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Great Falls

CONNECTION

With the help of the Rotary Club of Great Falls, Ashwani Ahluwalia, the owner of Brx American Bistro in Great Falls, has launched Meals for Heroes, preparing and delivering meals to the doctors and nurses at Reston Hospital, Kaiser Permanente Tysons, and Children's Hospital in D.C.

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Poetry Contest Winners Announced

The Fairfax County Park Authority and the Fairfax County Park Foundation celebrated Earth Day with a virtual poetry showcase recognizing the winners of the 2020 Fairfax Parks student poetry contest.

A record 150 students in grades K-8 entered the annual contest presented by the Fairfax County Park Authority and the Fairfax County Park Foundation. This year's theme of "My Parks, My Planet" celebrated the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. The virtual showcase included poetry readings from the six winners, as well as photo highlights from other entries. All winning videos and poems can be viewed at the Fairfax Parks 2020 Poetry Contest website.

The showcase replaced the poetry reading that was scheduled to be held at the Earth Day Fairfax Festival at Sully Historic Site, which had been canceled. The virtual showcase provided an opportunity to share some of the wonderful poetry with a much larger audience.

"Earth Day is a fitting opportunity to celebrate our local parks and the planet through the inspiring words of these young poets," said Michael Gailliot, Vice Chair of the Fairfax County Park Foundation Board. Gailliot would have

served as the emcee for the canceled poetry reading.

The winners will receive a \$50 Park Authority gift card, courtesy of the Fairfax County Park Foundation. The winners in each grade category of the poetry contest are:

Grades K-2

❖ Ali Dane of Springfield, a first-grade student at Garfield Elementary School

❖ Quraishi of Ashburn, a kindergarten homeschool student

Grades 3-5

❖ Jackson Stear of Burke, a fifth-grade student at Fairview Elementary School

❖ Sophie Yamaoka of Annandale, a fourth-grade student at Canterbury Woods Elementary School

Grades 6-8

❖ Eleanor Kim of Fairfax, a sixth-grade student at Fairhill Elementary School

❖ JoonWon Lee of Oakton, a sixth-grade student at Oakton Elementary School

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News

Managing Crisis, Great Falls Way

Restaurants, civic groups keep the community strong in facing pandemic.

BY EILEEN CURTIS

Crisis tests our collective mettle. In Great Falls, it is yielding wonderful examples of leadership, innovation, and caring. Food is the new gold. Beleaguered restaurants here have still managed to become givers. Yasser Baslios, owner of Deli Italiano, sent pizzas over to Inova Loudoun. Finn Thai advertised toilet paper. The Creamery serves up cheese, milk and eggs as well as ice cream.

Mike Kearney, owner of The Old Brogue in Great Falls, has re-invented himself, serving not only as one of the village's premier restaurateurs, but now purveyor of much-sought products such as hand sanitizer. Mike himself has become a traveling man, taking meals to clients who are home-bound, while organizing a team of 200 volunteers providing shopping services for shut-ins. He's also providing lunches to area first responders and hospital staff. His circle has now widened to helping desperate food shortages in D.C.

Ashwani Ahluwalia, the owner of Brx American Bistro in Great Falls, got creative. "Serving the community has always been one of my guiding principles. So, if I can do that through food, this is what I do best," says the restaurateur. With the help of the Rotary Club of Great Falls, he has launched Meals for Heroes, preparing and delivering meals to the doctors and nurses at Reston Hospital, Kaiser Permanente Tysons, and Children's Hospital in D.C. "These people are on the frontline every day fighting this battle. We need to help keep them strong too. If I can help by providing food, then it's the very thing I need to do for them." In another effort to continue to serve the community, he is also planning to stage a curbside barbecue in the Seneca Square parking lot with to-go cocktails, in conjunction with the anticipated opening of his new Brx Oven pizza.

OTHER LOCAL BUSINESSES address different needs of their community. For Great Falls Pilates, the emphasis is on staying healthy. Owner Ashley Gilchrist notes, "Our teaching style has adapted very well to a virtual setting. In addition to Pilates and yoga, we have added classes for beginners, a Men's Mat, thirty-minute core classes, kid's yoga, whole body stretch, and restorative yoga." Meanwhile, the Arts of Great Falls has focused on providing quality leisure. They are moving art classes online with classes on oil painting, jewelry, mixed media and youth drawing via Zoom. Costa's Family Dentistry is readying to reopen May 4 with new safety and sterilization protocols in place.

