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The Arlington Connection



Ana Parker of
 Arlington, a
 junior at GW
 Community
 School.

How Culpepper Garden
 Holds Virus at Bay

NEWS PAGE 3

Amazon, Freddie Partner
 To Provide 10K Meals

NEWS, PAGE 2

Arlington Week
 In CoronaVirus

NEWS, PAGE 4

School Where
 Distancing Didn't
 Mean Disaster

A+ PAGE 5

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CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

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MAY 20-26, 2020

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Amazon Partners with Freddie's to Provide 10,000 Meals in May

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

A caravan of cars packed full of food donations pulls up in hospital parking lot C at 11 a.m. on Thursday, May 14 to deliver 350 lunches as part of a partnership between Amazon and Freddie Lutz, owner of Freddie's Beach Bar & Restaurant. One hundred and fifty dinners will be delivered later the same day for the night shifts. Over a series of days the total meals delivered to the hospital staff through this initiative will be over 2,300.

Adrian Stanton, VP for Business and Community Relations at Virginia Hospital Center (VHC) says, "We have a very generous community in Arlington, and we get donations two-to-three times a week. It may be donuts, and we have a kind donor who is sending ice cream."

Today's choices organized by Freddie's are ham and cheese and turkey sandwiches, 35 sautéed vegetarian boxes as well as a lentil dish, chips, mac and cheese and a drink.

Stanton says it is nice for the health care workers to be able to have a meal delivery and take



Arlington Virginia Hospital Center (VHC) workers choose a free donated lunch on Thursday during National Nurses Week. It was provided by a partnership between Amazon and Freddie's Beach Bar and Restaurant on 23rd Street.

a break. The hospital has a command center that coordinates the donations and divides up the food among departments. He explains these are staff who said "send me where I'm needed" since some of the hospital functions such as elective surgeries have been temporarily suspended.

"They may put the meals out in

the lunchroom and people stop by whenever and pick up something to eat, or on a day like today they may step outside." He says there is joy in their faces. "You can tell it's more than a nice free lunch."

Stanton says since the hospital is 24/7 and operates in shifts, they have a lunch and dinner arrangement so the departments can

decide what works best for them. "Freddie has been willing to accommodate us with that."

Lutz says he first reached out to Amazon over a year ago when they came to Arlington and he has built a relationship with them. Amazon came to him recently and asked if he would like to partner with Amazon to provide 10,000 meals in the

month of May. Lutz is the President of the 23rd Street Merchants Association and so he asked Amazon if he could involve other restaurants nearby in the effort.

Now he has enlisted the efforts of Urban Thai, Young Chow, Crystal City Sports Pub, Federico Restaurante Italiano, and Enjera Ethiopian Restaurant. Amazon pays for the meals and Lutz does the organizing and coordination of the food.

Lutz says this has allowed him to hire back about nine employees who spend the night before the delivery boxing the meals. "Some of them have other jobs, but some of them are really desperate to get back to work. It's so gratifying to be able to help them."

Lutz says he has put Tony Rivenbark, who has worked at Freddie's for 17 years, in charge of the project. Rivenbark has already organized meals for the Arlington County Police and Fire Departments. He says he coordinates with the individual players to accommodate special tastes like vegetarian although they have not yet been able to provide gluten-free preferences.

SEE AMAZON PARTNERS, PAGE 3



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NEWS

Culpepper Garden Beats the Odds on Coronavirus

Low-income senior facility has no cases yet, as of this week.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Culpepper Garden low-income retirement property on Henderson Street in Arlington has so far escaped the coronavirus raging through other senior living facilities nationwide. Linda Kelleher, Executive Director of Arlington Retirement Housing Corporation that owns Culpepper Garden says, “Our Assisted Living and Nursing Director, Mary Van Wie, is extremely cautious.

“We started our lockdown on March 9.” She adds, “Everyday I’m grateful we have no cases so far. I send in the data every day. We’ve been as careful as we could be.”

Kelleher outlines their current operating procedures. The residents are restricted to their apartments, meals are delivered, family visits are curtailed. It is set up so that when staff arrive they have their temperatures taken and they step in a pool of disinfectant to cleanse their shoes. Everybody wears an N-95 surgical mask, and they have some vinyl screens so the masks can be worn for a longer period of time. She says the vinyl screens were originally hard to find but Arlington County was very helpful.

Culpepper Garden has received donations of masks from a number of sources. “We probably have 300 masks from all over. They are beautiful. United Way is sending 500 disposable masks next week.” Each resident gets two masks, one to wear and one to wash.

