville HS and Westfield HS areas

7:35-7:45 a.m. Airline Parkway and the Clubhouse
7:54-8 a.m. Trinity Parkway and Trinity Place at the Rental Office
8:10-8:15 a.m. Trinity Parkway & Wood Meadow Way (Woodway Apt Entrance)
8:20-8:30 a.m. Paddington Court & Paddington Court
8:35-8:45 a.m. Lee Overlook Rd & McCoy Rd

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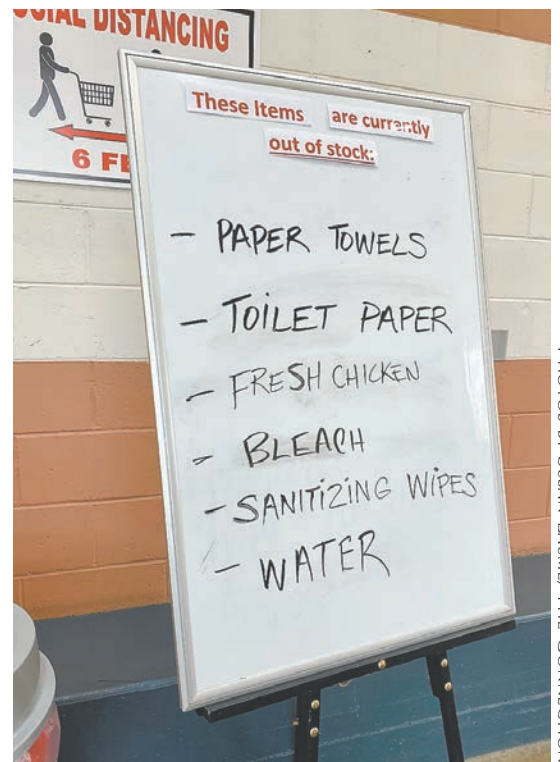
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NEWS



Police Officer R. Morton stationed at Costco as a crowd control precaution.



Customers greeted by distancing guidance; list of out of stock items at area Newington Costco store.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

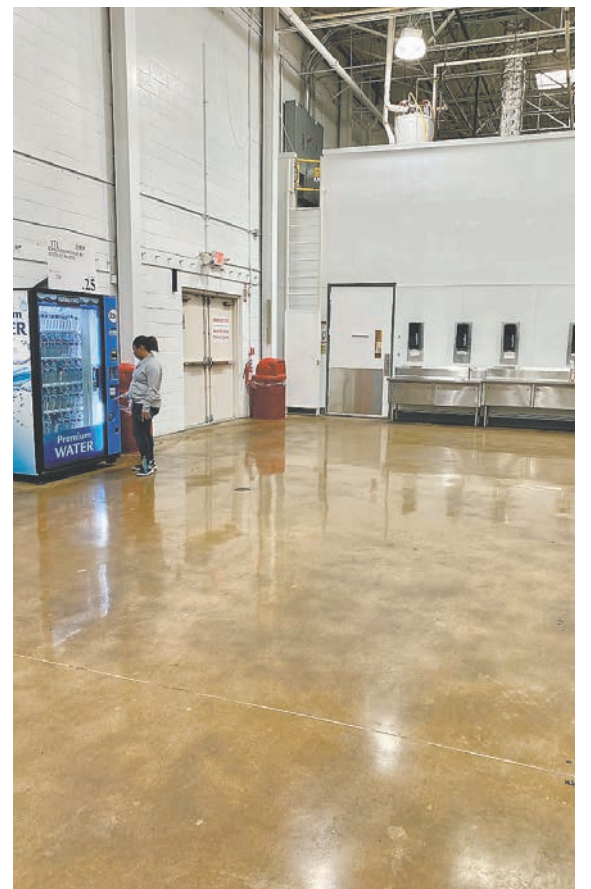
Costco Makes Changes To Protect Customers

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Area Costco stores, as providers of essential goods and exempt from the restrictions of no more than 10 people permitted, are feeling a different impact than many area businesses.... a deluge of customers. Many businesses such as gyms, restaurants, bars, movie theaters, and mall stores are shutting down, either proactively or curtailing operations by health department recommendation, and are struggling. Others like groceries, drug stores, warehouse suppliers, and on-line providers and delivery companies have seen a significant uptake in customers and orders as residents stock up on essentials or order on-line to comply with self isolation guidance.

Early opening hour Costco customers this week found it difficult to enter store parking lots with long lines for store entry. Later afternoon hours saw less store traffic, with available parking, but wait times to enter the stores. Stores requested and received assistance from Fairfax County Police who were on site for crowd control if needed. Officer R Morton who indicated there had been no trouble at the Newington store where he was stationed, said police would remain on site as a precaution, "...til things settle down."

Costco's were out of stock of many sought after items and employees struggled to keep shelves restocked this week. The store instituted several measures to help keep customers safe. Patrons are asked to wait in line, distanced by the length of large shopping carts, to assure the numbers inside the store at one time remain low. Every cart handle was wiped down before the customer entered. Crews inside were actively wiping and disinfecting shelves. Check out lanes have been reduced and spaced by every other register. Payment terminals no longer require touch entries or signatures (except notably at the pharmacy



Costco eat-in dining areas removed; replaced by super clean open floor space.

counter), and tables near the food counter have been removed, with eat-in dining no longer an option.

