

# Potomac ALMANAC



## 18,000 Pages of Environmental Impact Study

NEWS, PAGE 3

Environmental Impact  
on Nation's River?

## A Plan for Going Back to School?

NEWS, PAGE 6

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# Potomac REAL ESTATE

## May, 2020 Top Sales

IN MAY, 2020, 54 POTOMAC HOMES SOLD  
BETWEEN \$3,000,000-\$510,000.



**3** 12300 Rivers Edge Drive — \$1,600,000

PHOTOS BY DEB STEVENS/THE ALMANAC



**2** 9825 Avenel Farm Drive — \$1,875,000



**1** 9000  
Congressional Parkway  
— \$3,000,000



**4** 9417 Tobin Circle  
— \$1,500,000



**7** 7713 Masters Drive — \$1,250,000

Address.....	BR	FB	HB	Postal City	Sold Price.....	Type.....	Lot AC	Postal Code.....	Subdivision.....	Date Sold
<b>1</b> 9000 CONGRESSIONAL PKWY	5	4	2	ROCKVILLE	\$3,000,000	Detached	3.89	20854	BRADLEY FARMS	05/22/20
<b>2</b> 9825 AVENEL FARM DR	7	7	2	POTOMAC	\$1,875,000	Detached	2.05	20854	AVENEL	05/15/20
<b>3</b> 12300 RIVERS EDGE DR	6	5	1	POTOMAC	\$1,600,000	Detached	2.05	20854	AVENEL	05/28/20
<b>4</b> 9417 TOBIN CIR	5	4	1	POTOMAC	\$1,500,000	Detached	0.53	20854	MCAULEY PARK	05/01/20
<b>5</b> 4 CLOVERBROOKE CT	6	4	1	POTOMAC	\$1,295,000	Detached	0.46	20854	POTOMAC GLEN	05/29/20
<b>6</b> 11716 SLATESTONE CT	5	4	1	POTOMAC	\$1,270,000	Detached	0.30	20854	CLAGETT FARM	05/29/20
<b>7</b> 7713 MASTERS DR	5	4	1	POTOMAC	\$1,250,000	Detached	0.37	20854	RIVER FALLS	05/13/20
<b>8</b> 9734 BEMAN WOODS WAY	4	3	1	POTOMAC	\$1,235,000	Detached	0.20	20854	AVENEL	05/08/20

Correction: Due to a sorting error, last week's "Potomac Real Estate Top Sales" page contained multiple errors. Here is the corrected version.

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# Look Below the Impervious Surface

The public has 90 days to respond to a proposed \$11 billion project that would impact 48 miles of the Beltway, the American Legion Bridge, and land and water below for generations to come.

BY KENNETH MOORE  
THE ALMANAC

**T**he risk is \$11 billion and contamination of waterways and parkland for generations to come. And gridlock for a decade during construction. The reward is possible reduction in the commuting time of people commuting between Maryland and Virginia over the Potomac River and through Potomac and Bethesda. Commuters would pay a toll; the rest of us would pay in other ways.

Last week, the Montgomery County Planning Board staff responded with a 63-page memo to the draft environmental impact study for the I-495 and I-270 managed lane project. The proposal is to add toll lanes connecting the Virginia Beltway over the American Legion Bridge around the Maryland Beltway and up 270. The plan is to reduce traffic congestion by adding four lanes of pavement to 48 miles of highway.

The Planning Board listed hundreds of concerns, described as major issues, technically deficient issues and dozens of more critical comments.

Here is just a sampling of the comments:

“The days of highway-only projects with no public transit support or components are past, despite the efforts and focus of this project, and the blatant disregard for public sentiment on developing regional multimodal solutions is concerning.”

“The Commission must determine that the Policy for Parks has been followed. The DEIS provides imprecise and very rudimentary information about the potential impacts to parklands.”

“Detailed field review demonstrates that the current [level of detail] does not comprehensively reflect expectations of environmental impact and what will be needed to restore and mitigate for proposed construction.”

“Access decisions are flawed.”

“The DEIS does not meet the stated goal of leveraging other modes of transportation.”

“The storm water management approach presented in the DEIS is insufficient and ignores decades of



The sound of the Potomac River can drown out the sounds from the American Legion Bridge on many parts of Billy Goat Trail C, at least during a pandemic, but when you get close enough smells of exhaust can intrude on the experience of wilderness.

degradation that the existing highways have inflicted on local land.”

