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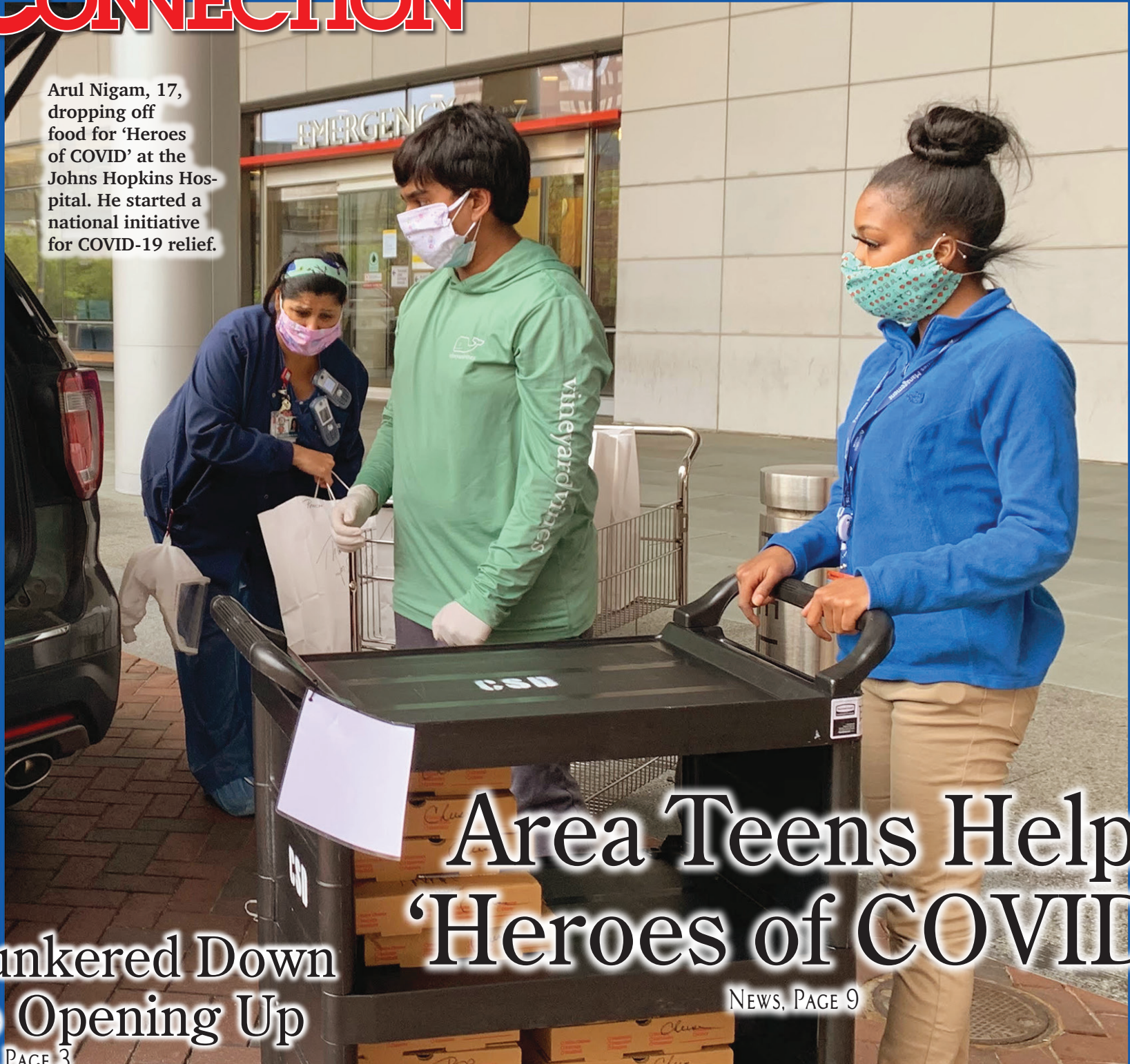
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# Great Falls CONNECTION

HOMELIFESTYLE

PAGE 6

Arul Nigam, 17, dropping off food for 'Heroes of COVID' at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. He started a national initiative for COVID-19 relief.



## Area Teens Help 'Heroes of COVID'

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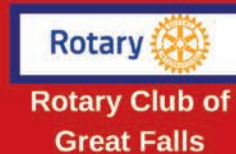
Bob Nelson Team

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[BothBobs@BobNelsonTeam.com](mailto:BothBobs@BobNelsonTeam.com)

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The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult for restaurants, small businesses, their employees and the owners. The Bob Nelson Real Estate Team in coordination with the Great Falls Rotary Club hope to spotlight local businesses and restaurants and let you know how to continue to support them until our economy gets back into full gear.

We have set up a website ([www.HelpGFBusinesses.com](http://www.HelpGFBusinesses.com)) where we will post a short description advising modifications the small businesses are making to their business practices to best serve the community and to keep everyone healthy and safe.

We would all ask that you be sure to transact business with these businesses as much as possible and do a little extra for those you consider your favorites. We also strongly encourage you to purchase gift cards to these businesses. T

Please check back to [www.HelpGFBusinesses.com](http://www.HelpGFBusinesses.com) as we continue to add other businesses and share ideas about how we can all work together as a community to help our local small businesses thrive during this difficult time.

Thank you,

Bob Sr. and Bob Jr.

Thank you for your support of our local Great Falls businesses. Through your loyalty, many have reported that your purchases will help them weather this current situation.

