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Communities Protest Against Racial Injustice and Police Brutality

NEWS, PAGE 3

'As a Family, We Take A Stand for Justice'

NEWS, PAGE 2

A Sea of Blue Seahawk Strong

NEWS, PAGE 8

'I'm out here today because things need to change. Everyone deserves equal justice...I have three teens watching and learning. You can't stand up for just what affects you. You have to stand up for the good of all,' said Jacki Varacalli at the Black Lives Matter Walk Saturday, June 6, in Town of Herndon.

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OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

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NEWS



SCREENSHOT VIA FACEBOOK HERNDON VA COMMUNITY

Herndon Police Chief Maggie DeBoard walks alongside protestors at the Saturday peaceful event meant to unite and demonstrate how the town will stand against unfair police brutality.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

A young boy carries a small sign that reads, "When I Grow Up I Want To Be An Actor Not a Hashtag."

Communities Protest Against Racial Injustice and Police Brutality

Thousands take to locals streets and sidewalks in solidarity.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

“We need to take this moment and make it our moment. We need to use our breath for those who have no breath,” said Rev. Dr. Debra W. Haffner of Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston. In the wake of the recent death of George Floyd in police custody, a surge of protests and rallies against racism and police brutality continued into its second week across the nation and throughout Fairfax County. Organized by faith-based and civic groups as well as individuals, people of all ages and races poured onto sidewalks and streets. They supported Black Lives Matter. They mourned the lives of Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others lost due to systemic racism and police brutality. And they are planning action.

Thursday, June 4, 6 p.m., Town of Herndon: Three residents, Sierra Moore, Jacob Dean Reeves and Nikki Pugh, organized a peaceful, mobile demonstration. According to a police spokesperson, an estimated 350-400 vehicles took part. The demonstration traveled down Elden Street through the downtown area with the Herndon Police Department providing security and traffic control. Moore, Reeves and Pugh texted: “We organized... ‘Justice for Black Lives,’ to be disruptive in the place where we live...the Town of Herndon and because we recognize the inequalities black people face everywhere. We are committed to not being complicit to racism and to bring change to www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Joined by Todd and Linda Weiss, Kerri Miller and daughter, Andi Miller hold signs supporting Black Lives Matter in the Town of Herndon Car Rally ‘Justice for Black Lives’ on Thursday, June 4.

where we live.”

“The actions that took the life of George Floyd showed a complete lack of humanity, one not previously witnessed in my 34-year career,” said Herndon Police Chief Maggie DeBoard in a Statement from The Chief, dated May 31. “Please know that all of us at HPD care deeply about our entire community, as well as the effect this incident has had on your relationship with us. We pray that the trust you have instilled in us over the past 8 years that I have been blessed to serve as your Chief remains strong. It is only through honest and open dialogue, clear minds, and peaceful protest can we continue to make positive steps forward to ensure an incident of this nature never happens again. Our hearts and prayers go out to George Floyd’s family and to all of those



PHOTO COURTESY OF NIKKI PUGH

Event co-organizer, Nikki Pugh joins Herndon Police Chief Maggie DeBoard and Captain Steve Thompson, Commander of Field Operations at the Town of Herndon, Car Rally ‘Justice for Black Lives’ on Thursday, June 4.

first responders working the front lines trying desperately to protect their communities and its citizens from further harm,” she said.

Friday, June 5, 5 p.m., Reston: Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston, Martin Luther King Jr., Christian Church and Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation held a silent vigil, an opportunity for a personal witness, not civil disobedience. Standing beside Wiehle Avenue with approximately 55 other witnesses, Rev. Dr. Debra W. Haffner, said in a live video: “I hope you are doing whatever you can do in your community to show your support that police brutality and killings of Black people simply must end. Did you know that every other day, a Black person in America is killed by police?”

Betty Collins of Reston participated in

the witness. “I’m tired of new lynchings. I’m here to try to make a change with what little I can do. I’m tired of talking; it’s time to act,” she said.

Saturday, June 6, 2 p.m., Town of Herndon: For those who could not join the thousands of protestors who would march through Washington D.C. that day against police brutality and racism, a peaceful, child-friendly walk took place on the sidewalks of Elden Street and the downtown areas. A Facebook post read: “This event is meant to unite us and demonstrate how our town will stand against unfair police brutality. This is a PEACEFUL event where families are encouraged to come and spend a sunny afternoon supporting and remembering all lives lost.”

