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The

Arlington

Connection

Mirabel makes large and small masks at Trade Roots on Washington Boulevard in Arlington.

Who Is That Masked Human?

NEWS, PAGE 4

Reducing Incarceration

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On the Street in Arlington

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PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/ARLINGTON CONNECTION

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APRIL 15-21, 2020

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News

OAR 12th Spring Fundraiser Held Online

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

A number of Arlington non-profits cancelled their major spring fundraisers due the pandemic. Instead of cancelling their 12th annual fundraiser, Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) of Arlington, Alexandria and Falls Church decided to hold their annual Second Chance breakfast online.

Dr. Kathy Dwyer, Chair of the OAR Board and pastor of Rock Spring United Church of Christ, says it was challenging. They made the decision to go ahead less than two weeks before the April 2 event. She said OAR didn't have any audio-visual people on the OAR staff. Elizabeth Jones Valderrama, Executive Director of OAR, says it was a stressful experience. "But we were lucky to have a great team, and volunteers jumped in." She adds that they did a dry run the day before and found some glitches.

Jones Valderrama, says they decided to go ahead because, "We know this brings joy to people who attend and we wanted to be able to do that in these unprecedented times." In addition, she explained the program participants are really struggling and needing the OAR services, and this is the biggest fundraiser by far each year. "We get calls every day for help with food, rent and other necessities." And they were already \$30,000 over budget.

Dwyer said they tried to follow the same format as in previous in-person fundraisers where they shared the creative and inspiring stories of OAR participants who had experienced incarceration. Jones Valderrama, did a live welcome to the breakfast from her home, then incorporated a couple of prerecorded small videos of OAR stories. Dwyer did the ask for support at the end. They incorporated a couple of polls where people could participate by answering questions, first with fun things like "is your pet watching with you," and then on to more serious questions about racial justice. The answers were immediately tabulated. This all got combined into the program.

Dwyer says last year's breakfast at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington had 600 attendees and raised \$110,000 while this

SEE FUNDRAISER, PAGE 7

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Commonwealth Attorney's Pandemic Priorities

Foresight helps keep pandemic at bay in local detention centers.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

How do you keep people out of jail during a pandemic? On March 27th, Parisa Deghani-Tafti tweeted, "We've been working on that in Arlington!" She was referring to Governor Northam's encouragement to police to avoid arrests and imprisonment, when possible, to cut down on the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 10, Deghani-Tafti said, "We started in early March talking to stakeholders, public defenders, the Arlington County Sheriff and the police. We could imagine jails were going to be a lot like cruise ships, only they are cruise ships you can't just off-load, and they are 'cruise ships times 1,000' because corrections officers leave a jail to go back in the community. We knew from the sheriff that if we thinned down the prisoner population we could space people out more [in the jail]. Their medical staff wouldn't be overwhelmed. We went at it in different ways: we told police to issue a summons whenever they could. Police were asked not even to book people at jail. We spoke to the magistrates and talked about releasing as many prisoners as possible."

Deghani-Tafti had already started efforts to reduce the jail population as early as January.

"Since early March we have asked the Sheriff for lists, looking at anyone who could be released, because they were either on pre-trial detention or there for probation violations. The public defender has been great," she said. "We did a lot of reconsid-



Parisa Deghani-Tafti, Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, talking to Arlington residents during a conference on restorative justice and mental health in January 2020.

eration of bond amounts. We haven't agreed on every case, but many. Those cash bonds were set over our objections."

Deghani-Tafti was elected on a platform that included eliminating some cash bond requirements, which she views as discriminating against the poor.

"We have not had a single positive case of COVID-19 in our jail, as a result of our efforts," keeping the numbers of prisoners as low as possible.

"We have done the same thing with our

juvenile detention center. We had nine kids in there, and we identified two we could get out. The others we could not release because they were either charged with serious violent crimes or the state of their families was such that there was no place for them to go. Sometimes families are not willing to bring the kids back home, and sometimes it's a combination of those two things."

"If we can say it's okay to release the people we have let go during COVID-19 then

why are we incarcerating them in the first place, using the most blunt of tools at our disposal?"

Deghani-Tafti made it clear there are red-lines. "In some cases we have asked for people to be held."

"We are going on a case by case basis," she said. Inmates who are on pre-trial detention in violent cases are not being considered for release. But the others can be monitored on personal recognizance or pre-trial supervision. Cases can be heard over phone calls versus in-person appearances, to maintain social distancing requirements.