The Bob Nelson Team teamed up with Brx American Bistro and the Rotary Club to promote "Great Falls Feeding Heroes." The funds raised are used to order meals from other Great Falls restaurants for local hospitals and first responders.

The Bob Nelson Team remains open for business while observing social distancing and other CDC recommendations.

With interest rates low and not many homes available, the real estate market is booming. We expect to see this continue in the Great Falls market due to the desire of many people to seek more open spaces for their families and live the 22066 lifestyle.

Contact us if you or someone you know is looking to buy or sell a home.



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# NEWS

## Hunkered Down to Opening Up

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

It has been nearly seven weeks since Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam used what he called during a news briefing on May 8 the “one blunt tool” they had back then to slow the spread of the coronavirus, “shutting everything down.” Now armed with a steady supply of PPEs, continuing to ramp up testing, hiring roughly 1000 contact tracers and most of all seeing a downward trend in the percent of positivity cases for COVID-19, Gov. Northam said, “I anticipate and hope that Phase One (of the Forward Virginia plan) will start on Friday, May 15. Obviously, if our trends change, we will adjust that date as needed.”

In his weekly email to the Fairfax County Community dated two days earlier, Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay wrote: “In response to a letter from Loudoun County Chair Randall, Prince William County Chair Wheeler, and myself, Governor Northam announced his intention to coordinate any future reopenings with Northern Virginia localities. This is important because we know a one-size-fits-all approach in the Commonwealth simply doesn’t work. We also communicated our desire to coordinate with DC and Maryland to avoid confusion for our residents and businesses.”

According to Gov. Northam, Phase One Forward Virginia would slowly and deliberately ease some restrictions, but not all. “We will move forward cautiously with science, data and safety as our criteria...I have said that I want a 14-day downward trend in the percent of positivity,” Northam said, referencing data by the Virginia Department of Health. “In many ways, (it) Phase one will look like what we’ve been doing,” he said.



Virginia Governor Ralph Northam lays out his blueprint for reopening the Commonwealth during the May 8 briefing.



Jeff McKay, Chairman of Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, at a recent virtual meeting.

## NOVA leaders urge regional approach to reopening Virginia.

The 10-person limit on gatherings would remain. The governor encouraged everyone to wear face coverings when in public and to social distance. His Stay At Home order would become Safer at Home order. Beaches would continue to be open for only exercise and fishing. “This virus is still with us. It has not gone away...We may be living with it for months or even years,” he said.

## Highlights of Changes from Current Status to Phase One:

Fitness and Exercise Facilities can hold outdoor fitness classes with restrictions

Non-essential Retail can open at no more than 50 percent capacity

Personal Care and Grooming Services by appointment only must adhere to social distancing and facemasks required

Indoor Shooting Ranges can open at no more than 50 percent capacity

Places of Worship can hold indoor services at no more than 50 percent capacity

Private Campgrounds can open.

Restaurants, Dining Establishments, Food Courts and Beverage Services that have a permit for outdoor seating can serve people at no more than 50 percent capacity, with spacing and with employees wearing masks

State Parks, in some places, can allow overnight-use

Violations will be a Class I misdemeanor.

SEE REOPENING, PAGE 11

## LATEST: Phase One for Northern Virginia Delayed

Governor Ralph Northam Tuesday 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.

Governor Northam has 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.

Governor Northam had directed jurisdictions to formally request approval to remain in Phase Zero. Executive Order

Sixty-Two allows the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William; the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park; and the towns of Dumfries, Herndon, Leesburg, and Vienna (Northern Virginia Region) to remain in Phase Zero, as requested by officials in those localities.

Data show that Northern Virginia is substantially higher than the rest of the Commonwealth in percentage of positive tests for COVID-19, for example. The Northern Virginia Region has about a 25 percent positivity rate, while the rest of the Commonwealth is closer to 10 percent. Further, in the last 24 hours, the Northern Virginia Region reported over 700 cases, while the rest of the Commonwealth reported approximately 270. On any given day, 70 percent of the Commonwealth’s positive cases are attributable to the Northern Virginia Region.

## NOVA Reopening Should Occur When Metrics Met

### Regional mayors and chairs send letter to Gov. Northam.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Mayors and chairs of the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William and the City of Fairfax sent a letter to Virginia Governor Ralph Northam dated May 10, in response to his May 8 news briefing. In their letter, they thanked the governor for his leadership. They said as the governor decided when Phase 1 should start, the threshold metrics he provided in his Forward Virginia plan “should guide any transition to Phase 1.”

The mayors and chairs also said they believed the industry-specific guidelines the governor offered for Phase 1 were “appropriate and prudent” and that

transition to Phase 1 in Northern Virginia “should occur when our region achieved the threshold metrics.” According to the letter, the metrics for transition to Phase 1 were a downward trend of positive tests and hospitalizations over 14 days, enough hospital beds and intensive care capacity, an increasing and sustainable supply of PPE and increased testing and tracing.

“While it is certainly useful to examine statewide metrics as we gauge the success of current public health policies, we feel strongly that any changes to current policies be guided by what is occurring in our region,” they said.

With the letter, the mayors and chairs attached a memo by their public health directors in Northern Virginia to Dr. M. Norman, State Health Commissioner, Virginia Department of Health. In the memo, the health directors said they had been asked to assess the status of the Northern Virginia region against the metrics the governor issued on April 24. “Based on our assessment, we do not believe that the Northern Virginia region has met the criteria for moving into Phase 1 at this time. We recommend continuing current community mitigation strategies and reassessing this on a regular basis to determine when Northern Virginia can move into Phase 1 according to these criteria (and any additional agreed upon criteria).”