Monumental Changes Continuing

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



COMMENTARY

Finding the words to describe the period of history in which Virginia finds itself is challenging. Readers of this column know that over the past several months I have been using adjectives indicating increasing significance of events that started with the historic (I have used this adjective many times) outcomes of the elections of 2019 to the transformative (future events will prove that this is the correct adjective) legislative session of 2020. Events of the past week add another descriptor of the changes that are taking place in the Old Dominion: monumental. Yes, the word applies to the monuments of which Virginia is home to many, but it applies also to what is happening to these monuments.

Governor Ralph Northam announced last week that the 60-foot high equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee on Monument Avenue is coming down right away! The Mayor and City Council of Richmond agree that the remaining five other grandiose Confederacy-related statues come

down as well. The grand boulevard that was named in 2007 as being one of the "10 Great Streets in America" and was in the early 1900s a significant part of the Lost Cause movement to glorify and justify the South's position in the Civil War will be left with one statue—that of Arthur Ashe, the Black Richmond native who was an international tennis star. A bill is being introduced to remove the statue of former governor and U.S. senator Harry Byrd from Capitol Grounds. Byrd is notable as the head of a political machine that maintained its power by keeping Black citizens from voting. He also led the "massive resistance" movement that delayed school desegregation in Virginia by a decade. There will be other monuments coming down in other locations as has already happened in Alexandria City.

Monumental but not relating to the statues is the work done by the General Assembly in its 2020 session to remove from the Code "explicitly racist language and segregationist poli-

cies." While no longer in effect, these parts of the Code nonetheless stood as a reminder of the racist history of the Commonwealth. The changes came from recommendations made by a commission appointed by Governor Ralph Northam to remove laws that "were intended to or could have the effect of promoting or enabling racial discrimination or inequity."

The "Act to Preserve Racial Integrity" that banned interracial marriage was repealed as was the Code provision "no child shall be required to enroll in or attend any school wherein both white and colored children are enrolled." Other state laws to require segregation of the races in transportation and health care facilities were no longer in effect but remained on the books.

While removing statues of people from the past and repealing laws that were previously replaced by other laws or overruled by court decisions may be called symbolism by some, the symbols they represent are important. Virginia leaders along with its citizens must make it clear that the divisions of people of the past are over. We need through our words and actions to demonstrate a monument to openness and acceptance of all people.

Under the Cover of Covid

BY JOHN LOVAAS
RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST



INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

These are tough times to follow what's happening in Reston. Under stay-at-home, no congregating Covid-19 protocols, it is nearly impossible for local media or anyone to see what's going on. Meetings are virtual and only Zoom knows!

For example, on May 21, the Reston Association Board of Directors under new President Julie Bitzer, held its first meeting of substance. If I hadn't been forewarned, I like nearly all Restonians would have missed it altogether.

It turns out that a handful of senior RA staff, while mostly at home for the Covid shutdown, were doing big things, with neither oversight by, nor consultation with, the RA Board or the Fiscal Committee. During the May 21 virtual Board meeting three of the highly paid ones—the CEO, Chief Accountant, and General Counsel—gave brief, general descriptions of actions they undertook while consulting only with one another. The CEO, with advice of the Counsel, triumphantly announced signing a Payroll Protection Program loan [\$1.3 million] from the Feds, a loan with funds intended for small businesses or charitable organizations. (RA is neither of those.) Nowhere, to my knowledge or that of lawyers familiar with RA governing documents, does the CEO have the authority to contract debt in any amount on behalf of the RA. Furthermore, no one participating in the May 21 meeting could define a need for such funds.

Yet, President Bitzer's response to news of the debt was to note it was a difficult time, con-

or charity.

The CEO also announced unilateral cancellation of all of RA's summer camps programs for kids without Board approval or consultation. In light of the current Covid-19 pandemic, this may not seem to be an unreasonable action. But, once again, it is not clear that he had the authority to do so, or whether it was an exercise in good judgement to do so unilaterally. As a final touch for the staff's impressive tour de force, it was noted that they had not recommended amending the current budget totaling \$17 million. This, too, was quite surprising since the Covid pandemic has led to cancelling or shrinking many program activities in addition to summer camps, continued closure of swimming pools and delaying planned hiring of several costly staff.