Culpepper Garden has both independent living subsidized by Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds as well as 73 assisted living apartments with 40 staff working in that area. Kelleher says the assisted living residents must stay in their rooms with meals delivered to them. “Only one person delivers the meals and one person does maintenance and housecleaning to control the number of people who can go there. If there is a delivery, it is taken to the room.” Visitors are restricted to registered



Edie Mims distributing fabric masks at Culpepper Garden.

caregivers only.

Mesbah Motamed, who is a member of the Board of Directors, says he hasn’t seen his 85-year-old mother for over two months. “I used to visit her two-three times a week.” But he says, “Since she has dementia her awareness is zero about the coronavirus.” His mother’s live-in care helper is her 66-year-old little sister who makes sure his mother gets fed with the Iranian food they both like, gives her medication and changes her clothes.

Motamed says, “They are very strict about who can go into the building. If I have groceries for my mother, I have to meet my aunt in the parking lot. It isn’t Grand Central Station, and I am grateful for the proactive management. I think this is what has kept the coronavirus out.”

But Kelleher acknowledges, “There is some loneliness we are trying to work around. Seniors are hanging in there but are feeling isolated.” She says they have knocked on doors to deliver goodie bags to each of the residents in assisted living to check in on how they were doing.

They have also initiated a “friendly caller” program manned by volunteers mostly from faith-based communities. They have had about 20 volunteers sign up with the goal of making a call once a week to a resident. “We give the volunteers a whole page of questions to start the conversations, stay away from the worrisome things. It’s what we can

do. It’s really popular.”

Edie Mims, Resident Association President, says the many activities which had been offered regularly such as bingo, music in the lobby with sing-a-longs, Sunday dog day, current event lectures and movie nights have all been temporarily stopped. “We do encourage people to go outside. We have lovely gardens where you can walk around here.

“We are handing out coloring kits and doing word games in the newsletter; for example words that start with C and end with N —things that aren’t too difficult but keep your mind occupied. We’re doing the best that we can, and the good thing is that there is help here if we need it.”

In addition volunteers from E*TRADE, who used to be on site every week, are now helping residents from offsite with technology asking “do you need help?” “What do you want to learn?” They are helping residents Skype with their families.

Independent living is a whole different animal according to Kelleher. She says because HUD subsidizes it, Culpepper Garden can’t restrict residents to their rooms because it is considered a violation of their privacy. Under normal circumstances the residents of independent living are actively engaged in the community and some have jobs.

However, under the current pandemic restrictions Culpepper Garden does recommend that residents in independent living

don’t leave their rooms unless absolutely necessary, and there is no congregating dining. “You do see more residents here walking around or taking their pet for a walk.”

They still have several dining options but all are delivered to the rooms. A resident may purchase some or all of their meals prepared in house, and “Chef Riddle is still cooking his wonderful meals.” In addition, some residents in independent living leave and go to the grocery store. “The Senior Loop still takes people to the grocery. We have 70 people who need supplemental food assistance which is provided by Arlington Food Assistance Center.” They receive protein, fresh fruit and vegetables, canned goods, carbohydrates and they have lots of bread. She adds some people receive food stamps. The community has been generous with donations. Since it is National Nurses Week, Arlington Federal Credit Union donated lunch from Rocklands today for the assisted living staff including the night shift. Conkyn’s Florist sent a bunch of flowers for the front desk on Mother’s Day. Another day a big bag of chocolates arrived from a local chocolatier.

One of the other impacts of the pandemic has been the halted construction of the major Culpepper Garden renovation which began in April 2018 to upgrade all apartment interiors and public spaces, replace all major systems and add six apartments. Kelleher says it was supposed to be completed in April this year but Culpepper Garden halted construction for four weeks beginning March 23 while they brought in an industrial hygienist to develop a protocol for construction to be back on site.

“Now it is very limited how they are working the area. There are no more than 10 workers in a space, and they use outside restrooms. We’re being very diligent with the workers wearing masks and having their temperatures taken.” The new date for completion has been moved to July.

Some apartments are available and Culpepper is welcoming applications. They recently had four people move in. “We have an incredibly wonderful group of people.” Motamed adds, “Even though I haven’t seen my mother for two months, which is the longest we’ve been apart in 10 years, I’m not worried because she is in such good hands.”