In his May 10, COVID-19 Update to the Fairfax County Community, Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors said, “Reopening our businesses will be crucial to moving forward and I share our community’s desire to do so, but the health of our residents is crucial to the health of our economy.”

The Mayors and Chairs

Libby Garvey, Chair Arlington County Board, Jeff McKay, Chair Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Phyllis Randall, Chair Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Ann Wheeler, Chair Prince William County Board of Supervisors and Justin Wilson, Mayor Alexandria City Council

The Northern Virginia Health Directors  
Stephen A. Haering, MD, MPH, FACPM Director, Alexandria Health Department; Reuben K. Varghese, MD, MPH Director, Arlington Health District; Gloria Ado-Ayensu, MD, MPH Director of Health, Fairfax County Health Department; David Goodfriend, MD, MPH Director, Loudoun County Health Department and Alison Ansher, MD, MPH Director Prince William County Health District

# The First Great Depression

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

**M**y mom and dad were married in 1928 just before the Great Depression that lasted from 1929 to 1939. They grew up less than three miles apart, and Mom's father who was a carpenter helped them build a house almost exactly halfway between the homes in which they had grown up. My dad worked for his father on the family farm in rural Page County, Virginia, growing grains and converting some of them into a liquid product (moonshine)!

The Great Depression was the greatest economic disaster the world had ever experienced to that time, and its impact was exacerbated by a drought. Mom and Dad never forgot the hardships they endured during that first decade of married life together, and those early experiences affected their entire lives. They developed skills of self-reliance and frugality that stayed with them even as economic times got easier for them later in their lives.



## COMMENTARY

My dad farmed about an acre of vegetables that fed us throughout the summer and for the rest of the year as my mom canned or later when they had electricity and a freezer frozen food for future consumption. We always grew enough potatoes to fill a garner in the cellar (essentially a basement with a dirt floor) to last us all year. In the earliest years of their marriage, more than a decade before I came along as the youngest of their three sons, they had a cow for milk and raised a hog for butchering.

To supplement the meager income Dad had from farming with my grandfather, they would pick huckleberries in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains that are now part of the Shenandoah National Park. They picked wild strawberries and blackberries for home consumption of jams and jellies Mom would make. Their most profitable side-line was selling the meat of black walnuts that they had gathered from the area. Cracking a black walnut takes a

lot of force and know-how. They were extremely frugal as they had to be. Well after the Great Depression ended and I was a young person we used our wax paper and tin (aluminum) foil more than once by simply wiping it off after each use.

Dad and Mom never lost their love and appreciation for President Franklin Roosevelt whom they credited with saving the country. They responded to his fireside chats that assured them that they had "nothing to fear but fear itself." When the Great Depression finally ended and Dad went to work "in the public" meaning that he no longer worked for his father, their economic situation improved with his being in a unionized job and as the entire country improved with the New Deal.

In many of the same ways that my parents experienced the first Great Depression, future generations will have been impacted by the next Great Depression coming on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic we are now experiencing. With hard work, strong faith, frugality, honest leadership, and perseverance they will be able to share the things they are now having to do to survive.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Missing McLean Day

To the Editor:

On the third Saturday in May, police cars park at the entrance of Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road, in the early morning. It is the McLean Day, the annual family festival in McLean. Rain or shine.

Prior to this event day, colorful, big and small carnival rides are set up in the park. In addition to carnival rides, the festival hosts live music, games, food trucks, petting zoo, laser tag, a rock-climbing wall, costumed characters, exhibitors and other entertainment.

When my kids were little, they used to perform on the stage for this day as a little ballerina with their dance class. Ever since we moved to McLean in 2002, we've enjoyed this festival every year. I still cherish the picture taken of my older daughter, Jeeho, on her first McLean Day when she wore a red dress with shiny, red shoes and picked the red plane out of the colorful airplane rides. Many more pictures have captured moments such as kids riding on a donkey, screaming on the Viking ride, holding our dog, laughing with friends and so on.

McLean Day has more than a centennial history. On July 31, 1915, the first McLean Day was

held on the Franklin Sherman Elementary School grounds and an adjacent lot, where my two kids once played as well.

McLean Day became an annual event after the success of the first event.

However, 1918 and 1919 missed it because of World War I and the flu epidemic. It moved to Lewinsville Park in 1989. In May 2020, however, there's no McLean Day: It's cancelled due to COVID-19. Lewinsville Park is still closed. It's a bright day in May. Blooming roses, chirping birds, and busy bees console me reminding me that life goes on and that McLean Day will return next year.

Yunjung S Ha  
McLean

## Don't Let Public Input Fall Victim to COVID-19

To the Editor:

At an electronic public hearing on April 14, 2020, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors discussed the Uncodified Ordinance to Establish Methods to Assure Continuity in Fairfax County Government and Conduct of Board

of Supervisors Meetings during the Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Emergency and other items.

The Virginia General Assembly has expressly provided that public bodies may meet electronically, provide three requirements are met:

(a) "the Governor has declared a state of emergency...";  
(b) "the catastrophic nature of the declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location"; and

(c) "the purpose of the meeting is to address the emergency." [VA. CODE ANN. §2.2-3708.2(A)(3)(2019)] Assuring "Continuity in Fairfax Government" appears to include public hearings related to zoning, planning, and land development applications.