Deghani-Tafti said one of the big reasons the number of COVID-19 cases in facilities in Arlington and Falls Church is still zero is because they stopped extraditing people from D.C. and nearby states. "That definitely helped. We didn't want to expose the deputies to that threat." Deghani-Tafti said that crimes such as distribution of very serious drugs will require extradition. Possession does not meet the threshold, but distribution does.

Deghani-Tafti said police are monitoring social distancing and occasionally have to remind people they weren't following the stay at home guidelines. They are getting calls about people gathering in parks, or having parties, but Deghani-Tafti has asked police not to engage too closely either, for their own protection. It's a tough position for police to be in — they are out there doing their job, but being told to do it differently.

SEE MANAGING, PAGE 5

SLICE OF LIFE

What He Really Seemed to Need Was a Hug

Six feet turns out to be a lot of distance to hear clearly in the wind.

BY JOAN BRADY

In my neighborhood, most people walk the streets without masks. And there has been much discussion in my own household about the use of masks. We live in an apartment building. I think we should be wearing masks in the hall, elevator and lobby.

For long walks though, I find it hard to breathe with a mask on. So, Saturday, as I walked the streets, my face was bare to the warm spring sun. And for a few moments, looking up at the sky, it was like any other lovely spring day.

Just after passing the corner of Wilson and Veitch a man called out to me and it was back to our new reality. I glanced over, doing my new kind of quick risk assessment; homeless man/virus risk. With



Will

every person on the street now viewed with suspicion, I flashed on what it must like to be homeless right now. I moved closer, eye-balling my six feet of social distance.

He looked squarely at me, perhaps the only person to have done so on my 3 mile walk. Haltingly, he started to speak, not making much sense at first. Until finally, "I'm having a time right now," he told me, his bright blue/green eyes welling up with tears. "I served 8 years in the Marines. But no one cares about that now."

I thanked him for his service and asked if things were worse as a result of the virus. He continued, following his own thoughts. "I played in a band."

I was famous." I believe he said as a drummer, but he might have said trumpeter. Six feet turns out to be a lot of distance to hear clearly in the wind.

He told me his name was Will and I introduced myself as well. What he really seemed to need was a hug. Instead, I asked if I could get him something to eat and/or drink. He gestured to a Giant bag with a prepared meal and pulled a wad of cash out of his pocket to show me. Nothing more was needed.

Our chat was briefly interrupted by a couple who reached toward Will, handing him some money and wishing him good luck. He accepted the money and thanked them as they hurried on.

"You see," he told me, tears spilling over "I have money... But money isn't everything... Sometimes you need conversation."

PHOTO BY
JOAN BRADY

Who Is That Masked Man? Arlingtonians respond to recommendation to wear PPE

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

In early April the Center for Disease Control urged Americans to wear face coverings in public settings. On April 7 Libby Garvey, Chair of the Arlington County Board, reinforced this directive. But she went a step further by demonstrating online how to fold a red, white and blue bandana into a face mask with ribbons to fit over the ears for those who she says, “like me, can’t sew.”

Arlingtonians have stepped up and face masks with stars, flowers, stripes and even plain white are found on faces walking down sidewalks, delivering packages, repairing streets and shopping for groceries.

Customers kept coming in to Arlington Cleaners on Harrison Street asking if their seamstress would make face masks that they could wear when out in public places for protection from the coronavirus. Jung Chou, the owner of the business, said, “I wasn’t sure we could make that much in a day.”

But they kept thinking and talking to their seamstress, Mrs. So, and they came up with an idea. Now Mrs. So makes a maximum of 80 a day in her home. Chou says in the last three days they have had orders for 300 masks. “We try to fill orders within three days, but it may be a little longer because we have so many orders.” Customers order them, and then come in when they are ready to pick them up and pay for them.

Chou says it is hard to buy fabric. So stood in line for two hours at JoAnn’s Fabric to buy the washable cotton she uses to sew the masks. Then she makes a pocket for insertion of a coffee filter. The men’s masks are a darker fabric, and the women’s have flowers or whatever fabric she is able to get. “I never know until I see them. I’m going to pick up some now.” Chou says So only makes men’s and women’s masks, not for children.

