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Great Falls CONNECTION



'Facilitating Connections' in Quarantine

NEWS, PAGE 3

Great Falls Creamery donation pickup by Andrea Karam, Serena Karam, and Isabel Mathew. Langley High students Isabel, 15, and her brother Nathaniel, 17, started 'Facilitating Connections' in quarantine, an organization that matches Northern Virginia donors with local beneficiaries.



Great Falls Helps 'Stuffing the Bus'

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A Great Falls resident drops off food for Stuff the Bus at the Great Falls Library.

PHOTO BY
MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION



Great Falls Helps 'Stuffing the Bus'

Stepping up 'Stuff the Bus' COVID-19 style.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

For nine years, the Stuff the Bus food drive served to fill the quickly emptying food pantry shelves of local Fairfax County nonprofits. On Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Fairfax County Government and the community came together once again to support the biannual campaign. Unlike past years, Fastran buses did not park in grocery store lots. Instead, they pulled into less-frequented lots, those for the offices of County Supervisors, such as the one at North Government Center in Reston, the Fairfax County Government Center in Fairfax, and even the County's Great Falls Library lot on Georgetown Pike. Organizers changed the locations to allow donor compliance with social distancing recommendations during the COVID-19 emergency.

At the office lot for Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) in Reston, the clock clicked toward 10:30 with no sign of the bus but not one car packed with groceries left. Jay and Carol Hadlock of Herndon were among the many donors who patiently waited. "Where's the bus," Carol asked. "I filled up our trunk," she said. The Hadlocks understood that this year, 2020, was forever marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food for cash-strapped families was crit-

ical. Owners of small and large businesses across the County shuttered their doors and let staff go. Unemployment rates escalated. Demand for the County's Microloan program for small businesses maxed out and closed within three days. Even before COVID-19, Fairfax County, one of the richest in the nation, had announced 8 percent of its public school students reported going hungry, and 30 percent of its students received free or reduced price lunches. These students no longer attended a physical school during the shutdown. They remained housebound because of the emergency stay at home orders.

Tony and Karen Smith of Reston walked over with bags of groceries. New to Reston, they learned of the county need in their condominium's morning newsletter. "We live in the Carlton House, and they sent out the announcement this morning," said Tony holding up multiple bags of groceries willing to share.

At a second Stuff the Bus location in Great Falls, Fastran driver Robert Barbieri said management had asked who would like to drive the bus for the effort and he had put his hand up. Off to slow start with nothing but an empty bus to show at 11 a.m., a car pulled up, loaded with bags of groceries. "It's a group effort of a couple of Great Falls families," said the woman who asked not to be identified. Barbieri helped load the bags into his bus. Four more hours to go and then he or another driver would be back Tuesday, May 19, for the second drive. Donations would benefit ten nonprofits serving those in need in Fairfax County.

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NEWS

Donation to Women Giving Back by Serena and Andrea Karam



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

‘Facilitating Connections’ in Quarantine

Great Falls siblings start charitable initiative during COVID-19 pandemic.

BY CAROLINE WATKINS
THE CONNECTION

It only took two days of quarantine for Isabel and Nathaniel Mathew of Great Falls to become restless.

After Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) announced on March 23 that all schools would remain online for the rest of the school semester, the Langley High School siblings didn’t know how they were going to spend their newfound free time.

That is, until they figured out a way that they could give back to those in the community who have been hit hard by the coronavirus crisis.

Isabel Mathew, 15, and Nathaniel Mathew, 17, started “Facilitating Connections” in quarantine, an organization that matches Northern Virginia donors with local beneficiaries.

Facilitating Connections accepts donations such as food, clothes and sanitary items and delivers them to beneficiaries in need of supplies.

“Our main goal is to make sure that no food goes to waste,” Nathaniel Mathew said. “So while customers have declined for businesses, restaurants have way more food than they used to.”

A bulk of the organization’s work consists of collecting food from Northern Virginia restaurants and donating it to shelter homes and food pantries, according to Nathaniel.