Tenant rents and PPP head the list of concerns for many businesses. The Rotary of Great Falls has stepped up to serve as a de facto chamber for its business members, sharing business news with local establishments. One beneficiary, interior designer Mar-



Ashwani Ahluwalia, owner of Brx, delivers food to Kaiser Permanente.

gery Wedderburn, reported, "Rotarian Joe Yoon at AOG reached out to me about the PPP. I was having trouble with my bank and so Rotary was able to put me in touch with Neddal Abu-Taa, one of their banker members. He helped me to get the PPP." The Rotary also helped put together a community chat room, meeting Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m. at helpgbusinesses.com.

ROTARY'S worldwide reputation as a service organization is very much in play at the local level. Volunteers are making phone calls to isolated senior citizens and enrolling as telehealth workers. Besides collecting nearly \$13,000 in donations to date for Meals for Heroes, the Rotary of Great Falls has also established a matching fund for Cornerstones, the area non-profit serving the homeless, children in need, and the hungry. In a short time, the Rotary has raised more than \$4,200 to help replenish our overwhelmed local food pantries. Contributions to both funds can be made at www.rotarygreatfallsva.org.



(On right) Dranesville District Supervisor John W. Foust goes live with Fairfax County Chief Financial Officer Joe Mondoro during a virtual town hall meeting on the Revised Budget Proposal for FY21.

Bracing for County's Revised Budget Proposal

Supervisor John Foust presents a virtual town hall.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

"Having a virtual town hall meeting on the budget was not what any of us expected we would be doing a few short weeks ago... Unfortunately, COVID-19 virus emerged," said Fairfax County Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville). On Tuesday evening, April 21, Foust provided residents with the opportunity to learn more about the FY 2021 Revised Budget Proposal and ask questions during the Dranesville Town Hall Meeting. Fairfax County Chief Financial Officer Joe Mondoro joined Foust. "The Revised Budget Proposal reflects the anticipated impact of the coronavirus on our local economy. It is significantly different from the FY 2021 Advertised Budget Plan...proposed in February," said Foust.

Together, for more than 60 minutes, Foust and Mondoro tag-teamed, discussing the Revised Budget Proposal and answering constituents' questions submitted by email, phone and video. Highlights of what listeners learned are that the Revised Budget Proposal no longer included the 3 cent Real Estate Tax rate increase; the rate would remain at \$1.15 per \$100 of assessed value, and neither did it include the adoption of a 4 percent Admissions Tax.

While the Revised Proposal put a freeze on county hiring, a hold on most new spending and re-prioritized services deemed



Dranesville District Supervisor John W. Foust presents his first virtual town hall.

essential to meet community needs during the coronavirus pandemic and support recovery, the County would preserve existing programs. Transfer to Fairfax County Public Schools decreased from an expected \$85.52 million to \$7.31 million. General Fund revenues were projected at \$4.457 billion, another decrease.

Mondoro shared updates. The County would receive an allocation "in the \$200 million range" that would flow from the Cares Act. "We'll be making some recommendations to the board... recognizing that clearly there are needs ... within our non-profit community (and) within those in the community that have been hit the hardest by coronavirus, lost their jobs... and have some basic need requirements for food, rental assistance, utility assistance... (and) support for the purchase of personal protective equipment," he said. Mondoro said for schools, the state budget adjustments appeared relatively minor, "about \$5 million from what was originally anticipated."

SEE FOUST, PAGE 6

Return to Normalcy

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

Warren G. Harding was elected president by a landslide in 1920. He promised in his campaign speeches that he would deliver, in a phrase that he reportedly coined, "a return to normalcy" that people eagerly sought after World War I. Harding had a scandal-plagued administration and marital affairs that contributed to rumors that his wife poisoned him leading to the heart attack that killed him before the end of his term. But Harding liked to be liked, and his "normalcy" phrase captured the mood of the people.

Today there is certainly a desire to return to life as normal from the quarantine existence we are experiencing during the pandemic. There are politicians who suggest that a quick return to life as we knew it before the coronavirus is possible, and that people should be "liberated" to live without the restrictions that governors have had to impose for public health and safety. At the reconvened session of the General Assem-



COMMENTARY

bly last week there was a background blare of horns soundings as cars and trucks circled Capitol Square driven by protestors who wanted to let us know that they wanted restrictions lifted.