Land-use applications were on the agenda on April 14. In fact, the board approved three land-use rezonings. Only one citizen was able to make a public comment.

Virginia Attorney General Mark R. Herring recently issued an opinion on electronic hearings. Herring stated, "Code §2.2-3708.2(A)(3) does not permit all meetings of a public body to be conducted electronically—only those where 'the purpose of the meeting is to address the emergency.'"

He also stated that public bodies

are permitted to "meet electronically to make decisions that must be made immediately and where failure to do so could result in irrevocable public harm."

Electronic hearings severely limit public input. Rather than addressing supervisors eye to eye, citizens are reduced to passive input, hoping supervisors heed their testimony. Citizens can't dialog with staff or supervisors, make site visits, verify or rebut information, and actively contribute. What about citizens without access to or expertise with technology?

Do land-use decisions "address the emergency?" Would their delay result in "irrevocable public harm?" We need an equitable process for citizens and businesses. Prudence dictates delaying such decisions until citizens can actively engage with the board.

The country is experiencing a health crisis not seen in 100 years.

People are rethinking their priorities. Why not postpone land-use decisions until citizens can research county plans and ordinances, gather with neighbors, analyze proposals, prepare testimony, and "be in the room" when important land-use decisions are made?

Do you agree? Let your supervisor know.

Linda Brown  
Vienna

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PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Turning 18 at pandemic time: Leila Williams of McLean.

## Celebrating Leila's 18th Birthday

Leila Williams is a McLean High School senior who is graduating in 2020 and will be attending University of Illinois in the fall. Leila will be studying engineering. It has been anything but a typical senior year as she and the rest of her class are not able to enjoy class trips, parties, prom, and most important graduation. She also turned eighteen on May 10. She celebrated with a birthday car parade. Leila's friends from elementary school, Color Guard, and family friends came in their cars and met in a parking lot. They made signs for Leila and had balloons. Everyone drove around, waved, and said hi while staying in their cars. It was a fun way to

celebrate with friends safely. Leila is a member of McLean Color Guard which teaches the value of hard work, performance, and friendship. Leila enjoys Color Guard so much that she plans to continue doing it in college. Leila also is a softball player who has enjoyed playing at McLean Little League and McLean High School. Leila plays the violin and is in the National honor society, math honor society, science honor society, TriM (music) honor society and German honor society. Leila is a Girl Scout and volunteers to help others through Girl Scouts and her church. Leila has gone on several mission trips to share her time with others.



Drive-by birthday parade.



Birthday to remember.

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## HomeLifestyle



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NICELY DONE KITCHENS & BATHS

The island gives the Boland family a place to prepare meals, eat and spend time together playing games or crafting.

## Comfy Kitchen Amid COVID-19

A gloomy, dark space gets a light and bright update.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

When Joe and Sarah Boland moved into their colonial-style home in Burke, they were drawn to the skylights, soaring ceilings and picture windows that allowed in streams of natural light. The house had one blemish however: the kitchen.

Dark wood cabinetry, paired with black countertops worked to create a gloomy space, while a cooktop-covered peninsula disrupted the flow of the kitchen. The family of four, including two daughters ages 8 and 10, longed for a sunny gathering spot that harmonized with the breeziness of the rest of their home.

"We spend a lot of time in the kitchen preparing meals and just hanging out," said Sarah. "I wanted a bright space that inspired me to want to cook more. I knew I wanted mostly white with pops of color. I knew I liked the warmth of brushed brass accents."

The energetic and fun-loving couple asked designer Kate Couchman of Nicely Done Kitchens & Baths to bring their musings to life. "They were adventurous and open to colors, patterns and doing fun things," she said. "They love spending time together, but there was no room in the kitchen for them to do things together."

Deriving inspiration from the family's request for light and spaciousness blended with practicality and functionality, Couchman conceived a colonial blue and white kitchen accented with champagne-hued hardware. "This was the first blue kitchen that I've done," she said. "We used a lot of touches that many people would be unsure about."

The former kitchen's dark slate flooring was replaced with wide-plank wood and the peninsula swapped for an island. "I knew I liked an updated, transitional farmhouse feel with a farmhouse sink," said Sarah.



Sarah Boland wanted a farmhouse kitchen design, complete with a farmhouse sink.

White Silestone accented with ribbons of blue and gray now tops the counters and island. The updated workspaces give Laura inspiration that sparks her culinary aspirations, and she shares those with her daughters.

"The island is a workstation, but it's also an eating station and fits six people," said Couchman. "It's multi-functional, which we're seeing a lot of now. People are doing away with breakfast tables in the kitchen."

The kitchen not only makes efficient use of space and lets in sunshine, but provides a venue for lively family togetherness.

"The vast island table is great for crafting, playing games, baking and doing homework," said Laura. "The kitchen has such a clean, bright feel, which is part of the reason we are always in there."

The COVID-19-induced social isolation gives the Boland family a renewed appreciation of their kitchen. "The kitchen is pretty much the first space we are in after we wake up," said Laura. "It is ... always very welcoming. I feel fortunate that I get to spend time, especially these days, in this homey and beautifully functional space."





PHOTO COURTESY OF GFCFA

GFCFA President Bill Canis and Treasurer Jim Trent present donation to Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Captain Mike Allen, Commander of Great Falls Station #12, with Firefighters and technicians.

## Honoring Great Falls First Responders

Great Falls Citizens Association presents donation to Great Falls Fire & Rescue Station #12.

Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCFA) is responding to meet the needs of the first-line firefighters and emergency medical personnel who serve the Great Falls community by providing a \$2,500 donation to the GF Fire Station to support their response to the pandemic of 2020. GFCFA's Board voted to provide Fire Station 12 with assistance to help purchase meals for all three shifts, from local restaurants and stores if possible, and, if needed, to provide the means for the station's men and women to have enough personal protective equipment not only on the job, but also when they go home to their families. In addition, if useful, some of the funds could be used to purchase any other equipment that ensures the ongoing safety of Great Falls firefighters.

GFCFA's President and Treasurer delivered the donation to the Firehouse on May 5 to coincide with #GivingTuesdayNow a global day of giving and unity, as an emergency response to the unprecedented needs caused by COVID-19. The day is designed to drive an influx of generosity, citizen engagement, business and philanthropy activation, and support for communities and nonprofits around the world.

Several weeks ago, GFCFA Board members began exploring ways to support the local community during the crisis and presented several options for giving. At a time when we are all experiencing the pandemic, GFCFA believes generosity is what brings



Great Falls Fire Station #12 personnel with Capt. Mike Allen (center)

people of all races, faiths, and political views together across the globe. Generosity gives everyone power to make a positive change in the lives of others and is a fundamental value anyone can act on. It's a day for everyone around the world to stand together and give back in all ways, no matter who or where we are.

Bill Canis, President of GFCFA, said: "GFCFA's Board members recognize that, along with doctors, nurses, and allied health workers, our firefighters and paramedics are on the front lines of this battle against COVID-19. The personnel of the Fairfax Fire & Rescue Station #12 selflessly serve our community and do so in the face of incredible risk, under normal circumstances. Today, that risk is compounded by the effects of COVID-19."

GFCFA is an all-volunteer organization with no paid staff. Member dues provide the financial support needed by the Association to operate. The Great Falls Citizens Association has been serving the residents of the community for more than 50 years, providing a local voice with local, state, and federal elected officials.

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5/6/2020.....Wellbeing

5/13/2020.....HomeLifeStyle

5/20/2020.....A+ Camps & Schools

5/27/2020.....Senior Living

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# Final Weeks of College in Quarantine

McLean college senior, Volunteer EMT reflects on life in pandemic time.

BY CAROLINE WATKINS  
THE CONNECTION

When Claire Dalby of McLean envisioned her last semester of college she certainly did not expect it to end like this.

Like many other college students, Dalby is struggling to come to terms with having her final weeks at the University of Virginia stripped away from her, due to COVID-19.

"It was definitely stressful to have all of my last semester plans cancelled, because a lot of that was stuff that I was really looking forward to," Dalby said. "And it is definitely stressful to know that there are a lot of people that I probably won't see again, or probably won't see for at least a couple of months."

Instead of making final memories with her college cohort and visiting some of her favorite Charlottesville hangouts one last time, Dalby spends most of her days completing online classes and volunteering at the Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad.



Claire Dalby of McLean.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

DALBY works as an emergency medical technician for a minimum of 12 hours a week, plus a 24-hour Saturday shift every six weeks. Due to COVID-19, Dalby and her coworkers have faced a number of adjustments to their safety protocol.

One of the main changes is that crewmembers are now being required to wear face masks, gloves and goggles for every call. Immediately following their shifts, workers must change out of their uniforms. And when it comes to limiting exposure among crewmembers at the station, only essential workers are allowed inside the building at all times.

But for Dalby, it's all part of the job.

"Honestly, rescue is a stressor, but it's also not at the same time," Dalby said. "It's nice to feel like I'm able to change something and that I'm able to help."

Madeleine Engel, another volunteer EMT and UVA student, said that she is grateful to have support from the Charlottesville community during such an unprecedented time. Thanks to donations, workers are not at risk for a shortage of personal protective equipment.

"We were given cloth masks, enough for everyone on the rescue squad I think," Engel said. "I know everyone is very grateful for the donation. We wear them at all times at the station, except when we are eating."

And after months of social distancing and lifestyle changes for many, recent headlines suggest that a

gradual return to normalcy may be in sight for the state of Virginia.

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) said that he would likely ease some of the state's restrictions as early as May 15.

For Dalby, it's hard to imagine what life will look like when the stay-at-home order is lifted.

"I think that people are going to be a little bit wary for a long time," Dalby said. "Social distancing has become such an ingrained part of our culture by this point. I feel like it might be a little bit hard to go back to normal right away."

IN THE MEANTIME, Dalby continues to keep herself grounded in her schoolwork, medical school applications and EMT shifts. She also continues to keep in touch with college friends online and through phone calls.

"I think it's definitely hard for college students, because we're so used to being around everyone all the time," Dalby said. "But, luckily we're able to call each other and hear from each other and often, which makes it easier to keep in touch and make sure everyone's staying sane."

Dalby optimistically awaits the start of her next chapter. If all goes according to plan, the fourth-year UVA student will cap off her collegiate career in October, when the university plans to host its Final Exercises for the Class of 2020.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Turning 18 at pandemic time: Leila Williams of McLean.