The siblings have enjoyed watching the donations grow over the past few months.

“We were having trouble for the first few weeks finding donors,” Nathaniel said. “It was once we started to get a few donors who were willing to donate weekly, that I started to feel like we were making a difference in the community.”

NEARLY TWO MONTHS after the inception, the organization has received approximately 40 donations. Facilitating Connections averages about 5-6 donation drop-offs per week.

For Isabel, it’s also rewarding to be able to work with friends to give back to those in need. Between the two, the siblings have rallied 12 of their Langley High School friends to help them with their cause.



Organizing and distributing Next Door donations by Nathaniel and Isabel Mathew

“We’re really close to the people we’re working with and it has brought us together in a different way,” Isabel said. “I’ve learned things about my friends that I haven’t before.”

The organization has worked with local restaurants such as Great Falls Creamery, Manhattan Pizza and Deli Italiano. The organization has even worked with local branches of national chains such as Domino’s and Chick-fil-A.

Casey Jones, the director of operations at Deli Italiano, has enjoyed working with Facilitating Connections during such a difficult time.

“We were really touched to see, especially people so young in the community, getting involved with something like this,” Jones said. “Deli Italiano has its own initiative called ‘Feeding Heroes,’ so to be able to do even more than that, and to extend ourselves and to work hand in hand with another organization was really wonderful.”

Facilitating Connections has delivered food and supplies to organizations such as Women Giving Back, the SevaTruck Foundation, LINK Against Hunger and Cornerstones.

Although Facilitating Connections has given the teenagers a sense of purpose during such an uncertain time, their efforts won’t stop once the worst of the COVID-19 crisis subsides.

MEMBERS of the organization will continue to make a difference in their communities, post-pandemic.

“Our short term goal was to help people immediately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we intend to go beyond the region of Great Falls and beyond just this crisis that we’re facing right now and help anybody who is in dire need,” Nathaniel said.

Those who are interested in getting involved can find Facilitating Connections on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook or visit the organization’s website at www.facilitatingconnections.org.

Virtual Race for a Good Cause

Langley High sophomore organizes virtual 5k for CIS NOVA.

BY JESSICA FENG
THE CONNECTION

As the Coronavirus outbreak has caused everyone to be confined to their homes, many have turned to exercise to keep busy and healthy. Will Navas, of Great Falls, a sophomore at Langley High School, is using it to raise money for children in his community by organizing a virtual 5k race that donates all proceeds to Communities in Schools of Northern Virginia (CIS NOVA).

The concept of a virtual 5k may be foreign, but it allows for participants to choose when and where they run. Navas explains how potential runners can sign up through a Google Form and pay the entry fee through GoFundMe.

“The virtual 5k is going to be on May 23 and the runners will be able to race any time of the day. The tickets to join only cost \$10 and you can pay through the GoFundMe page that has been set up.”

Navas chose CIS NOVA to donate to because it reaches children affected by the closure of Northern Virginia schools.

“Given our current situation, many children in underserved areas are unable to get basic services they normally get at



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Will Navas holds a sign with the #allin4kids slogan in a post to spread awareness. He is also using the hashtag to track people running and their times through social media posts. The GoFundMe Will Navas set up - [gf.me/u/xxy3sz](https://www.gofundme.com/u/xxy3sz) - is where people can pay their registration fee for the 5k.

school. CIS NOVA helps bridge the gap in wraparound services like food, mentoring, and tutoring.”

An organization called Positive Tracks that spreads awareness through sports helped Navas start his event.

“They helped me with getting the word out about my 5k on my social media platforms and they also helped with setting up the GoFundMe page.”



Great Falls Boy Scouts Help ‘Stuff the Bus’

Boy Scout Venture Crew 673, out of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls, held a mini Scouting for Food drive and collected 438 lbs. of food for Fairfax Stuff The Bus this past Saturday. They plan to hold monthly food drives to continue to support the food banks in our area during COVID-19.