It would be a tragic mistake to lift health and safety restrictions too early based on politics rather than reliable scientific evidence. Every individual needs to act in a responsible way with social distancing, hand washing, and face masks, and we need to encourage others to do the same. There is no constitutional right to spread your germs around.

The economic crisis brought on in part by the pandemic is another issue that will be addressed in future columns.

An activity that I believe would be helpful to undertake while we are hunkered down is to review the old "normalcy" under which we grew accustomed to living and to ask ourselves if we have learned things over the past several weeks that might be applied to life in the future. Re-

cently there has been a significant reduction in air pollution. We drive our vehicles less. Could we continue to make a list of what we need and make fewer vehicular trips to get those items. Walking and bicycling are on the increase that will contribute to better health in the community.

There has been a strengthening of community as neighbors support each other more, and there has been a wonderful outpouring of contributions and help to those in need. Many are looking at entertainment differently as there is a need to be more inventive and creative in entertaining ourselves.

Technology is being used more frequently to deliver information and services that should be continued into the future. Do not simply go back to the old way if we have been forced to recognize better ways to accomplish a purpose. Certainly teachers and public education have gained support by those who have had to teach their children at home!

I share the desire that a life without restrictions return as soon as medical science says it is safe to do so. In the meantime, let's think about what we have learned through all of this that might make our life be even better in the future. Share your ideas with me at kenplum@aol.com.

Respecting Thy Neighbor

BY NASIF AZHER

Swoosh! I shifted to the other side of the road for the fourth time in the approximately 1000 feet I had run from the house in the last 8 minutes. Followed a slight wave of appreciation from the elderly gentleman across the road. I waved back and continued my sprint. I had run this path numerous times as warmups for track meets over the last year but never had to practice this switching road sides every few minutes. Fellow bikers and strollers in the neighborhood seemed to practice the same. Without any verbal exchange or any new road signs, people had accepted "staying away from each other" as an act of respect and love for thy neighbor. The ruthlessness of COVID-19 is the driver of this newly accepted etiquette.

My mother, brother, and I relocated from San Francisco just to be near extended family and within a year I am told "not seeing the family" was the right thing to do – the only way to en-

sure that we all make it. With the state of our world today, many are unable to visit friends and family, which can cause one to feel lonely and isolated. I have noticed friends behaving "awkward" virtually from loneliness and boredom. But if one reflects on the fact that we are all in the same boat for the basic cause of "life," perhaps it will help us get through this crisis in a smoother manner. As cliché as it may sound, we have to stay united as we fight to defeat this "invisible enemy."

If we don't unite and cooperate, then problems will only intensify. For example, all it takes is one person disregarding physical distancing guidelines for this virus to spread to multiple others. One slight cough from someone not wearing a mask while browsing fruits, and tens of apples become dangerous to consume. A kind gesture like a hug can produce devastating results. In all these cases, there is a common theme - the actions of one person can put countless others at risk.

Luckily, the majority seems to have stepped up to the plate and embraced the role of a responsible citizen. Those knowing smiles when I clear off a fellow runner's space is evidence to this. Although paramount progress in the medical field is needed for the pandemic to be resolved, the little things like this add up and can truly have an impact.

Finally, it is crucial for us to be considerate of the needs of others and the environment during this time. For example, if we all purchased only the toilet paper or hand soap that we actually need, then perhaps those essential items would still be in stock regularly. By hoarding, we are making other people's lives more difficult. If we hold ourselves and family members accountable during these tumultuous times, then we can place our faith on the old maxim; this too will pass.

The writer is an 11th grader at Langley High School.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Selflessness and Compassion

To the Editor:

Right now the world is being brought to its knees by this "novel" Coronavirus. I was completing my surgery rotation in Brooklyn, the current epicenter of this virus, when I was sent home. I saw, first hand, the impact that this monster had on the community. Trust me, coming

back to my quiet home in northern Virginia and being stuck indoors for 14 days drove me crazy too. But not because I wanted to hang out with my friends or go out to eat, but because I had seen how the world was suffering and would continue to suffer and there was nothing I could do about it. This virus was about to show the world how being ignorant may not be as bliss as we all thought. It doesn't discriminate between races, age, gender or wealth. To be hon-

est, this was the most equity I had seen in the 27 years of my existence.