Arlington Arts has organized a volunteer effort in the community to make face masks. Joan Lynch, Director of Arts Enterprises for Arlington Cultural Affairs, said by April 7 they had over 100 responses from the community. She sent an email to the volunteers. “We are in the process of making bundles with fabric, patterns, elastic, ribbon and thread. We have a very small staff of volunteers so it has taken us some time to pull together all of your emails.”

Lynch says they passed out 30 bundles on



Two students shopping together but with appropriate social distancing.



Assistant Supervisor at Safeway directing customers to the new one-way aisles.



Grocery store clerk joins the front line workers



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Mrs. So sews 80 face masks a day for Arlington Cleaners.

Finger donated her elastic to the volunteer effort but when she unwrapped her own kit she discovered it had material, thread and bias binding but no elastic.

Danielle Rampton, Volunteer Coordinator at AFAC says they ordered masks from Arlington Arts because in a typical week “we see about 100 volunteers. Most come with their own mask but we want to be able to offer them to everyone. We would welcome any and all mask donations.” Rampton says they probably have 500 on hand now.

Lisa Ostroff sent out her weekly newsletter to her Trade Roots customers telling them about a recent customer plan to send 84 tissue wrapped presents to shelters to support the families and at the same time to help keep her business going. In highlighted box she explained “Need a mask? Mirabel is busy making them,” and they are free for pick up or delivery. Ostroff says they have made 25 multi-colored masks to date and they are free to people who need them or some customers want to make a contribution to keep her business going.

20.

Mary Finger, a stitching volunteer, says she first started looking into making face masks several weeks ago and made masks for her family from a pattern online. She couldn’t find elastic so ordered some online. “Now I have 50 yards of elastic.” When she discovered Arlington Arts was sponsoring a drive to make non-medical masks for groups like A-SPAN and AFAC she decided to join the effort. “We’re all stuck in our houses with nothing to do, and I wanted to help.”

Friday, April 10 to volunteers who are already skilled stitchers. They had been working on this project for three weeks, and the outpouring of interest was great. Lynch said they are working in conjunction with the Arlington Department of Human Resources who decide how to distribute the masks with the first batch going to Arlington Food Assistance Center.

“We sent 112 [kits] today and 75 last week.” Each person received materials to make 24 masks with a return date of April

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.

WEAR FACE COVERINGS

Arlington County is encouraging all Arlingtonians to wear cloth face coverings when in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

This directive is in accordance with a new recommendation

from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which encourages the cloth face coverings in public (e.g. grocery stores and pharmacies). To be clear, this is not meant as a replacement to staying at home, handwashing or maintaining six feet of distance – those remain the cornerstones in the effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

RESIDENTS ASKED TO REDUCE WASTE

Arlington County, along with the City

of Alexandria and Fairfax County, are asking residents to reduce the waste they discard, in order to help protect collection crews. As residents heed the call to stay home, an increase of up to 40 percent in residential trash tonnage since mid-March has placed strain on regional waste management systems. Refuse and recycling collection are vital to the region’s health and safety, and localities are committed to providing this essential service. Every morning, collection crews

report to work while facing the same life challenges as the rest of the community.

To help ensure crew health and safety, as well as daily completion of routes, residents are asked to follow these guidelines:

Dispose of used wipes, tissues and paper towels in trash bags that are tied shut.

Minimize setting extra bags outside the cart.

Refrain from generating large amounts of waste – Keep your spring

cleaning pile in the basement, attic or garage until normal operations resume. (Bulk item pickup is suspended.)

Flatten cardboard boxes to create more room in recycling carts. Consider backyard composting or grasscycling lawn clippings.

OPEN DOOR MONDAYS

Arlington County Board Chair Libby Garvey announced that the Board this week will begin
SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

AFAC Sends Plea for Food Donations

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

AFAC has issued an urgent request to the community to donate much needed food for the low-income families they serve. Arlington Food Assistance Center had been serving 2,400 families providing 80,000 pounds of supplemental food assistance in a normal week. That number climbed to 2,885 in mid March. Now it has grown even higher as a result of the growing number of families now out of work due to the coronavirus pandemic. Forty percent of that food is donated from food drives and grocery store donations.

AFAC has asked for contributions of cereal, canned vegetables, tuna, tomato products, and soups. Jeremy Huston, Assistant Director of Communications at AFAC says, "sticking to these categories helps us when making uniformed bags for our families." He says the menu is now pre-bagged for the families so they can go through lines faster. Families get fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, a frozen protein, canned items, pasta, rice, beans, peanut butter, and oatmeal. Donations of clean fresh produce are now welcome but in a size that will fit in a plastic bag and is easily recognizable for families such as tomatoes, potatoes, beans and carrots.