Beyond Equality to Equitable Funding of Our Schools

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



Passing by the elementary and high schools I attended as a youngster was a small yellow bus carrying about six children to a school 12 miles away in Luray. They were black children who by the constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia were prohibited from attending school with white children. I was reminded of that experience this past Sunday which was the 66th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, decision by the United States Supreme Court. In this landmark 1954 Supreme Court case, the justices ruled unanimously that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. They ruled that separate facilities were inherently unequal in public education. Among the cases that were heard along with the Brown case was a case coming out of Prince Edward County, Virginia, challenging racial segregation of public schools that I had seen as a young person.

It took more than a decade for black and white children to start attending school together

COMMENTARY

er in Virginia and throughout the Nation as state and local government actions and numerous lawsuits sought to reverse the Brown decision. Massive Resistance was the term applied in Virginia to the efforts over a decade of state legislation and court challenges to keep schools segregated.

The Brown decision 66 years ago was as critically important a step in moving towards equality in access to public educational opportunities as it was in helping to ignite the civil rights movement in the United States. Clearly it was a beginning and not a conclusion to the challenges of combating racial inequities in public schools. The concept it helped to foster was that there should be equality in funding among public schools regardless of the zip code in which they might be located.

Performance outcomes by minority students over decades demonstrate that equality of funding is not sufficient. Equal funding suggests that all students start at the same point and given the same support will progress equally. There

are many social and economic factors as well as individual differences that affect student performance.

A depiction that has become popular recently demonstrates the differences among equality, equity and justice. Three children of different heights are shown looking over a fence at a sports game. With equality, the three children are given the same height box on which to stand; two children can see the game, but the shortest child cannot see over the fence. With equity the children are given the height box each needs to see over the fence. With justice, the fence barrier to seeing the game is removed.

More than six decades after the Brown decision there are real efforts to move forward on equity funding of our schools. The most recent General Assembly session did more in introducing equity concepts into school funding than ever before. School funding is to be divided along principles that more schools would get the funding they need and not the same as every other school. We cannot let the current economic depression take away that important step in supporting our schools. We have come too far in seeking to achieve equity to let it slip away. With equity in place we can move on to justice!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keeping Nursing Home Residents Safe

To the Editor

On behalf of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), I'd like to thank all those who work in nursing facilities -- doctors, nurses, food preparers, housekeepers, and others -- for their unwavering dedication to compassionately caring for the vulnerable residents who are relying on them during the COVID-19 pandemic. These facilities have been on the front lines

of the pandemic, and our hearts are with all of those who have been affected by this virus and their families.

We at CMS share the goal of keeping nursing facility residents safe and healthy. Under President Trump's leadership, we are using CMS's regulatory authority to facilitate residents' care and ensure that long-term care facilities have the guidance they need to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The best thing nursing facilities can do to keep residents and themselves safe is to ensure they're following effective infection-control practices. These are outlined in our guidance and include recommendations that employees wash their hands properly; separate ill residents from well residents; use personal protective equipment correctly; get screened for illness; and stay home if they're sick.

By employing effective infection

control and prevention, coordinating with local and state health authorities, and showing patience and kindness to others, we can beat the virus, reopen America, and keep our nursing home residents safe and healthy.

Seema Verma
Administrator,
Centers for Medicare &
Medicaid Services
Washington, D.C.

VIEWPOINTS

What would you like to see happen before the area opens for business?

Virginia Senator Barbara A. Favola (D-31)



"I completely understand the need for businesses to reopen and workers to be rehired. But we must balance the economic benefits of reopening with the need to keep workers, patrons and the general public healthy. This is a crisis where every individual must act responsibly so we can all be safe. When we enter Phase-I, businesses and patrons will have to demonstrate a commitment to cleanliness

and social distancing. Moreover, the health status of our communities will have to be continually evaluated.