Amazon Partners with Freddie’s to Provide 10,000 Meals in May

FROM PAGE 2

Amazon told them a good planning tool would be 25 percent vegetarian meals but when Rivenbark asked the firemen ahead of time, “they said they had 5 percent vegetarians at most and they said we have big tough guys who need a little bigger meal.” On the other hand, on the nursing side, they don’t need quite so much. Rivenbark says when they feed the same group again, like the firefighters last week, he makes sure they get a different meal each time.

Rivenbark remembers, “we spent the first several days trying to figure out what Freddie’s could do and do well. Vegetarian was not our strong point,” so they passed it along to other neighbors. As a result, for the hospital workers, Young Chow provided sautéed mixed vegetables and Enjera a spicy lentil dish. Rivenbark walks up and down the street asking the 23rd Street restaurants “what can you provide us within this budget.”

In order to prepare the 150 chicken pesto fettuccine dinners

for the hospital workers on Thursday as well as the 350 lunches, Rivenbark says Maria and Francis came in at about 5:30 a.m. on Wednesday and worked until noon to prepare the pesto, chop and slice the tomatoes and turkey and ham for the sandwiches the next day. They were back at 5:30 p.m. working until 8:30, then back the next day to finish the job. Rivenbark says “There are 6 of us who are actively working 100 percent of the time just on this project.”

The next two weeks they will be

providing meals for “our most vulnerable neighbors in low-income housing at Arlington Housing Corporation and Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing. I especially look forward to seeing their faces.”

Lutz says the first thing the hospital workers do is thank him but I tell them “we need to thank you guys for what you do for us.”

Stanton comments, “There is always some good that comes out of every situation and one of these things that people have learned is to say thank you.” He contemplat-

ed that people didn’t think to say it so much before this pandemic hit. “But we know that it is within us.”

This initiative is part of Amazon’s efforts to support their headquarters communities where they live and operate. As part of this effort Amazon donated \$1 million to kick start emergency COVID-19 response efforts in the Washington D.C. area. This will enable four community foundations to distribute grants to nonprofits addressing food insecurity, housing and shelter and emergency financial assistance.

Arlington Week in Coronavirus

Virginia begins to open despite adding more than 6,000 cases and 150 deaths in one week; Arlington up to 1,638 cases and 77 deaths.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Monday, May 18

Arlington County Cases: 1,638
Virginia Cases: 31,140
United States Cases: 1,480,349
Arlington County Deaths: 77
Virginia Deaths: 1,014
United States Deaths: 89,407

Monday, May 11

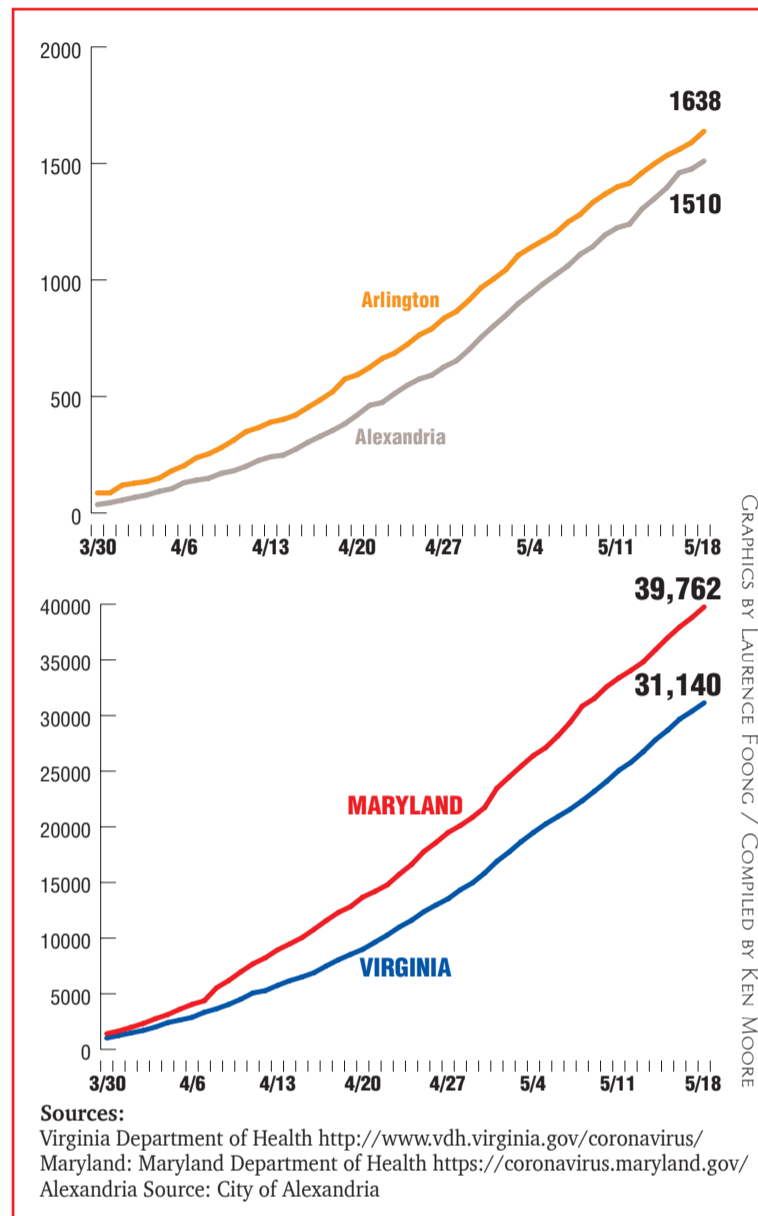
Arlington County Cases: 1,399
Virginia Cases: 25,070
United States Cases: 1,300,696
Arlington County Deaths: 60
Virginia Deaths: 850
United States Deaths: 78,771