“The DEIS does not sufficiently address impact to economically challenged populations or social equity as required under NEPA. To simply conclude that everyone is benefiting with travel time savings when the project design does not provide equitable access to the managed lanes creates another layer of inequity.”

“There is no discussion or analysis of how to bring transit across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, which was designed and built to accommodate rail at significant cost to the State of Maryland. There is no indication or commitment that the American Legion Bridge will be designed to structurally accommodate rail, whether now or in the future for this significant bridge replacement project.”

“There is no indication that the financial risks due to the likelihood of delay as a result of litigation to prevent the build-alternatives, or the difficult land acquisition process, particularly to expansion of I-495 in its most environmentally sensitive areas ... will impact the financial implications both to the P3 and the potential for unexpected burden on the taxpayers. The impact to the Purple Line Partnership due specifically to cost overruns from construction delays, land acquisition difficulties, and design changes – each raised as concerns under this DEIS review – is a perfect case in point.”

Approximately 15 percent of travellers need to be off the Beltway to keep the American Legion Bridge from being clogged.

In a matter of days, the pandemic took more cars off the road than many said would be possible. Nationwide, the decrease was 30 percent by the end of March; traffic was down 36 percent in the Washington Metropolitan area according to INRIX Research.

People aren’t using the American Legion Bridge in ways they did before; workers are using Zoom, Google Meeting Rooms and FaceTime, and telecommuting with positive impacts on the environment and traffic. But now the public has been given three months to

## Their Own Words:

“The Draft Environmental Impact Statement weighs 90 pounds. That alone indicates that this project warrants intense scrutiny. We are concerned that this massive highway project will exacerbate harm to our health and environment. The Sierra Club and other organizations have been denied, delayed or charged \$300,000 for public information requests that would have shed more light on this project. We need more time to comment on this controversial proposal.”

— Josh Tulkin, Director, Maryland Sierra Club

“Experience shows that highway expansions increase, not decrease, driving demand. By fueling more long-distance living and commuting, toll lanes are a massive, generational alteration of our landscape and come at high cost to homes and neighborhoods, people and health, and the natural environment.”

— Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager of the Coalition for Smarter Growth

“The \$11 billion I-495/I-270 expansion is too big and will affect too many lives over the next 50 years for Marylanders to accept an 18,000 page draft environmental impact statement that offers vague assurances that pollution and flood risk won’t increase and parks and communities will be protected. We urge MDOT to give the public the time it needs to review this draft statement and to release the secret traffic and revenue studies being used to justify this massive, high-risk project. Maryland cannot afford a repeat of the crisis plaguing the Purple Line, the Hogan administration’s first public-private partnership.

— Brad German, Co-Chair, Citizens Against Beltway Expansion

“This proposed expansion threatens our national parks, including Greenbelt Park, C&O Canal, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Suitland Parkway, and Baltimore-Washington Parkway, without solving the region’s transportation needs. Should this proposal move forward, over 300 acres of local parkland – including valuable green space in an increasingly urban area -- could be paved over. Instead of pursuing this new and costly highway expansion, the National Parks Conservation Association urges the Maryland Department of Transportation to examine the many alternatives available that will address our transit needs without sacrificing our parks.”

— Pamela Goddard, Mid-Atlantic Senior Program Director, National Parks Conservation Association

“Rock Creek is just one of the many special places that will be impacted by the proposed \$11 billion expansion of I-495 and I-270. These impacts will extend far downstream, including into the creek through the nation’s first urban national park, Rock Creek Park. The public deserves a full range of alternatives for these sensitive waterways, habitat corridors, and public lands and time to fully consider them.

— Jeanne Braha, Executive Director, Rock Creek Conservancy

“How precious is breathing? How important is it to preserve natural spaces and protect the health of residents of this region? We at the Audubon Naturalist Society want MDOT and the SHA to tell us, because the delivery of this 90-pound EIS for an \$11 billion project with only 90 days to review it suggests that our health and well-being are not a top priority. Tax-

SEE THEIR OWN WORDS, PAGE 4

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE/POTOMAC ALMANAC

# Look Below the Impervious Surface

FROM PAGE 3

review more than 18,000 pages of technical detail about the project.

"If we promote telework right we don't need to expand 270 through Rockville where I grew up and it's already 6 lanes both ways," said Del. Marc Korman (D-16) on Twitter.

"In general, we only need 5% to 15% of drivers to avoid traffic bottlenecks during peak periods for all of the traffic jams in Maryland to dissipate," Korman said in a letter he wrote with Del. Carol Krimm of Frederick to Maryland's transportation secretary. "To achieve that reduction, drivers can choose – when practical – to work from home, use alternative modes of transportation, shift departure time, change travel routes, or use other Transportation Demand Management practices."