Until a vaccine is developed and widely available, 'business as usual' will be a thing of the past. Three things need to happen as we prepare NoVA for a Phase-I reopening. 1) Social distancing, the wearing of masks, washing your hands and avoid-

ing groups of 10 or more people must become the norm. 2) NoVA will have to implement a more expansive testing and contact tracing program. Ideally, 3 percent of the 2.5 million residents of NoVA should be tested by the time NoVA reopens. This target is a CDC recommendation and it will give us a more accurate picture of the spread of the disease; and 3) NoVAs rate of increase in positive COVID-19 tests must begin to level off or decrease. Right now, 25 percent of all cases tested in NoVA show signs of COVID-19. The state average is 10 percent. I am confident we

can meet these benchmarks, but it will take the actions of everyone to make it happen.

It is heart-warming to see the compassion and acts of kindness that have come forth to help those who are struggling to feed their families, pay their rent and care for their children. We owe a big 'thank-you' to our first responders, health care workers, delivery drivers and grocery store clerks. They are here for us and we must do everything we can to lighten their load and keep them as safe as possible. We are all in this together and we will get through this together."

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PEOPLE



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Sharing uplifting messages: Brooke Dawn, 15, of Great Falls.

Helping Community Stay Safe

Brooke Dawn, 15, a Great Falls resident, student at The Madeira School, and Kawasaki Disease survivor loves to ride her bike and take walks to keep her heart healthy. When she does, she loves to read the different uplifting messages written on brightly colored stones left by others. Great Falls and Reston are two communities where residents walk and bike trails frequently. As Covid-19 took hold of Northern Virginia, her daily exercise became more important to her than ever. When it was revealed that some kids and teens might be impacted by a Kawasaki Disease like illness called Multi-system Inflammatory Syndrome, Brooke, a long time Kawasaki Disease ambassador and fundraiser, brainstormed ways she could help. She still remembers her recovery from Kawasaki Disease and wants no one to suffer those or similar symptoms. She was exploring quite a few ways to help through the Kawasaki Disease Foundation this summer, and thought a great way to start in her community now was to spread the word and remind others to use the tools we all have to help stop the spread of Covid-19. She thought brightly colored safety reminders on rocks along the trails might remind neighbors to social distance, wear masks, and wash hands not only for their safety, but for the safety of others. Two of her favorite slo-

"I want these kids to have the same chance to feel better and have hope."

— Brooke Dawn

gans to encourage mask usage are: "a mask today keeps Corona away" and "masks rock".

Each morning she collects rocks, washes them, and once her school work is done, she spray paints them and writes a message. She delivers the rocks to various trails that are open in Great Falls and Reston, and loads up new ones in her backpack to start all over again. Once some of the parks are open, she will leave stones there and plans to have 500 done by early July. It is a small act, but one that she hopes will remind her community that their safe behavior can keep others safe and healthy. Additionally, she is figuring out a way to reach sufferers of the new syndrome in hospitals and connect them to the Kawasaki Disease community. "Maybe they can form friendships. The KD community is very loving and supportive, and I want everyone to have access to it. Also, friends always helped me feel better when I was struggling with health issues. I want these kids to have the same chance to feel better and have hope," says Brooke.

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WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

Cause Of Great Falls House Fire Under Investigation

On Tuesday, May 12 at 2:53 a.m., units were dispatched for a reported house fire in the 800 block of Walker Road in the Great Falls area of Fairfax County.

Units arrived on the scene of a three-story, single-family home to find a large volume of fire evident to the rear of the house. Crews worked quickly to contain and then extinguish the fire. There were no firefighter or civilian injuries reported.

No one was home at the time of the fire. A neighbor heard noises coming from the home and noticed fire coming from the back of the house. The neighbor then called 9-1-1.

One occupant was displaced because of the fire. Red Cross assistance was offered and accepted. Damages as a result of the fire are still to be determined.

The cause of the fire is currently under investigation.

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.