Huston says a number of donation sites



Paulus Faracon initiates neighborhood food drive.

have recently closed due to the closure of public facilities but a number of popup food drives have been organized by civic associations and neighborhoods, individuals in their own driveways. For instance, last week 4,508 pounds was collected at six community centers and the Central library combined.

Paulus Faracon, a student at Bishop O'Connell has organized a food drive in his neighborhood through pamphlets, NextDoor, and a note on the front door inviting people to drop off food supplies. Sacks full of groceries are already crowding the house. He says he is willing to pick up the donations left on your doorstep on Wednesday or Thursday or have them dropped up at his house at 6628 Williamsburg by Friday, April 17 when he will deliver the donations to AFAC.

There are 10 Crystal City locations still available as well as AFAC warehouse at 2708 S. Nelson Street, Arlington Church of the Brethren at 300 N. Montague Street and Fairlington Villages Management Office at 3001 S. Abingdon Street. The annual food budget has gotten a boost from individual and corporate donations, foundations and Arlington County.

For further information contact food-drives@afac.org.

Managing Crime

FROM PAGE 3

COVID-19 will not derail efforts to engage in a restorative justice program for Arlington and Falls Church.

"We are forging ahead in the new normal," she said. "We had hoped to have a Restorative Justice Day (RJD) at the end of May, with interactive groups and simulations and much more. But we aren't calling it off, either, we will just be organizing it differently, virtually. We got the team together, and we all decided to do a partial RJD virtual meeting and then an in-person event later. The great advantage of virtual meetings is we can get experts to come to a zoom meeting that we could not get otherwise. ... I am so committed to this that I would move heaven and earth, if I had to, to keep the momentum going."

Deghani-Tafti said she has been amazed at how her office team has continued to function despite the difficulties of working during the pandemic. "Victim witness has two people every day. We have a skeleton crew coming in on two rotations. About a third of the office is in, but we are all wearing masks and social distancing. The way everyone has continued to work on the mission of the office, the commitment they have shown, the way they have pulled together and dealt with this crisis, despite the fact many of them have a much more difficult home situation because of the crisis, is just amazing.

I get very moved when I see how selfless people are and how committed to the community they are — our paralegals, attorneys, front desk staff. "

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Legals

Storage Line of Virginia, LLC (t/a APT Storage), Box 767, Haymarket VA 20168, pursuant to the assertion of a lien for rental of a storage unit, will hold a public auction for the sale of all goods in a storage unit to take place at 10:30Am on Wednesday, Apr 22, 2020 at storage unit 181A, located at Rosslyn Heights, 1804 N Quinn St, Arlington, VA 22209 to satisfy the lien. All terms of the sale are cash. Call 800-217-4280 for questions.

ON THE STREET IN ARLINGTON

BY JOAN BRADY

The streets of Arlington have a very different feel these days. For the most part, eyes no longer meet, if there are smiles, they may be hidden beneath a mask and even the dogs seem to understand a walk means business. At the same time, on a sunny spring day, there are seconds when you can briefly forget the increasing number of positive test results and deaths along with them and everything seems normal.



PHOTOS BY JOAN BRADY



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Fundraiser Held Online

FROM PAGE 2

year's online breakfast had 200 attendees in a Zoom chat format and raised \$30,000. "Overall given the timeframe and everything else, it was remarkable." She says a number of new people learned the OAR story.

But Dwyer explains the breakfast was disrupted "right off the bat by a speaker in space" mouthing racial epithets in the Zoom meeting. Dwyer explains as each speaker joins a Zoom group, they are identified by name and picture. A number of strange account names started appearing. These people started speaking racial slurs, and the administrator of the call immediately started kicking them out. But there were so many of these interruptions "that we couldn't keep up and had to shut out the entire group from chatting."

"The disturbing thing was that our Executive Director, who is a person of color, was talking about racial disparities just at the time these calls were coming in."

Jones Valderrama says "imagine white supremacists up at 7 in the morning saying super aggressive things."

But she said she wasn't surprised. She expected something like this might happen because of common interactions in the Arlington and Alexandria communities. "These things happen to us every day." She says people want to touch her hair to see if it feels different or her body, like a person of color isn't a real person, or they argue back at her in an aggressive way. Having a conversation about race is uncomfortable.