## Celebrating Leila's 18th Birthday

Leila Williams is a McLean High School senior who is graduating in 2020 and will be attending University of Illinois in the fall. Leila will be studying engineering. It has been anything but a typical senior year as she and the rest of her class are not able to enjoy class trips, parties, prom, and most important graduation. She also turned eighteen on May 10. She celebrated with a birthday car parade. Leila's friends from elementary school, Color Guard, and family friends came in their cars and met in a parking lot. They made signs for Leila and had balloons. Everyone drove around, waved, and said hi while staying in their cars. It

was a fun way to celebrate with friends safely. Leila is a member of McLean Color Guard which teaches the value of hard work, performance, and friendship. Leila enjoys Color Guard so much that she plans to continue doing it in college. Leila also is a softball player who has enjoyed playing at McLean Little League and McLean High School. Leila plays the violin and is in the National honor society, math honor society, science honor society, TriM (music) honor society and German honor society. Leila is a Girl Scout and volunteers to help others through Girl Scouts and her church. Leila has gone on several mission trips to share her time with others.



Drive-by birthday parade.



Birthday to remember.



# Vienna Teen Helps ‘Heroes of COVID’

High School junior organizes national initiative to feed frontline COVID-19 health care workers.

BY CAROLINE WATKINS  
THE CONNECTION

Like many of us, Arul Nigam, 17, of Vienna, was looking for a way to help his community during the coronavirus crisis.

“I wanted to see what I could do to give back to the community and help as many people as I could,” Nigam said.

After researching and brainstorming, the Thomas Jefferson High School student came up with the idea to start a national initiative for COVID-19 relief.

Nigam’s initiative, called “Heroes of COVID,” delivers curbside meals from local restaurants to health care workers in COVID-19 hot spots around the country.

“I was doing a bit of research and I realized there are these two struggling groups, which are hospitals and a lot of small local businesses like restaurants,” Nigam said. “And I thought that there must be some way that I can use both of these groups to help each other.”

Word about the initiative quickly spread online. On March 20, Nigam started a GoFundMe page, where he was able to raise nearly \$5,000 to purchase meals for frontline workers.

Now, just over a month later, Nigam has raised nearly \$9,000 to serve over 1,000 meals to health care professionals in COVID-19 hot spots around the country. Through the initiative, meals have been delivered in cities such as Washington D.C., New York, Boston, Baltimore and Chicago.

Thus far, 21 hospitals in 12 states have benefitted from the Heroes of COVID program.

**LOCALLY,** Heroes of COVID has delivered meals to Fairfax INOVA Hospital, George Washington University Hospital, Johns Hopkins Hospital and Washington Hospital Center.

Deliveries to hospitals in Virginia and



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Arul Nigam, 17, of Vienna, came up with the idea to start a national initiative for COVID-19 relief.

**“It’s really amazing to see someone his age coming up with this kind of initiative.”**

— Rahul Vinod,  
co-founder of Rasa

Washington D.C. were made in cooperation with Rasa, a fast-casual Indian restaurant based in Washington D.C.

“It’s really amazing to see someone his age coming up with this kind of initiative,” Rahul Vinod, co-founder of Rasa, said. “We’ve seen a few of these ‘fuel the frontlines’ and ‘fuel the fight’ kind of organizations popping up and they’ve been really helpful for local small businesses, like myself, where sales are down so dramatically.”



Arul Nigam dropping off food for ‘Heroes of COVID’ at the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Like Nigam, Vinod was also excited for the opportunity to give back to his community.

“We’re looking for ways that we can not only stay in business, but also, be a part of the solution and help people who are putting their lives on the line,” Vinod said.

Through the project’s Instagram and Facebook accounts, followers can see photos of the meal deliveries to hospitals. Many photos in the project’s social media feeds feature health care workers in their hospital scrubs, smiling with meal donations in hand.

In addition to spreading word about Heroes of COVID through social media, Nigam uses his platforms to give medical professionals a voice. Nigam hopes that his initiative can also inform others about how they can stay safe during the pandemic, by featuring stories and advice from frontline health care workers.

“People are getting direct information

about what they should be doing in terms of social distancing to protect themselves, their loved ones and everyone in the community,” Nigam said.

And although some states across the U.S. are beginning to slowly lift their stay-at-home orders, Nigam has no plans of slowing down anytime soon. He will continue to reach out to COVID-19 hot spots to help underserved communities around the country.

**AS NIGAM CONTINUES** to expand Heroes of COVID, he remains grateful for the donors and individuals whose support of the initiative is making a difference.

“We’re just really, really, thankful for all the frontline workers, especially in health care, but also in the restaurants, delivery and everyone who’s contributing to this and risking their lives to help everyone get over this and get through this,” Nigam said.

## Vienna Youth Leads Global Pandemic Mask Initiative

Vienna Youth Chelsea Hu, Basis Independent McLean student and founder/executive director of Teen Mobile Arts, a non-profit which brings together talented teen artists into a mobile ensemble of painters, exhibited in shops, restaurants, and businesses throughout Virginia and raising visibility for young artists while bringing new and larger patronage to these “partnering” businesses, has led her team of local young artists to fundraise for face masks at home and

abroad. By auctioning their paintings, the young artists of Teen Mobile Arts have purchased 5,000 surgical face masks to date for senior homes in Metro D.C. The teens wrote: “Dear Seniors, We are thinking of you! Please take care, stay safe, and be strong!”

Back in February, Teen Mobile Arts also joined forces with other organizations to donate cases of masks to nine hospitals in Wuhan, China, when the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) was at its peak in Asia.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Chelsea Hu delivering masks and greeting cards to senior homes.



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## NEWS

# Curtis Knocking Presents 'Happy Half-hours'

Local band started half-hour live performances of classic rock through their Facebook page.