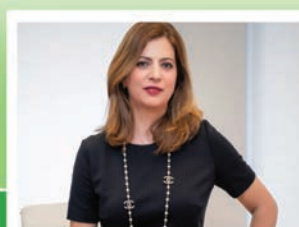
GREAT FALLS MEMORIAL DAY CANCELLED

The Memorial Day Ceremony at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial will not be held this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

CALL FOR ELECTION: MYA BOARD POSITION

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SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 6



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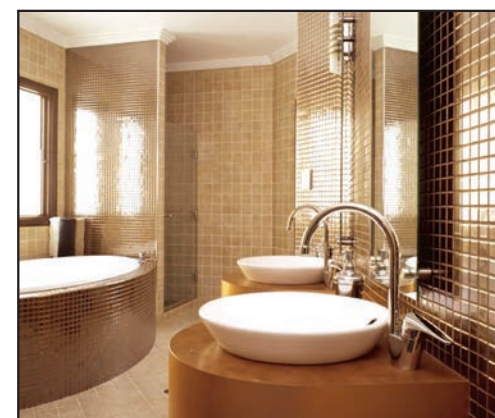
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football, lacrosse, track & field, rugby, squash, volleyball, fencing, and wrestling for all children in the McLean community. MYA's vision is that any child in the McLean Community, from kindergarten through high school, interested in a sport can play a sport.

MYA is looking for new candidates to serve two-year terms on its board of directors. They're looking for local leaders with skills in areas like PR, lobbying, marketing, and accounting as well as good, old-fashioned community-types who just want to get involved. Applications/letters of interest are due May 24, 2020.

MYA's board serves an integral role in ensuring that all MYA programs provide a positive sports experience for all children. From field space to player safety to charitable initiatives, MYA has its hands in everything.

Elections for the MYA Board of Directors will be held at the MYA Annual Meeting on May 28, 2020. The following positions are open this election cycle and the slate of candidates are as follows:

President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, Members-At-Large, Youth Board Members (they encourage high school Juniors from the McLean and Langley school districts to apply). If you'd like to be considered for any of the above positions, send a statement of interest to Reza Golesorkhi at rgolesorkhi4@gmail.com by May 24, 2020. That communication should include:

1. A statement of interest (50-100 words) on why you are interested in serving on the Board; and,
2. For high school students, a brief resumé providing contact information; identifying the high school you attend, and the school district (McLean or Langley) where you live; your GPA; your school activities; and your activities outside of school, including your involvement in sports.

GOVERNOR DELAYS PHASE ONE FOR NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Gov. Ralph Northam issued Executive Order Sixty-Two, allowing specific localities in Northern Virginia to delay entering Phase One of the "Forward Virginia" plan to ease restrictions on certain business operations that were put in place in response to the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19. Northam said that Virginia as a whole may enter Phase One on Friday, May 15, as outlined in Executive Order Sixty-One, based on achieving certain health metrics. Executive Order Sixty-Two allows the Northern Virginia localities to delay implementation of Phase One until midnight on Thursday, May 28, to allow those localities more time to meet the health metrics.

FACE COVERINGS REQUIRED ON TRANSIT

Fairfax Connector buses, as well as Metro buses, trains and MetroAccess vehicles, are joining VRE and Amtrak in requiring face coverings and masks to be worn by riders, beginning May 18. This also includes stations and facilities. This enhanced safety measure will help protect other riders as well as the bus/train operators and follows guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

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News

School Board Celebrates Class of 2020

Superintendent Scott Brabrand releases Board decisions.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Superintendent Scott Brabrand dashed any remaining hopes of summer in-person commencement ceremonies for the Class of 2020. After receiving results from high school students and parents on his Survey on Graduation Preferences, Brabrand said the School Board agreed on his recommended approach. They committed to celebrating the seniors “in the safest and most personalized manner possible.”

According to the message, high schools would schedule individual photo opportunities in June with each graduate wearing their cap and gown along with appropriate cords and medals. A limited number of family members might attend. At that time, seniors would receive their diploma. A Class of 2020 celebration video would be produced and distributed at no cost to members of the Class. As for a face-to-face graduation ceremony, Brabrand said, “If it is possible to gather safely in large groups, we will plan to do so at each of our high schools during the fall months. If conditions have not improved by then, we will monitor conditions through the winter and spring to see if an in-person ceremony is possible.”