While the reduction in approved expenditures is likely to be in the low millions, we don't have a precise estimate of the total decrease. One wonders why hadn't the staff consulted with the Fiscal Committee about a major reduction of the 2020 budget to reflect the Covid-19 reality? One possibility is that senior staff preferred to keep extra cash sloshing around for more exotic ideas, like a fleet of swan boats

and fine wine and cheese crafts for Lake Anne perhaps, rather than do something crazy like refunding it to Covid 19-stressed homeowners, for example.

Some in the community, myself included, are seeking corrective actions by the Board to show that a Board is needed at all! Too much authority has been carelessly ceded to staff with worrisome implications. As it stands, the CEO presumably can contract a debt in any amount he wishes, as Counsel's half-baked opinion templates no upper limit.

We strongly urge that, inter alia, the Board investigate the PPP loan application to explain its content and any misrepresentation, for example; that the CEO provide full justification for cancellation of camps and, with the Fiscal Committee, a propose an amended budget detailing shortfalls in income and expenditures, and disposition of the surplus; that the Principal Financial Officer prepare timely detailed monthly reports on budget execution—best estimates of actual revenue and expenses for the Fiscal Committee and the Board; and, that budget amendments be submitted when any line item is to be exceeded by more than 5 percent. RA owes its members an explanation of what happened with the PPP loan and why the money was returned.

There is a glimmer of hope that the shocking police killing of yet another black man and the resulting national convulsion may lead to long-overdue systemic change. Minneapolis is committing to demilitarizing and re-inventing its police force. If they succeed, perhaps George Floyd will not have died in vain.

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'As a Family, We Take a Stand for Justice'

Black Centreville residents respond to racism in America.

By BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Jamie and Erik Gadley and their daughter, Kayla, a rising sophomore at Westfield High, live in Centreville's Sully Station II community. And as a black family, the recent, unprovoked deaths of black people such as Breonna Taylor and George Floyd have both angered and saddened them.

In response, they joined the peaceful protest, last Friday, June 5, in the newly renamed Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington, D.C. But in addition, they've had serious discussions as a family about their own thoughts and feelings regarding what's going on and why it's so important.

"It has been a powerful and enlightening conversation for our family to have," said Jamie Gadley. "It has helped us to understand each other's experiences and perspectives. In spite of the differences, we agree that we believe in justice and humanity. All lives will not



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE GADLEY

(From left) Centreville residents Erik, Kayla and Jamie Gadley about to join a peaceful protest, last Friday, in Washington, D.C.

matter until Black Lives Matter, so we will continue to take a stand."

She said they're aware of how people may perceive, treat and respond to them based on the color of their skin. "We recognize that

systemic racism impacts the lives of blacks daily, in overt and covert ways," said Gadley. Things that the average white person doesn't have to worry about are real and significant concerns for a black man.

For example, said Gadley, "When the COVID-19 global health pandemic reached the United States, causing us to adjust our way of being, my husband and I had a conversation about his going to the grocery store with a bandana covering his face. The reality that we paused and discussed how to cover his face and to extend a kind gesture – to diminish the perception of him as a threat – is a manifestation of racism. It is important for us all to have these discussions in order for mindsets and perceptions of black men to change."

She then noted three recent incidents of clear and blatant racism that were captured on film and have since created a platform for discussing racism and discrimination in America. And it's critically important, she said, that blacks have a voice in this discussion and are truly heard.

THINK ABOUT IT, said Gadley: "Do blacks not have the right to grocery shop, jog through their neighborhoods and walk through

the park without being deemed as a threat, being targeted or killed – simply because they are black in America?"

Over the past three weeks, she and her family – like others in the U.S. and around the world – have not only learned of the deaths of Amaud Aubery and George Floyd, but have witnessed these tragedies on film. Furthermore, said Gadley, "We saw the weaponizing of whiteness against Christian Cooper. These incidents bring to light the issue of systemic racism impacting blacks in America. Racism is injustice and, as a family, we take a stand for justice."