Being an Ahamdi Muslim, I was listening to a sermon by the head of our community on Friday and he stressed the importance of abiding by the rules placed by one's country. Honestly, as a doctor-to-be, it saddens me how ignorant we as a nation are. Wake up America. You won't die if you don't play basketball for a couple of weeks or get your nails done for a month. But

you will put many others around you at risk. And if that risk is greater than your love for one another, then what a shame.

I hope that this virus teaches us the importance of selflessness and compassion and I hope that once this pandemic ceases to exist, that we as humans don't forget these important lessons.

Aneela Wadan
Fairfax

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NEWS



Eileen Curtis

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Unexpected Experiences in Unusual Places

Great Falls author publishes her second book.

Local author Eileen Curtis has just published her second book, *Roam: Mindful Adventuring Across the Globe*. The Great Falls resident is an internationally published author whose diverse writings span arts and travel documentaries, magazine covers, business, and ghostwriting people's memoirs. Among her many awards are a Peabody and the Silver Medal for the Arts from the Government of Austria. Her co-author Pat Williams owned an adventure travel agency for many years.

In the new book *Roam*, Curtis and Williams share seven journeys they deem the best of their visits to more than a hundred countries. Curtis cautions, "This is not the typical Paris and Rome travel experience.

Our narrative invites readers to come along on vicarious journeys full of unexpected experiences in unusual places." These include a safari in Kenya and Tanzania, a walk on the Spanish Camino, hiking in Peru's mountains and jungles, traveling ancient Turkey and its underground cities, scuba-diving in the Galápagos, testing new philosophies in a Buddhist monastery in Nepal, and sampling the multicultural pulse of Santa Fe. Each dramatic story crosshatches themes of history, ritual, sublime panoramas, primitive spaces, high-wire adventure and reflective ruminations of mind and heart.

In the age of programmed living, *Roam* is a guide to finding what else is out there. Ultimately, "Roam" provides readers a pleasurable gambol to hidden places across the continents while engaging in life's deepest questions. Stuck at home? Wanting to practice mindfulness? *Roam* is a perfect recipe for trying something new. For more information, visit www.eileencurtiswritings.com and www.PatsWisdom.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.

CLOSURE OF SILVER AND ORANGE STATIONS

The Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) announced a new plan for construction activities for the summer of 2020 with a full closure of all Metrorail Orange and Silver Line stations in Fairfax County. These adjustments to WMATA's current construction efforts on the Silver Line and the up-coming platform reconstruction efforts on the Orange Line address the health and safety of WMATA's workers operating the rail system and the contractors working on these two major capital projects. It also considers the low ridership on Metrorail related to the impacts of COVID-19 and the current Stay-at-Home Orders in place across the National Capital Region.

The expanded station closures will advance the two largest capital projects in Virginia -- the demolition and reconstruction of the station platforms at four Metrorail Orange Line stations and work to connect the five new Metrorail Silver Line stations to the existing transit network. The closures begin Memorial Day weekend 2020 and are

expected to continue through the fall. Impacts on Orange and Silver Line Service -- All stations west of Ballston Metrorail Station on the Orange and Silver Lines will be closed beginning Saturday, May 23, 2020. The stations to be closed are: Orange Line -- East Falls Church, West Falls Church, Dunn Loring, Vienna Silver Line -- McLean, Tysons, Greensboro, Spring Hill, Wiehle-Reston East All Orange Line trains will begin and end service at Ballston. Service will operate from Ballston to New Carrollton. There will be no Silver Line service for the duration of the station closures. Free Shuttle Bus Service -- WMATA will be offering free express and local shuttle bus service to provide alternative travel options for those who must travel and use the Metrorail system. The shuttle buses will operate seven days a week during the operating hours of the Metrorail system, currently 5 a.m. – 9 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. on weekends. They will operate approximately every 10 minutes

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

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Fairfax County Chief Financial Officer Joe Mondoro answers constituent questions during the Q & A portion of the town hall.

Foust Hosts Virtual Town Hall

FROM PAGE 5

Foust cautioned the action the board takes in early May when adopting the budget would not be final action. “The challenge for us in estimating the budget is that data lags...The budget will be coming back to the board and the community repeatedly and we will be providing updates as we get additional information on the revenue side,” Foust said.

Q & A Highlights

Q: How do you compare the 2020 pandemic impact on the County with the 2008-2009 recession?

A: The immediate hit on our budget was dramatic because... the major component of the 2008 crisis was the housing market...It didn't impact every part of people's lives like this is. (Mondoro)

Q: Why aren't we using the reserves that we currently have available to us to fight the economic challenges?