BY JESSICA FENG  
THE CONNECTION

Since social distancing started, concerts have been canceled or postponed, but that didn't stop Curtis Knocking, a Northern Virginia based classic rock band, from entertaining their fans. On Saturday, May 2, the band went live on their Facebook page to play music for more than 90 people and the video later went on to garner more than 1,800 views.

For those who aren't familiar with Curtis Knocking, keyboard player Doug Sharpe explains the roles of each member.

"The band is made up of four 50-something Virginia Tech grads: Doug Sharpe on the keyboard, Zeke Gladstone on guitar, Gary Stein on bass, and Dave Signori on drums & vocals."

The sudden disruption of social life in March prompted Curtis Knocking to cancel their original plans following the social-distancing policies. Sharpe shared some of the band's traditions, stretching back years.

"The band plays shows about once a month, mostly at local restaurants in Falls Church and Arlington, such as Dogwood Tavern, Clare & Don's, Cowboy Cafe, Westover Beer Garden, and Ragtime. For many years, we have looked forward to practice & beers at our drummer's house every Thursday night. However, due to the pandemic, we canceled all in-person shows and practices starting the second week of March."

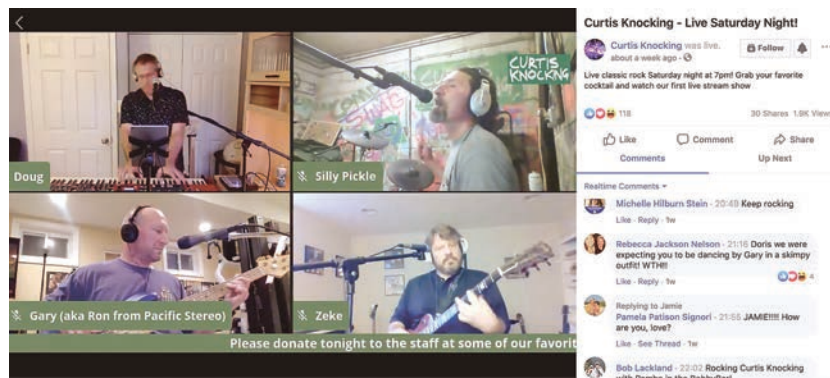
PLAYING VIRTUALLY wasn't initially a success; the band faced problems with the sound syncing. Sharpe mentioned that they used Zoom before switching software.

"Connecting with each other and our fans through music is a big part of our lives. So at the end of March, we started virtual practice over the internet. Initially, we tried a Zoom meeting. However, there was way too much delay. We all sounded a beat behind each other."

With problem-solving and IT knowledge, Curtis Knocking arrived at the solution of a server with Jamulus software. This allowed them to produce better audio quality and move forward with the live performance.

"The key part of our solution was setting up a hosted server with Jamulus software. Jamulus is what mixes all four live performances together on a server and then plays the result back in our headphones. Once we worked out the kinks, we were surprised at how crisp the sound was - and how well we could play in sync with each other. So we decided it was time to perform a livestream show for our fans."

Wendy Jensen, of Falls Church, a viewer of the virtual performance, describes her history with Curtis Knocking. She commends the band for keeping followers up-to-date on their events.



Kurtis Knocking in virtual live performance: More to come.

"I'm good friends with the members of the band and have been attending shows for years. They were the main attraction for my 50th birthday and were a huge hit! Curtis Knocking does an excellent job of emailing newsletters to inform friends/family/followers of upcoming appearances."

Two other fans, Bela and Hari Sastry of Vienna, are neighbors of Sharpe and share the impact the performance has made on their life during social distancing. They highlight that Curtis Knocking used the opportunity to raise money for their usual venue.

"The impact was reminding us that we are all part of a community; one that is sticking together but facing real challenges. The band did a nice tribute to Adam Schlesinger of Fountains of Wayne, who recently passed away from COVID, by playing one of his songs (Stacy's Mom), and also made the event a fundraiser to help support staff at local venues including Dogwood Tavern where we have seen the band play."

Although the virtual performance couldn't fully replicate the experience of an in-person concert, it brought new aspects to the experience. Jensen added that socializing with her friends was something she missed.

"I missed the live experience of spending time with the band & friends (especially being able to get out on the dance floor & boogie down)! But enjoying the show from your own home was also fun and a great in-home treat since we aren't allowed to venture out to a bar!"

THE SASTRYS enjoyed the comment feature of Facebook Live and felt that it gave the feeling of community.

"Having the concert streamed live on FaceBook was awesome because all of Curtis Knocking's fans were posting comments throughout, so even though we weren't in a room with a bunch of other people, we still felt like we were part of an audience that was rocking out to the band! And our kids were able to watch too which was a nice bonus!"

Through the support shown on the Facebook page, Sharpe noted that Curtis Knocking will make the 30-minute installment routine moving forward.

"Based on our initial success, we plan to make our Facebook Live 'happy half-hours' a regular thing. The next one is scheduled for Saturday, May 16 at 7 p.m. EDT. Fans can request songs in advance at <http://jukebox.curtisknocking.com>."



# NEWS

## Reopening

FROM PAGE 3

Northam said he knew some communities might choose to go more slowly, particularly in Northern Virginia, where they may not feel their communities are ready to go to Phase One just yet. "I have said that Phase One restrictions will be a floor, not a ceiling and local governments to consult with our administration about stricter regulations," he said. Clark Mercer, Northam's chief of staff. "If these entities, as a region, would like to delay entering Phase One by two weeks, for example, which would be May 29, I think the governor would be open to doing that," Mercer said.