She called Aubery's killing "deeply concerning" and another motivation behind her family's willingness to take a stand in the Black Lives Matter movement. She said a system in which individuals would feel entitled to profile, chase down and murder a black man jogging in his community – a simple activity that white men do, every day – is another illustration of prejudiced minds that devalue

SEE FAMILY, PAGE 6

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Family

FROM PAGE 5

the worth and lives of black men.

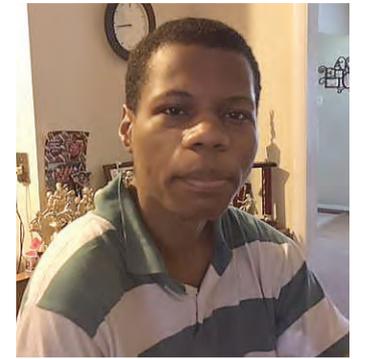
But that's not all, said Gadley. "We also take a stand for Christian Cooper – a Harvard-educated, black man who asked a white woman to put her dog on its leash," she explained. "Her response of threatening to call the police and fabricating a story about a black man trying to hurt her was evidence of her understanding of how white America views black men. Rather than being a courteous, community member and law-abiding citizen, Amy Cooper [no relation to him] weaponized her white privilege to criminalize Christian Cooper's being black."

GADLEY said these incidents reflect how racism has manifested on camera and has now allowed space and the opportunity for people to see and examine the "systemic racism and microaggressions" that blacks experience and observe daily. Yet she and her husband have taken a thoughtful approach when talking with Kayla about it.

"We have taught our daughter to speak and act in, and with, love – which includes speaking up when an injustice occurs," said Gadley. "And we believe it is important for us to unite for justice during this defining movement in history. We are peacefully protesting systemic racism and will lovingly call friends, neighbors and community members into courageous conversations about racism so that we can collectively work for 'liberty and justice for all.'"

Herndon Man Still Missing

Herndon Police are asking for the public's help in locating Joshua Bowman, 27, of Herndon. According to the Police Department Weekly Press Report, a family member last saw Bowman several days before making the report. He is a black male, 5 '10" and weighs approximately 170 pounds. Police ask anyone with information to call 703-435-6486 immediately.



HERNDON POLICE DEPARTMENT
Joshua Bowman of Herndon

— MERCIA HOBSON

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KENNETH CHARLES COLEMAN (Age 36)

Kenneth Charles Coleman, 36, passed away at his home during the early hours of May 30, 2020, of a fatal seizure. Kenneth was born in Fairfax Hospital and grew up and lived in Reston, VA. He had a rare pediatric stroke at age 3 months and had valiantly fought the resultant sporadic seizures his entire life. Ken was a 2002 graduate of Chantilly High School, attended Northern Virginia Community College, and was trained and certified as a multi-level computer hardware technician. He worked as a field repair technician for Worldwide Technical Services doing three of the things he loved to do: driving his car, fixing computers, and helping people. During the corona pandemic, Ken went proudly and happily to work every day, keeping essential businesses and home workers up and running. He was also a very proud third-generation Eagle Scout who was deeply loved for his great heart, subtle humor, and kind nature. Ken is survived by his mother, Ann Coleman; his father and stepmother, Greg Coleman and Pam Coleman; and his younger siblings, Tory Coleman and Christopher Coleman. Ken will also be sadly missed by aunts, uncles, in-laws, and many loving cousins and their children who loved to play with him - just like he loved to be with them. His family, his extended Boy Scout family, trivia team, and many friends will miss this kind gentle man, who was always quietly there for them.

A celebration of Ken's life will be held Friday, June 12, 2 p.m. at The Lake House, Reston, Va. Due to the pandemic space will be available but limited. All are welcome to attend and participate via the internet, and that web address will be included in invitations.

In lieu of flowers, a memory gift may be made in Ken's name to the Boy Scouts of America (donations.scouting.org/#/national).

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Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

CIT BUILDING SOLD

Gov. Ralph Northam announced the \$47.35 million sale of the Center for Innovative Technology Office Building in Northern Virginia. Proceeds from the property sale will be directed toward efforts to drive research and job creation in emerging technologies. The Department of General Services (DGS) closed on the property with the purchaser, affiliates of Origami Capital Partners and Timberline Real Estate Partners.