Mondoro said there were three main reserves tied to the board's 10 percent policy based on General Fund Disbursements. The first, Managed Funds, had never been accessed in the County's history and was meant for a catastrophe. Staff recommendation was, “we don't go there first.” The second was Revenue Stabilization, accessed only when revenue declined by at least 1.5 percent, accompanied by expenditure reductions. I would think that in FY 21, those triggers will be met...The last reserve is the Economic Opportunity Reserve, which is 1 percent of the General Fund. And it has been accessed in response to the coronavirus, initial funding for a Micro-

loan program for small businesses. (Mondoro)

Q: Elaborate a little bit more about the plight of our friends who are homeless in Fairfax County... (and the presumptive) growing number of homeless... due to the failure of people to be able to pay rents and mortgages.

A: We are in the process of expanding the number of hotel rooms that we are renting so that we have more capacity for the homeless and especially individuals who are at risk of contracting coronavirus. We are initiating a number of sites that will provide, not overnight access, but access during the day for restrooms and showers, etc....We have shelters that the County has funded and built and then contracts with our nonprofit partners to provide the direct service in those facilities. (Mondoro)

In closing, Foust said public hearings on the budget are rescheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 4 p.m. and 3 p.m. Wednesday, April 29, and Thursday, April 30. “There will be no in-person testimony. Residents will be able to provide testimony via video, phone or online, and please do...Be safe and be well,” he said.

Access additional information, questions and answers including ones pertaining to November elections, phasing of payments for overdue rent and utilities, school boundary adjustments and overcrowding, response to elevated domestic violence reports, accessing loans and unemployment insurance, Climate Action Plan and more at www.facebook.com/John-Foustva/. The Revised Proposal is available at <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/budget/sites/budget/files/assets/documents/fy2021/fy-2021-updated-budget-proposal-covid.pdf>.

One Resident Dies, 15 Test Positive on COVID-19 at Vinson Hall

On Friday, April 24, the Vinson Hall Retirement Community has issued the following press release:

“It is with great sadness that we share that we lost one of our residents who had tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and had other underlying medical issues. The resident died this afternoon at our campus. The resident's daughter was at the bedside. This resident lived at Arleigh Burke Pavilion, in our skilled nursing area, receiving 24-hour care and support prior to COVID-19. Eleven days ago, after exhibiting symptoms of the COVID-19 virus, the resident was tested and confirmed positive. Our resident was immediately placed on isolation protocol, moved to our isolation area, and closely monitored and cared for by our nursing team.

Vinson Hall Retirement Community had its first staff case of COVID-19 on April 10, 2020, and its first resident case on April 11, 2020. Since then, 15 additional residents have tested positive. All residents live in Arleigh Burke Pavilion, assisted living and skilled nursing care. Nine staff members have tested positive to date for the virus: two in Dining Services at Vinson Hall and seven in Arleigh Burke Pavilion.

Senior leadership and other relevant staff, led by a full-time RN Infection Preventionist, have created all infection control measures and action steps to prepare for and now contain COVID-19. Major moments

of this process include:

- ❖ In February, we started sharing educational information about COVID-19 with residents and staff.

- ❖ Starting in early March, a COVID-19 Emergency Operations Team was established, which has taken progressive and responsive strides to enhance infection control measures, including:

- ❖ On March 8, all visitors and staff, upon entry into VHRC, were screened regarding travel and health.

- ❖ On March 14, campus visitation was restricted.

- ❖ All written communication, since March 6, outlining COVID-19 focused efforts is posted on our Vinson Hall Retirement Community website.

“Despite our extensive preparations, and our nursing team's tireless efforts and care, we find ourselves here today. It's always a deep loss when one of our residents dies. COVID-19 has created an additional layer of trauma that our residents, staff, and families have been forced to confront,” said Libby Bush, CEO, Vinson Hall Retirement Community.

Vinson Hall Retirement Community continues to work closely with the Fairfax County Health Department, and is taking all measures possible to contain the outbreak.

At this time, we have no resident confirmed cases of COVID-19 at Vinson Hall, Willow Oak, or The Sylvestery.

Potomac School Debater Wins Two National Championships

Kay Rollins, a junior on The Potomac School's speech and debate team, won two individual national championships at the 2020 Tournament of Champions (TOC), hosted virtually by the University of Kentucky on the weekend of April 18. To be eligible to compete in the TOC, a student must have placed in the final rounds at two national circuit qualifying events during the regular season. Potomac had eight students qualify in nine events as part of the tournament's 1,100-student field.