"Those numbers are achievable and do not require billions of dollars in new infrastructure investment using risky financing methods of which we have now become all too familiar with the downsides. Moreover, saving money on roadway expansion will allow us to re-target some of those funds and focus on other critical transportation needs around our State. ...

"We have the opportunity to use the data to work with all levels of government, the Transportation Planning Board and Maryland's other Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the private sector business community, and Maryland commuters to explore ways to reduce traffic, particularly during peak times in innovative ways."

**SO MASSIVE IS THE PROJECT**, its draft environmental impact summary requires trailers to be set up outside Montgomery County libraries so people can review the document.

Advocates with the Sierra Club and Citizens Against Beltway Ex-



Pre-Coronavirus photo of traffic shows what a decade of construction might look like on the American Legion Bridge.

pansion (CABE) are requesting public help to assist their experts and attorneys to read and get ready to respond.

"This Project is one of the largest of its type ever proposed and will cost more than \$11 billion dollars ... and will affect the lives of Maryland residents and their communities, land, and water for generations," according to U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen and U.S. Representatives Jamie Raskin and Anthony Brown.

"To ensure genuine public access, broad awareness of the process, and serious public engagement with the issues raised," they asked the public be given 30 additional days to review the draft

environmental impact study and give feedback to the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration and Federal Highway Administration.

"Many of our people are facing sickness, stress, and unemployment," they said.

**FOUR VIRTUAL MEETINGS** for the public to respond have been currently scheduled for 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 18; Thursday, Aug. 20; Tuesday, Aug. 25; and Thursday, Sept. 3.

Construction is planned to begin as early as 2021 and the first phase of the project would include the American Legion Bridge and the

SEE LOOK BELOW, PAGE 5

## Links for Information

[https://495-270-p3.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DEIS\\_June-2020.pdf](https://495-270-p3.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DEIS_June-2020.pdf)

<https://495-270-p3.com/virtual-hearing/>

<https://495-270-p3.com/>

<https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/5d-I-495-I-270-Managed-Lanes-Study-DEIS-Comments.pdf>

### Read the Documents at Montgomery County Libraries:

Potomac Library; Chevy Chase Library; Davis (North Bethesda) Library; Kensington Park Library. Hard copies will be available in trailers in the library parking lots. Viewing hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11 AM to 7 PM, and Sunday 12 to 5 PM. Once libraries are open to the public, the hard copies will be available for review in the libraries during normal branch hours.

## Get Involved

### Public Hearings

The Federal Highway Administration, Maryland Department of Transportation State High Administration, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) will conduct six public Hearings. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will participate in one hearing on August 25. The public will have 3 minutes to provide their testimony and registration is required for both virtual and in-person hearings. Hearing materials can be viewed starting July 31 at the document availability locations or on the program website.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 10, 2020 - Montgomery County  
Hilton Executive Meeting Center  
1750 Rockville Pike  
Rockville, MD 20852

### Virtual Meetings

Four virtual hearings are planned from 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.:

Tuesday, Aug. 18

Thursday, Aug. 20

Tuesday, Aug. 25

Thursday, Sept. 3

<https://495-270-p3.com/>

## Their Own Words:

FROM PAGE 3

payers deserve better."

— **Denisse Guitarra, Maryland Conservation Advocate, Audubon Naturalist Society**

"MDOT gave assurances that the public would have an opportunity in the DEIS process to actively participate in the consequential decisions related to the I-495 & I-270 project. However, in releasing an 18,000-page DEIS in the middle of a health and fiscal emergency, and then failing to provide adequate time for document review, MDOT shows disregard for public input. No one knows what post-pandemic commerce, employment, and traffic patterns will look like -- the entire effort should be paused until the pandemic subsides."

— **Linda Rosendorf, Don't Widen 270**

"Had the Governor and the Maryland Department of Transportation followed a process that allowed for sufficient constituent input and alternative proposals before announcing this massive, destructive plan, the citizens of Maryland would not be in the position of pointing out the obvious. The plan is deeply flawed and may very well cause more harm than good."