Arlington and Northern Virginia will continue stay-at-home restrictions despite most of Virginia transitioning to Phase One of Governor Ralph Northam's "Forward Virginia" reopening plan.

"The Board appreciates the Commonwealth's acknowledgement that the Northern Virginia region faces challenges that differ in number and scale from the Commonwealth as a whole. Over half of the cases and hospitalizations and nearly half of the COVID-19 deaths are here in Northern Virginia — despite our constituting a little more than a quarter of the state's population; and we continue to see a rise in hospitalizations," said the County Board.

Executive Order Sixty-Two permits Northern Virginia localities to continue the stay-at-home order and maintain restrictions on certain business operations until May 29, while the rest of state moves on to Phase One on May 15. The order applies to the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park; the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William; and the towns in those counties.

"We are committed to mitigation strategies, such as wearing masks and maintaining social distance,



that will help us meet the critical health metrics. Our top priority is the health and well-being of Arlingtonians and all of Northern Virginia," said Board Chair Libby Garvey.

Garvey said entering Phase One in Arlington and other Northern Virginia jurisdiction will not begin until key health metrics can be met in the region, including: downward trend of positive test results over a period of 14 days; downward trend of hospitalizations over a period of 14 days; sufficient hospital beds and intensive care capacity; increasing and sustainable supply of personal protective equipment such as masks, respirators, gloves and gowns; and increased testing and tracing.

FOOD ASSISTANCE: Arlington Public Schools families whose children are eligible for the federal free and reduced-price meal program can receive benefits for temporary food assistance to cover the cost of meals missed while schools are closed. Families that are already eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals do not need

to fill out additional forms as they will receive the funds automatically. Families that are not currently receiving free and reduced-price meals can apply now by visiting <https://www.myschoolapps.com/>.

The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) food purchasing assistance program, being implemented by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), provides extra benefits for food assistance to families, through electronic transfers. APS encourages families whose needs have changed due to the pandemic to enroll now, so that all families who are eligible can receive the P-EBT food assistance benefits. VDOE and VDSS ultimately approve eligibility and issue the benefit.

CLASS OF 2020: Dear Seniors, wrote Cintia Z. Johnson, Arlington Public Schools Interim Superintendent, "I want you to know first and foremost, that I congratulate you, the Class of 2020, on your success. "At the same time, I share in your disappointment about the current

situation. This was supposed to be a time for gathering with friends and families, not of social distancing. As a mother myself, I understand how trying this time can be for you and your families.

"While we all recognize the end of the school year cannot be the same as in years past, it is my intent to ensure that you are all celebrated in ways that honor this major accomplishment. As a result, we have decided to move forward with graduation plans that will allow you and your family members to come together to recognize this significant milestone in a way that reflects the current reality we are living and uses the digital tools and social media platforms, which so many of you rely upon daily. That said, I have been working closely with your principals, and we are planning virtual graduation ceremonies for each of the comprehensive high schools and high school programs ... You will be provided with more information soon, as we continue planning for this celebration. Please note that I am not ruling out any future opportunities to celebrate in person, however I do feel it is important to plan for ways we can honor the Class of 2020 now."