Many area stores, such as Walmart and Target, are reducing open hours to allow more time for re-shelving; some are providing weekly designated hours for at risk group shoppers. Potential customers will find more information on individual store websites.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

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.

COVID-19 CLOSURES

- Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam this week announced a number of COVID-related actions that impact Fairfax County and the entire Commonwealth, including:
- ❖ All schools (public and private) to remain closed at least through the end of the academic year. Fairfax County Public Schools is still considering some form of continuity of learning for its students. The School Board will meet in an emergency session on March 23 to discuss further.
 - ❖ Restaurants may only provide curbside, takeout or delivery service.
 - ❖ Recreation and entertainment facilities like gyms, bowling alleys and theaters must close.
 - ❖ Personal care services like spas, massage parlors and barber shops must close.
 - ❖ Essential businesses such as grocery stores, pharmacies and banks may remain open while maintaining social distancing guidelines; grocery stores must increase sanitizing procedures.
 - ❖ Non-essential brick and mortar establishments can stay open if they can maintain the 10-person limit, otherwise, non-essential businesses must close.
 - ❖ Gatherings of more than 10 people are still banned across Virginia.

FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOLS CLOSED

- Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis:
- ❖ All FCPS school buildings are now closed through the end of the year.
 - ❖ All FCPS administrative offices are closed until further notice.
 - ❖ Only essential personnel as defined by FCPS will be asked to report to work until further notice. All other employees will work remotely.
- Food distributions** will continue in the local area through the closures. Breakfast will be available from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and lunch will be available from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday-Friday at the following locations:
- ❖ Annandale Terrace ES, 7604 Herald St., Annandale;
 - ❖ Braddock ES, 7825 Heritage Dr., Annandale;
 - ❖ Burke School, 9645 Burke Lake Rd., Burke;
 - ❖ Crestwood ES, 6010 Hanover Ave., Springfield;
 - ❖ Garfield ES, 7101 Old Keene Mill Rd., Springfield;
 - ❖ Providence ES, 3616 Jermantown Rd., Fairfax;
- All students enrolled in FCPS and other County children 18 years and under receive one meal at no-cost; and, may have additional meals at no-cost upon request. Adults may purchase breakfast and lunch meals at a cost of \$2.00.

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

SALVATION ARMY GIVES AWAY FOOD BOXES

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Risking a Reward



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

In my 11-plus years as a lung cancer “diagnossee,” I’ve done a pretty good job of facing the facts and acting/planning accordingly. I’ve accepted my reality and somehow managed to live so long beyond the original “13 month to two year” prognosis I was given by my oncologist that he has introduced me to some of his students as his “third miracle.” Unfortunately, this characterization is not the end of the story.

In retrospect, dealing with/being treated for one type of cancer (non small cell lung cancer) seemed easy enough. Soon, I’ll be getting treated for two types of cancer: papillary thyroid cancer stage 2, in addition to my pre-existing stage 4 lung cancer. And since the treatments are not identical and cannot occur simultaneously, I’ll be receiving treatment for my thyroid cancer first and deferring treatment for my lung cancer until at least mid April. That’s when I have my next scheduled appointment with my oncologist when no doubt we’ll discuss strategy and all treating me forward.

In the interim, to address the thyroid cancer, I will be spending a night at the Washington Hospital Center. This will occur after I receive a dose of radioisotopes, a type of nuclear medicine designed to target and kill any remaining thyroid cancer in my body wherever it might be located. What happens after my “overnight” and subsequent follow-up appointment with my endocrinologist has yet to be discussed. What little I know is that I’ll need a pre- and post-procedure CT scans and that upon release from the hospital, I’ll need to be quarantined for a few days (away from children and pets primarily).

Hoping my body responds as anticipated, I’ll presume there will be some kind of maintenance-type of treatment for my thyroid cancer which will likely be combined with the restart of my lung cancer treatment. But I don’t really know. But what I really do know is that doctors, generally speaking, don’t want to consider scenarios about what might happen if such and such or so and so happens, or not. Though I’m sure there’s a reasonable expectation of something or other happening, my experience has been that doctors divulging what might happen (treatment/procedure etc.) next, since there are so many variables/results yet to be considered, is unlikely. Though I will still ask my fair share of questions about my future, ultimately, all I can do is wait and see.

Ordinarily, as in how I’ve managed since my diagnosis, being uncertain about the next medical step has been no problem. I realize that answer would likely be somewhere between a house of cards and definite maybe anyway, always depending. Now add to the mix of uncertainty, the coronavirus that has “pandemicked” the country. As a result of its spread, will I be prevented/rescheduled because the hospitals are overwhelmed? After all, I am the poster child for possible victims: male, over 60, weakened immune system with a severe underlying medical condition. I’m the exact person they don’t want to see at the hospital. Yet, if I don’t go/receive approval to go, I doubt I’ll get any better at home without treatment. In my case, I don’t believe leaving well enough alone is going to work very well.

Still, my choices feel almost counterintuitive. I have to risk my life (leave my home) in order to possibly save my life (cancer treatment) away from home. I can’t do one without the other. To receive treatment, I’ll have to expose myself, potentially, to the exact complication that my lung cancer diagnosis makes me most susceptible to: breathing issues. However, if I don’t/can’t, I’ll be worse off than if I hadn’t. Nor do I feel as if I can wait until the virus is more under control. Control which seems unlikely in the near term. And in every term (short, medium or long), the cancer is not going to wait. I sure hope I won’t have to either.

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

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