On May 5, government leaders at the helm of Loudoun, Fairfax and Prince William counties, Phyllis J. Randall, Chair-at-Large, Jeff McKay Chairman At-Large and Ann B. Wheeler Chair-At Large respectively had sent a joint letter via email regarding a "Coordinated Response to COVID-19" to Northam. The leaders communicated their "strong desire to be both briefed and consulted" as Northam's administration made decisions about the reopening of the Commonwealth. Together, the NOVA leaders represented more than 2 million residents, just shy of a quarter of the Commonwealth's population. They said not all parts of the state had been impacted the same by the virus.

**THE LETTER** read in part: "Sadly, our three counties also account for 40 percent of all known positive cases and hospitalizations due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Commonwealth...Regionally, Northern Virginia equates for 40 percent of the Commonwealth's GDP...We have worked closely with our communities and regional partners to ensure that Northern Virginia's response is unified and continues to meet the needs of all residents. These efforts continue today... As you know, our communities are unique, and our needs remain great. Overcoming this pandemic will require even closer communication and a clear understanding of what our localities face currently and in the future; we can bring that perspective. We request a discussion with you prior to future announcements about the state's reopening. This is not an attempt to slow our progress. Rather, a recognition of the need for greater collaboration between state and local governments." Additionally, the leaders requested a weekly phone call between a member of Northam's team and their chiefs of staff to "help with the flow of information and help better open lines of communication."

According to Fairfax County Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville), other parts of Virginia might be ready to start easing restrictions and reopening businesses, but he was concerned. He said, "Given the prevalence and continuing spread of the virus in Northern Virginia, we should move very cautiously." Foust said he agreed a back to work plan for Northern Virginia should be closely coordinated with the District of Columbia and suburban Maryland jurisdictions. "To state the obvious, the virus does not recognize or respect jurisdictional boundaries," he said.

## New Cases

The Virginia Department of Health

The number of new COVID-19 cases in Virginia by day:  
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## What's Today?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

After six weeks or so of isolating at home and working hardly at all, I believe it's time to invoke Violet Crawley (a.k.a. Maggie Smith), "the Dowager Countess of Grantham" and wonder aloud: "What's a weekend?" Every day feels like some other day or no day at all because the days in and of themselves are meaningless/indistinguishable. I mean, you can't go anywhere, you can't do anything; thankfully you can use your phone and access your computer, but at the end of the same-old-day, you're basically nowhere man, with apologies to "The Beatles."

If it weren't for the trash pick-up on Thursdays and the recyclable pick-up on Fridays, and of course, no mail delivery on Sundays, there really is very little to separate one day from the next (the four-week schedule relating to my thyroid cancer treatment notwithstanding). Actually, if it weren't for the thyroid treatment beginning May 11th and the very specific requirements/activities for the following 23 days, ending June 2nd when I return to the hospital for a post-script scan, I would be totally betwixt and between; so much so that I might not know the difference between "Downton Abbey" and "Belgravia." But I still do, thank God, even though they were both written by Julian Fellowes. I haven't completely fallen through the cracks.

Although sometimes I do fear that if I indeed have a crack in my psychological armor, it likely would occur in the middle/late beginning of a pandemic when a possible lack of sanity might be exposed.

And since I'm not really allowed out of the house and retail stores and service providers are mostly unavailable, this would be a heck of a time to need any kind of help from outside one's house. You're not supposed to go anywhere and neither is anybody else so you're sort of left to fend for yourself. Now, generally speaking, I don't mind fending for myself or others for that matter, but at present, in the midst of pandemic pressures, we're all supposed to mind our own business (and/or others if we stay six feet apart) and watch our "ps" and "qs" as we're doing it.

And as well consider what other letters to 'watch.' The problem with living through a pandemic, aside from listening to all the opinions on "a" to "z" is believing any kind of reliable timeline. No one, despite their credentials and learned experience, can say with any accuracy or certainty when this pandemic will end, when the virus will stop spreading and/or whether and when a second viral wave will hit in the fall, when a safe and effective vaccine will be ready and when we can return to whatever the new normal will be. And though there's no shortage of hopes and prayers on the subject, unfortunately neither are there any simple solutions or definitive end to this mess. Somehow, we have to persevere in the present to get to the future by presuming nothing except more of the same. I guess it's an updated version of a definite-maybe or a "confirmed I doubt it" as BJ Honeycutt frustratingly said on a M\*A\*S\*H episode 25-plus years ago.

However, life went on for BJ and the rest of M\*A\*S\*H characters as they all got to leave South Korea and return to The United States (except for Klinger who ironically enough chose to stay and marry a South Korean woman). And just as it seemed that the suffering they all experienced during the police action in South/North Korea would never end, it did. And so too will this pandemic end. Probably not by magic as President Trump has suggested, but likely through the collective efforts of the medical and scientific communities as well as our own mitigation and social distancing behaviors. As my Auntie Irene used to say decades ago, and as so many others say all the time now: "This too shall pass."

But not knowing exactly when 'it shall pass' is sort of the problem. As my late mother would say: "It's enough already." I imagine we'll have a better idea of whether it's 'enough already' when we see the effects of the 45-plus states which are "opening." If the virus reasserts itself, and thousands more are diseased and ultimately die, then we'll know exactly what day it is: a day of reckoning.

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



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