OAR was founded in 1974 to work with men and women returning to the community from incarceration and offering alternative sentencing options through community service with race equity as a core goal.

In 2019 OAR worked with 708 men and women who had experienced incarceration as well as 1,334 adults and youth performing community service. They sponsor re-entry programs beginning with assistance while still in prison and following with services as the person transitions successfully into the community. Since last fall OAR has hosted four intensive Undoing Racism workshops for 180 people, most of whom live in Arlington and Alexandria.

For further information visit their website at www.OARonline.org

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 4

piloting a virtual format for Open Door Mondays, the informal weekly sessions where individuals or small groups can meet one-on-one with a Board Member to raise any issue. Participation is easy — just fill out a brief RSVP on the County website, then join in virtually, or by phoning in, at 7 p.m. Mondays.

How to participate:
Fill out a brief RSVP form on the County website. Receive an acknowledgement email, beginning the Friday afternoon before the scheduled Open Door Monday.

Use the link in the acknowledgement email, or the phone number, to join the Open Door Monday, starting at 7 p.m. on the night of the session.

Keep your conversation brief to ensure everyone gets their turn.

Virtual Open Door Monday sessions will end at 8:30 p.m.

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Money For What, Exactly?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I don't know, really. Money comes in. Money goes out. But since I stay in and don't go out, cash is no longer king. Credit reigns supreme and since the accounting/budget system for the Lourie family business is rarely written down/planned for, I don't know from one expenditure to the next, where the money goes, unlike John Prine knew when he sang about "Sam Stone" when he came home.

As the spouse responsible for the business side of the marriage, it has been my job to financially plan what the family can and cannot afford. And since both earners were commission/tip recipients, the task of managing that cash flow, unpredictable as it occasionally was, took some emotional wherewithal. Nevertheless, we survived the ordeal, mostly, and now, as it has happened that all of us are consumed by pandemic-related pressures/procedures, our compensation history/experience has prepared us to ebb and flow with the times. But instead of spending money when we may have it, now we're spending money when the goods and services we need are available, which is similarly unpredictable as our dual incomes used to be.

The result of this inconsistent and 'unpredictable' availability is that when any of the goods and services are available one must buy immediately regardless of cash on hand/in-wallet or credit balance in tow or risk being shut out completely: "No soup for you," from a long-ago Seinfeld episode, so to speak (although my wife, Dina does like soup and therefore it is a regular item on our shopping list.) Accordingly, during these pandemic days, one must strike (buy) when the iron is hot, cash on hand be damned, and worrying about your credit card balance also be damned. We all need what we need in our homes/for our families and lack of paper money is not going to stop any of us from purchasing what staples and peace of mind a piece of plastic can offer. And thank God for those pieces of plastic with the magnetic strip. They're certainly getting a work out these days providing aid and comfort - of a sort, to all of us non-essential people staying at home.

And while we're staying/consuming at home, we're no longer letting our fingers do the walking through our local Yellow Pages. Instead, we're Googling our way instead, pointing and clicking, and then entering our credit card information while trying to keep our respective family business afloat. The evolving problem for me however is accounting for all these purchases and wondering if we're ever going to receive them, how much was actually charged and was the purchase even worth it, given the wait. Still, since we're all housebound, there are so many more purchases that have to be made over the phone/online that what control I used to have when in-person, spending the cash in my wallet, I no longer have. Now, I have to charge almost everything and then wait for the monthly credit card statement for an accounting of what financial damage I may have done. And by that time, 30 days or so later, I likely can't undo any of the damage because the customer-service operators are not available like they were during the pre-pandemic days or in some cases, not even taking calls. Resolution, clarification, compensation? Heck no. All you're likely to get is frustration, and that's after "extended waiting times."

And that previous paragraph's presumption is that I even know what I'm talking about (what I bought, where, when, how much, etc.). But the real point of this column, which concerns me more, is accounting for the purchases that I don't know about/haven't received. It reminds of a joke I once heard, David Brenner, a comedian from Philadelphia and a regular on The Johnny Carson Show tell: "It's not the mosquitoes I hear that I worry about, it's the ones I don't hear."

Three months plus into this pandemic and our new normal has become fairly familiar. The problem is that familiarity has bred some contempt.

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

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