ART GUILD OF CLIFTON SCHOLARSHIPS

The Art Guild of Clifton is offering \$750 scholarships to talented seniors exploring a college level curricula in the visual and performing arts including literature, music, and film. Application and details are available to download from the website www.artguildofclifton.org.

SULLY'S ANTIQUE CAR SHOW IS ONLINE

Crank up your computer. The annual Antique Car Show at Sully Historic Site will be an online gathering. The Fairfax County Park Authority and George Washington Chapter, Inc. Model A Ford Club of America have teamed up to bring you a weekend full of classic and antique cars online. Friday through Sunday, June 19 - 21, 2020, car club members will present photos of some of their proudest possessions and the stories behind them. Although the car show cannot be held in person this year because of coronavirus restrictions, you can still treat your dad to a free Father's Day weekend full of classic car posts on the Park Authority's Instagram and Facebook pages. On Instagram, use #SullyCarShow. Call 703-437-1794 or visit Sully Historic Site.

SUMMER ART CAMP GOES DIGITAL

The Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE) is offering a Digital Summer Art Camp for the 2020 summer season. GRACE Digital Summer Art Camp will mirror much of what is offered for the in-person program: Weekly camps will run for six weeks between June 29-August 7. The program's camp themes will remain the same. They will continue to focus on many aspects of art-making while encouraging children to expand their artistic vocabulary and creativity through hands-on art activities. Activities will be taught by a professional art educator.

New to the program this year: All activities will be visually demonstrated in short, pre-recorded videos of 15 minutes or less and will be accompanied with easy-to-follow written instructions. Each camper will receive a "camp-in-a-box" kit that will include most of the special materials required for the activities. Camp kits will be available for contact-less, no-touch pickup each Saturday between 12 p.m.-2 p.m. at GRACE.

SUMMER ENTERTAINMENT, JULY 4TH EVENTS CANCELED

The Fairfax County Park Authority's Summer Entertainment Series will be canceled through July due to public safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and Fourth of July events have been canceled, too. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and health-related guidelines continue to recommend against large gatherings.

REOPENING OF OUTDOOR ATHLETIC FIELDS

The Fairfax County Park Authority, Fairfax County Public Schools, and the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services are announcing the reopening of outdoor athletic fields in Fairfax County for unpermitted use as part of Forward Virginia Phase 1 for Northern Virginia. This includes more than 850 athletic fields, including synthetic turf fields and fields at Fairfax County parks and public schools. Open, walk-on use of athletic fields is allowed when the field is vacant and only during regular operating hours.

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"The News of My Death ..."



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... is greatly exaggerated." So said Mark Twain. So said W.C. Fields. And so said Kenny Lourie. And the reason I am now saying it is because of what correspondence I received in my personal inbox accessed through my HMO's online site. What I received was a condolence letter (sort of a form letter, quite frankly), addressed to the Lourie family from my oncologist expressing his sadness at my "passing" and his "privilege to have participated in the care of Kenneth Blacker Lourie" (me). Then, a bit later in the day, I received a cell-phone call from an unknown number (so I didn't answer it) but apparently, it knew me as a voice mail message was indicated. I entered my code and listened in associated shock as I heard my oncologist speak in a very heartfelt way about his "sadness" yet again concerning the death of yours truly. He spoke for nearly a minute, hemming and hawing and occasionally hesitating as if at a loss for words. Compared to the email, this message was personalized. Reading and then hearing what I have just written was an out-of-body experience of sorts, almost as if I was attending my own funeral and listening to the eulogies while standing off in the distance.

This experience was not totally unfamiliar to me. In fact, once before, pre-cancer, something similar happened though it was more curious than morbid. Scanning the Obituary section of The Washington Post, I noticed - for the first time, photos of the many of the deceased were a part of the page. They were located above the agatetype and mostly in black and white. Catching my attention as they did, I randomly went to the top right corner of the right-side page where I saw a photograph of an African-American man. Unknown to me except for one extraordinary fact. Printed below his photo was his date of birth: 9/30/54. The same as mine. It took my breath away. I have to tell you, seeing one's date of birth listed in the obituary section is a peculiar kind of the-future-being-now.