Rollins ranked first in the nation in extemporaneous speaking and original oratory. Last year, she ranked first in extemporaneous speaking at the same tournament. Additionally, as an eighth grader, Rollins won the extemporaneous speaking category at the NSDA Middle School Championship and achieved a dual win in the TOC Middle School Championship. Thus, her extraordinary career now includes six individual national titles. She is the only person ever to win national championships in the same event (extemporaneous speaking) two years in a row, and the second-ever to win two TOC championships in a single year.

Rollins reflects, “My big goal this year was to do as well in extemp as I did last year – I was really proud of last year's championship-round speech, and I wanted to do that well again. Meanwhile, my oratory is very special to me; it expresses what I wish someone had told me as a middle schooler and as a freshman.” Harry Strong, the head coach of Potomac's team, observes, “Kay is one of those special students who are both talented and driven to succeed. No one is going to outwork her; she is always very well prepared!”

Competing alongside Rollins in the original oratory category were two Potomac quarterfinalists:



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Kay Rollins, a junior at The Potomac School in McLean.

Samira Abbasi and Christian Herald. Maryam Abbasi (public forum debate), Sara Abbasi (public forum debate), and Valentina Raghieb (original oratory) also gave strong performances. In addition, Potomac junior Kaitlyn Maher ranked third in the nation in congressional debate. Her teammate Alex Joel was a semifinalist in the same event.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's Tournament of Champions was held online, through the Zoom platform. Rollins notes that the change gave the event a different “feel” than past tournaments: “For the original oratory, I sent in a video of myself giving the speech. That was a big change from speaking in front of a live audience. Extemp, meanwhile, was almost the same as in the past: I had 30 minutes to prepare a seven-minute speech, then presented it to a panel of judges; what was interesting was that we were all in different places, rather than the same room.”

Coach Strong observes, “All of the participants in this tournament had to pivot rapidly, adjusting to speaking in front of a camera rather than an audience. Making that kind of adjustment while competing at the national championship level requires tremendous flexibility and focus. Given our team's success at the TOC, I can say with confidence that Potomac's debaters have made the adjustment successfully.”

BULLETIN BOARD

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on weekdays and approximately every 15 minutes on weekends. Buses will not stop at stations that are currently closed due to WAMTA's response to COVID-19.

Free Orange and Silver Line Shuttle Service
Orange Line Express -- Direct service between Vienna and Ballston Metrorail Stations.

Orange Line Local -- Service between Vienna, Dunn Loring, West Falls Church and Ballston Metrorail Stations.

Silver Line Local - Service between Wiehle-Reston East, Spring Hill, Tysons Corner and Ballston Metrorail Stations.

VIRTUAL MOVING, DOWNSIZING, DECLUTTER SUMMIT

JK Moving Services, ProAging Network, and Positive Aging Sourcebook are partnering to host the virtual Moving Downsizing, Declutter & Rightsizing Summit on Thursday, May 7 from 12-1 p.m. The event is geared toward senior-serving professionals to provide insights to help clients make good relocation decisions. The free event will feature a panel of experts from leading move management associations: National Association of Senior Move Managers, Senior Real Estate Specialists, National Association of Professional Organizers, and National Estate Sales Association. The summit will take place virtually by Zoom. Pre-registration required. To register, visit: <https://www.retirementlivingssourcebook.com/events/moving-downsizing-decluttering-rightsizing-covid-19-and-beyond>.

GOVERNOR POSTPONES MAY ELECTIONS

Gov. Ralph Northam invoked his statutory authority to postpone the May General and Special Elections by two weeks, from May 5 to May 19, 2020. Elections are scheduled in 56 localities across the Commonwealth. The Governor also moved the June primary elections from June 9 to June 23, 2020. Earlier this month, Governor Northam recommended moving the May elections to November, which required action by the General Assembly. While the House of Delegates approved the measure, the Senate failed to do so. The Governor has directed the Department of Elections to provide the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance to General Registrars on best practices to maintain social distancing and sanitization standards at polling locations.