Brabrand added: “Based on data from the Fairfax County Health Department, a summer in-person ceremony poses too many health risks and too much uncertainty with regard to social distancing requirements and restrictions on large gatherings that could still be in effect at that time. Health Department data indicates that Fairfax is still experiencing community spread of the virus with increasing infection rates and a University of Virginia model predicts the number of cases will remain elevated in Fairfax in the summer.”

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

VIENNA LAUNCHES NEW BUSINESS CAMPAIGN

The Town of Vienna announced the launch of a new business appreciation campaign featuring week-long activities to recognize and celebrate the town's businesses during May Virginia Business Appreciation Month. The grassroots style appreciation campaign titled “ViennaUnited” will take place during the week of May 18-22, 2020 and will shine a light on the Town's diverse makeup of businesses and owners. Vienna is home to over 1,800 independent and small businesses and continues to evolve and grow from an economic standpoint attracting new businesses to open up in the charmed town. The Town partnered with Vienna Business Association, Vienna Foodies, and the Town of Vienna Parks and Recreation on this campaign.

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Time Will Tell



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Nearly three weeks into my low iodine diet, in preparation for my hospital overnight on May 28 when I will get my radioactive iodine therapy to be followed immediately by a medical quarantine at home for a week, I wouldn't say I'm thriving. More like persevering. I can't really satiate eating “rabbit” food and what culinary pleasures I can enjoy, I can only have them in small quantities and infrequently at that. I won't give you a list, but just consider what any 10-year-old likes to eat.

As you might imagine, I've lost some weight. Granted, it was weight I could afford to lose. And though I'm not exactly a shell of my former self, I am hardly the man I once was. Nevertheless, as my friend Frank would say: “I'm in pretty good shape for the shape I'm in.” And the shape I'm in, and the diet I'm following and all the medical appointments I'm going on is to find and kill my remaining papillary thyroid cancer, the 15% or so the otolaryngologist was unable to get to on my Jan. 29th thyroidectomy.

The purpose of this treatment/activity is to locate and simultaneously eradicate the papillary thyroid cancer tumors still in my body. And since papillary thyroid cancer is called the “friendly cancer” because it is generally curable, I'm not worried about the outcome of all that I've described. However, there is an associated element to this treatment which is more important and potentially life changing.

It's possible, according to my oncologist, that my lung cancer tumors may in medical fact, be thyroid cancer tumors. Not unusual since cancer often moves throughout the body. So on paper, one can have thyroid cancer in the lungs. The thyroid cancer treatment I'm presently undergoing will be the final determination on whether the tumors in my lungs are actually thyroid cancer which migrated or still lung cancer. If the tumors are identified as lung cancer then all goes along much as it has for the past 11 years. However, if the tumors are identified as thyroid cancer, and they are all eliminated by this procedure, then a new day has dawned and life will indeed go on, much as it hasn't since late February, 2009 when I was first diagnosed.

And though I've just written it, it's really too much to consider. After living on an emotional precipice since receiving a “13 month to two year” prognosis 11-plus years ago, the thought of living a non-cancer-centric life/return to normal life expectancy is disjuncting almost. To say it would change everything minimizes the word “change.” “Change would barely describe the effect. I'd be reborn almost with an entirely new lease on life.

It's what all “terminal” patients dare not dream: the miracle cure, the medical mix-up, the you're-free-to-go sendoff.

It's early days though and premature until I'm told otherwise. And “otherwise will be told sometime in early June when I will have had my post-thyroid-treatment CT scan and then the follow-up appointment with my endocrinologist who will explain the findings. Only after learning these details and then discussing them with my oncologist will I know what the future holds.

Right now, my future is a cut-up apple, a four-ounce burger for dinner with no bread or cheese, some kind of vegetable, unsalted kettle potato chips, (thank God for them) and no dessert. To say this list compares favorably to my pre-low-iodine diet is the understatement of the year. The overstatement of the year is come early June I'm likely to be cancer free.

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

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