Subsequently, I was diagnosed with "terminal" non small cell lung cancer, stage IV and given a "13 month to two year" prognosis. And though my presumptive death was not listed in the obituary section, its inevitability was implanted in my brain where it has been gnawing at me since late February, 2009. And for the last 11-plus years, as you regular readers know, I have ebbed and flowed with the varying medicines and protocols which have amazingly managed to extend my life way beyond my oncologist's expectations, and never once had I being given last rites, so to speak, or advised to "get my things in order." Until today, that is.

After I thought a bit about what I had read and heard, a part of me drifted back in time to the 1999 Bruce Willis movie "The Sixth Sense" and whether unlike Haley Joel Osment, I was actually dead already. Being alone in my house with nobody to snap me out of my delusion, for all I knew, this is what death feels like. Nevertheless, I continued with my normal routine, presuming I was still alive and sure enough, it soon became clear that I was indeed still alive.

But my oncologist and maybe even my endocrinologist - with whom I have an appointment Monday, June 8th might think otherwise. And not that their thinking 'otherwise' will change their lives, but knowing what they think they know rather than what is actually true might blip their radar and cause some emotional misdirection. After all, they're only human and even though I might not be their most memorable patient, given my unexpectedly long life post diagnosis, I feel I'm not so easily forgettable either. Not dying does that to a person's "pagh," to invoke "the spiritual force inherent in all sentient beings" as believed by the inhabitants of Bajor. (See Major Kira Nerys from "Deep Space Nine.")

For the moment/immediate future though, I am still present and accounted for. I just hope all my medical appointments haven't been automatically cancelled since I'm still a living and breathing cancer patient, and that's no exaggeration.

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



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

SLHS Class of 2020 line South Lakes Drive in Reston on Graduation Day, June 3 for a drive-by parade in their honor, organized by parents and the community.



PHOTO BY TINA ATTAWAY MEEK/SLHS FACEBOOK PAGE

SLHS grad, Paige Meek, Class of 2020, shows off her diploma, received through the car window.

A Sea of Blue Seahawk Strong

SLHS graduates
Class of 2020.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On what would have been Graduation Day, June 3, 2020, at Eagles Bank Arena, seniors at South Lake High School pulled up to the front of their school for a drive-thru pick up. Each reached their hand out an open window of their vehicle and received a green bag with a cap, gown, recognition accessories and their much-valued diploma. Principal Kim Retzer, administrators, faculty and others, masked and keeping a social distance waved and cheered. Futures stood ready to unfold.

“Congratulations to the Class of 2020. You have faced many challenges during your time in high school, but you have persevered,” wrote ‘Proud Principal, Ms. Retzer,



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Friends back together and now the newly minted SLHS graduates Class of 2020, masked, capped and gowned, gather on the evening of a drive-by parade in their honor organized by parents and the community.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Friends back together and now the newly minted SLHS graduates Class of 2020, masked, capped and gowned, gather on the evening of a drive-by parade in their honor organized by parents and the community.

Class of ‘89.’ “I am confident that this class is prepared to go out into the world being #SeahawkStrong and will continue to make us proud. It has been an honor to be your principal, and I welcome you into the SLHS alumni family.”

Later that evening, 338 new alumni donned their COVID masks, blue caps and gowns. They assembled along South Lakes Drive in Reston, a safe social distance 8 feet apart per the designated taped Xs on the sidewalk and in front of their name sign. Parent Tracy Waller said that it took 30 par-

ents and community members to coordinate and set up the drive-by parade route to honor the graduates.

Wendy Delmolino of Vienna, graduate Frankie’s mother, stopped by. Asked how she felt on what would have been the school’s graduation night 2020 at Eagle Center Arena, Delmolino said, “I’m focusing on Frankie’s accomplishment... I couldn’t be more proud. I can’t wait to see her future.” Nearby, Dipasis Bhadra of Reston placed a large glitter-wrapped arch behind where his graduate daughter Sara would be on the sidewalk. On

it, he put a photo of Sara and her mother, his departed wife, Laura, who passed in 2016. Bhadra said he wanted Sara to know this: “Keep up the resilience. Dad loves you.”

Graduate Hassen Kurtu gathered with fellow grads, Mustafa Ali and Joseph Dagbe. “Hard times bring us closer together,” Kurtu said. Hurrying up South Lakes Drive toward his location, graduate Sam Barbaro of Reston paused a moment when asked what he wanted to share on graduation night. “I thank my parents for having my back, through thick and thin. I love you,” he said.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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