DEPRESSION, ANXIETY: The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn are causing many people to experience depression, anxiety, stress and isolation, among other challenges. "One in five people will experience a mental illness at some point during their lifetime," said Dr. John Palmieri, Behavioral Healthcare Division Chief for Arlington County. "Because many people are facing mental health challenges now, we want to raise awareness of the many resources Arlington offers to help people manage mental health issues under these challenging circumstances."

See <https://health.arlingtonva.us/> to go to Arlington's COVID-19 Mental Wellness page, which offers numerous health and wellness resources to help residents through the pandemic, and Arlington's Mental Health Programs and Services division which provides assistance to adults with mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Bilingual staff are available and all services are strictly confidential.

Health and Wellness Resources for Arlingtonians
Arlington Behavioral Healthcare Services Emergency Line: 703-228-5160

Children's Behavioral Healthcare: Outpatient Services 703-228-1560

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Out of the Box (OBX) Friday: Zoom class on Basquiat and Self-Portraits.



Gabe Kimmel-Senior from Fairfax, working on his self-portrait, inspired by artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat.

PHOTOS BY JOAN BRADY

Now, For Something Completely Different

At the GW Community School, distancing doesn't mean disconnecting.

BY JOAN BRADY
THE CONNECTION

School started the way it always had on March 19, with advisories, groggy students and a few snarky jokes. But instead of staring at a teacher, everyone was staring at a screen. The COVID-19 lockdown had begun.

Students at the GW Community School were thrilled to be there.

"We had only missed a few days of school," said history teacher Tim Connelly. "But with everything going on, it felt desperate and lonely. Everyone was so excited to see [each other]. There was a sense of normalcy. We had history class. We were making jokes."

Founded by teachers Alexa Warden and Richard Goldie, GW Community School is a private college preparatory high school. "GWCS students are bright, motivated, often non-traditional learners who don't necessarily fit into the big public high school mold," said Warden, school director. "They may have felt that there was something missing in their previous school environment, a missing connection that kept them from realizing their full selves."

That connection is what they find at GWCS. They become part of the family.

With an average class size of seven, GWCS's 41 students take classes in everything from English to astrophysics and choose from an assortment of extracurriculars, including a basketball team, a theater group and many clubs.

Warden says it's important for kids to have a sense of belonging. So community is core to the school's philosophy. Students are encouraged to help each other, their families and the community at large. Teachers and administrators are expected to model that behavior.

Anthony Parisi, a senior from McLean,



COURTESY OF RODNEY WHITLOCK

10th Grader Matthew Whitlock of Arlington, during school hours.

feels the difference: "Public high school can be lonely. But here, it's one big group ... a community, like the name implies."

The approach to academics focuses on igniting students' interests and passions. Parisi's mother, Suzanne, can't say enough about the impact the school has had on her son's excitement for learning, just since September. "All of a sudden it was like seeing the energy and enthusiasm I had seen in him in grade school," she said. "That [energy] had slowly drained out of him over the years."

For senior Gabe Kimmel of Fairfax, the reason for the school's success is simple, "It's a community," he said. "You support each other and that helps you want to learn."

The GWCS students and their parents didn't waste any time stressing over a shutdown that would ultimately disrupt the education of Virginia's nearly 1.6 million school-age children. Jay Mestraud, a student from Clifton, had confidence in the school's director, saying he "knew not to worry, because Ms. Warden is always super prepared."

And, in fact, Warden had recognized early in the COVID crisis that GWCS needed to move quickly to be prepared in case the school was forced to close.

So, weeks before Virginia schools were shuttered, Warden orchestrated Microsoft Team downloads and updates on every student and teacher's computer. And with one local student already quarantining at home and teachers testing distance learning methods by operating from remote classrooms,



Ana Parker, a junior from Arlington, enjoying some outdoor time during our Zoom interview.

March 12 was the last day the brick-and-mortar school was open, and Warden and the staff worked to adapt the curriculum as needed. So by March 19, it was business as usual with full-day, live education for all GWCS students.

While many public and private schools struggled with the transition to remote learning, GWCS students quickly learned that there would be no lowering of academic performance expectations, said Goldie, who, in addition to being a co-founder, also serves as the school's assistant director, teacher and coach.

BEFORE THE pandemic, Fridays during the school's fourth quarter were a big deal. Juniors and seniors would go to internships, while freshmen and sophomores engaged in carefully crafted outings. Something had to be created to replace those experiences. It was critical that social distancing didn't result in social disconnecting.