GOVERNOR NAMES BUSINESS TASK FORCE

Gov. Ralph Northam announced a diverse group of leaders participating in the Commonwealth's COVID-19 Business Task Force, which will continue to provide advice and guidance to the Cabinet on a safe, responsible strategy for easing restrictions on businesses and individuals. The task force consists of representatives from a variety of Virginia industries, scales, geographies, and backgrounds across the Commonwealth, including restaurants, breweries, wineries, small and large retailers, fitness centers, hair salons, barber shops, spas and estheticians, museums, hospitality groups, campgrounds, and entertainment venues. Local members include:

Brian Moore, Amazon, Arlington/Alexandria;
Jon Norton, Great American Restaurants, Arlington/Fairfax;
Warren Thompson, Thompson Hospitality, Reston.

GRADUATION SPEAKER VIDEO CONTEST

U.S. Senator Tim Kaine has launched the "Everybody's the Graduation Speaker" video contest. With many in-person graduations likely to be postponed or canceled due to the coronavirus, Kaine is encouraging Virginia's graduating high school seniors to submit a video of an original speech they would like to give at graduation. Kaine will select speeches to feature on his Facebook page and website during May and June to celebrate the graduates. Kaine is encouraging students to film videos of speeches that are 10 minutes or less and submit them to gradspeech@kaine.senate.gov by May 15.

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And So It Begins



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

The six-week schedule/treatment for my stage II papillary thyroid cancer began on Thursday, April 23 with an hour-long telephone appointment with one of the doctors from the Nuclear Medicine department. He was confirming, clarifying and preparing yours truly for the arduous task at hand: a commitment to a month-long, low iodine diet beginning April 27 (no salt, no sugar, no dairy, no normal-type bread and a bunch of other less impactful nos) and 15 on-site hospital-related visits (in lab, in doctor's office and in scan area) followed by an overnight in late May when I receive my final treatment. After which, for the following week, I am to be quarantined at home (unsafe for children, pregnant woman and pets) with miscellaneous other quarantine-associated behaviors/advisories (changing bed sheets every other day, using one bathroom exclusively, flushing toilets twice, using plastic silverware and paper plates, among others) with the fun and games ending June 5th when the quarantine period ends. Then I can resume my normal/familiar routine for the treatment of my underlying/pre-existing stage IV non small cell lung cancer. Treatment for which will likely begin again in mid July after I've had a CT scan to assess the damage/success of my thyroid cancer treatment.

By then, it will have been about six months that I've actually had any current treatment/medicine for my lung cancer. Once given a clean bill of health (so far as the thyroid cancer is concerned), I'll likely restart my bi-weekly treatments for my non-small cell lung cancer (which as my oncologist said; he could treat but never cure). Treatment which began in early March, 2009 and has continued for nearly 11 years. Pending the results of that July CT scan, my life will likely return to abnormal. Still, it's way too early to speculate on life going forward. Six months (dating back to my last treatment in Jan., 2020) is an eternity in the cancer world (heck six days is an eternity).

And aside from the obvious, that planning for or even predicting scenarios two to three months hence, it has never been my oncologist's style. Then consider, as he said during our most recent phone appointment (April 17), that he's no longer certain if the tumors in my lungs are non small cell lung cancer, papillary thyroid cancer which has moved and/or, wait for it, that my lung cancer tumors have gone into remission. Can you quote the late Phil Rizzuto: "Holy cow!" None of which will be known until a week or so after my July CT scan. And not that wondering/waiting isn't already the hardest part but before I will have learned the status of my tumors, I will have been in and out of hospitals being treated for thyroid cancer right smack in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic when I'm supposed to do the exact opposite: isolate at home and stay away from hospitals. I couldn't be looking for more trouble if I planned it. Nevertheless, I just hope the old adage applies: "Time flies when you're having fun." (And I suppose I should add: flies safely.)

I don't really feel the fun? Maybe it's the needles you feel, or the fear/anxiety associated with being in and out of hospitals multiple times in a comparatively short period of time? Or maybe you feel the worry and difficulty I'll have maintaining a low iodine diet for 31 or so days, and the hunger pains and chocolate withdrawal I'll experience during that month. I'd like to think that the time/treatment will pass quickly, but I'm guessing that the demands of the diet will slow me down to a crawl and that the experience will be an extremely challenging transition/return to normal. (Particularly so for me since food has always been the bane of my existence.)

But so what? My health status, which originally had been a terminal one: "13 months to two years" has improved dramatically. I'm still likely to die from cancer but instead of the two years maximum I had anticipated (been "prognosed"), I am now living and breathing two months into year 12, post diagnosis. And depending upon what is interpreted from my upcoming CT scan, I may yet have a bit more life to live.

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

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