The result was the new-for-Covid-19 version of the "Out of the Box" Friday program, which was kicked off by an all-school Zoom call. On Fridays, Warden splits the students into teams and they are given an activity to complete, and sometimes there's competition between teams. For Earth Day, they used the seek app (iNaturalist) to document biodiversity in their yards and neighborhoods and then analyzed and documented the data together.

Last week, English and math teacher Sam Wallace introduced the work of the late

the team was able to troubleshoot the technology.

Warden recognized that technology would be just one of the pieces that would ensure success. Students would need structure and a continued sense of community to energize them for the rest of the school year.

artist Jean-Michel Basquiat and, led by artists from Artjamz, the students completed self-portraits inspired by Basquiat's style. In preparation, parents and guardians had picked up art kits from a central location.

Ana Parker, a junior from Arlington, started at GWCS just after they began distance learning. She said she "used to dread the idea of going to school on Mondays." But at GWCS, despite not having met any of the other students face to face, they were quick to draw her in. She was immediately invited to the weekly Zoom movie night that one of the students had organized, which she really appreciated. And, while Parker says she, "doesn't love school, the way some people do, [she] loves this school."

GWCS parent Lisa Kimmel said she is "blown away with how the school has handled the remote learning. And how quick they were to adapt to it. It's been an overwhelming success."

"Creating predictable structure and normalcy is very important for young people," said Jackie L. Stout, a Herndon-based trauma specialist. "Especially at a time when the uncertainty caused by the pandemic can increase stress levels. And GWCS's actions benefit not just the students, but the entire family. Knowing that kids are focused constructively during the day minimizes potential tension between family members."

Suzanne Parisi acknowledged that she "doesn't know anyone who is having an educational experience that is even close to what her son, Anthony, is getting." That can make talking to less-satisfied parents a challenge, "I try to edit myself," she said, "so they don't get bummed out."

The school is definitely unusual, but it's hard to argue with the results. All fourteen 2020 GWCS graduates have plans to attend college programs. That is, if the world goes back to normal in the fall.

And graduates are successfully launched. Ben Suskind of McLean, who graduated from GWCS in 2019, says his classes and teachers set him up for success in college. But what he really appreciated was "having the time and freedom to explore [his] interest in aviation because GWCS doesn't waste time with busy work." Suskind recent-

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PUBLIC NOTICE

AT&T proposes to replace an existing 31.2' metal light pole with a new 38' metal light pole and install a top-mounted antenna at 40.4' near 1505 Crystal Dr, Arlington, VA (20200687). Interested parties may contact Scott Horn (856-809-1202) (1012 Industrial Dr., West Berlin, NJ 08091) with comments regarding potential effects on historic properties.

Legals

PUBLIC NOTICE

AT&T proposes to construct a 41.5' light pole at 201 12th Street S, Arlington, VA (20200686). Interested parties may contact Scott Horn (856-809-1202) (1012 Industrial Dr., West Berlin, NJ 08091) with comments regarding potential effects on historic properties.

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COURTESY OF TIM CONNELLY

History teacher Tim Connelly and his son Jackson showing what GWCS Zoom lunches are like from their house.

Now, For Something Completely Different

FROM PAGE 5

ly finished his freshman year in the Aviation Flight Science program at Western Michigan University.

Another member of the class of 2019, Centreville's Gabriella Holtermann, said she has found college challenging, but has taken lessons learned at GWCS to successfully seek support from her college advisors at The American University, where she's pursuing a double major in anthropology and international studies.

Max Ginsberg of Fairfax, class of 2017, remembers well a time when crippling social anxiety kept him from making meaningful connections with peers. Moving to GWCS for his sophomore year, Ginsburg says, "the family environment is the key reason [I] did well there."

In the face of the welcoming acceptance he felt from the other students he said "[his] nervous shell dissolved away." Ginsberg is a rising senior at Davis and Elkins College, W. Va., with a major in psychology and a minor in theater.

In hours of interviews, there was not even a hint of criticism of the school. In fact, the gushing from parents and students was over the top.

About the only possible dent in the armor seemed to be when one student mentioned that Warden sometimes yelled at the school's pet turtles.

So when I sent Warden a list of mundane follow-up questions, I tucked one devious one in: "What do the turtles do to make you angry?"

Her response: "I never get mad at the turtles. I love them."

When I went back to my source with some follow-up questions, I could almost hear freshman Jay Mestraud's infectious laugh in his typed reply, "Ms. Warden doesn't yell at them in anger she just gives them a stern talking to because they are mischievous and get up to all kinds of things. ... Kinda like her students."

That's just how it is when you are a family.

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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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