— **Cecilia Plante, Maryland Legislative Coalition**

Source: Sierra Club of Maryland

**PCV is still active via Zoom and our Boredom Busters Newsletters.**

**Our Help Desk is ready for you at 240-221-1370**

**Want to be on our mailing list? Email [info@PotomacCommunityVillage.org](mailto:info@PotomacCommunityVillage.org)**

**We wish everyone good health!**

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## NEWS

# Look Below the Impervious Surface

FROM PAGE 4

segment that extends from I-270 to I-370/Maryland Route 200 (the road formerly known as the ICC).

The Maryland Board of Public Works, a three-member body made up of Governor Larry Hogan, Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp and Comptroller Peter Franchot (who has announced he will run for governor in 2022), voted 2-1 (Franchot and Hogan in favor), in January, to speed ahead with the project as a public-private partnership. The solicitation process will begin with Phase 1 on I-495 beginning in the vicinity of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia to I-270 in Maryland and on I-270 from I-495 to I-70. I-495 from the vicinity of the George Washington Memorial Parkway to the I-270 west spur, and the I-270 west spur to I-370, would be delivered first.

**TRAFFIC CONGESTION** affects many lives around the Beltway. More than 235,000 vehicles crossed the American Legion Bridge daily, at least until the beginning of the pandemic.

Hogan made the claim: "The project is expected to cut commuting time in half for many travelers, reduce

congestion in the regular lanes by 25 percent, provide 40 percent more lane capacity over the old bridge, and include bicycle and pedestrian paths across the Potomac River."

"Our teams have identified a way to fix one of the worst traffic hot spots in the country," said Virginia's Governor, Ralph Northam. "This demonstrates what can get done when leaders come together to find shared solutions to tough regional problems. This is about helping people see their families more, grow their businesses, and further unlock the region's vast economic potential."

But with climate change rivaling coronavirus as an existential threat, reducing carbon pollution means reducing car travel.

"Transportation is the leading source of climate pollution in Maryland. Our transportation strategy must, first and foremost, focus on reducing vehicle miles traveled and expanding mass transit," said Josh Tulkin, Director of Maryland Sierra Club. "We need to be honest about global warming and the impacts of our actions. You cannot expand highways and magically mitigate the carbon pollution."


**BULLETIN BOARD** Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](http://ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

### IMMUNIZATION CLINIC REOPENS JULY 6

Montgomery County health officials urge parents of children to get recommended vaccinations, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Health and Human Services' Immunization Clinic will reopen on Monday, July 6 at the Dennis Avenue Health Center at 2000 Dennis Avenue in Silver

Spring. There are 14 vaccine preventable diseases that children can be protected from before the age of two and it is important that parents keep up to date with recommended vaccinations. Children entering school will also need to show proof of vaccination in compliance with Maryland vaccination requirements. See the 2020 recommended childhood immunization schedule at the

Maryland Department of Health's website. The vaccination clinic is intended for children who do not have health insurance, are covered by Medical Assistance or have health insurance that does not cover vaccinations. Appointments are available on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Call 240-777-1050 for more information and to make an appointment.



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## Pie and Fly Celebration

**Wednesday, July 22, 2020**

11:00 am - 4:00 pm

**Location: Arden Courts of Potomac**

10718 Potomac Tennis Lane • Potomac, MD 20854

**RSVP: 301.983.3620 or [Potomac@arden-courts.com](mailto:Potomac@arden-courts.com)**

Join us for this special drive-by event where you don't have to leave the convenience of your car!

- Drive to the front porch of Arden Courts of Potomac
- Roll down your window
- Pick up your delicious free apple pie and free Arden Courts information packet to discover how we can help your loved one
- Enjoy!



[arden-courts.com](http://arden-courts.com)

**Arden Courts**   
 Memory Care Community

# MCPS Plans for Fall Opening Published draft subject to review.

By PEGGY McEWAN  
POTOMAC ALMANAC

**M**ontgomery County Public Schools announced Saturday a plan for reopening schools this fall.

The plan for “MCPS Fall 2020: Reimagine, Reopen, Recover,” a 21-page document clearly marked DRAFT, spells out “Considerations for MCPS Fall 2020 Recovery.”

The conclusion: “MCPS anticipates starting the school year in a virtual-only instructional model given the current public health conditions, to plan for the needs of our families and to provide sufficient training for staff and students on new COVID-19 protocols.”

“The 2020-2021 school year will begin on Monday, Aug. 31, 2020, for all students,” the draft begins. “Students will return to schools on a rotational schedule for in-person learning with reduced class sizes and reduced numbers of students in the buildings. Due to limited capacity, transportation resources will be prioritized to elementary and middle school students. The goal is for all grade levels to be in a school rotation by end of November. Students will return to classrooms by grade level, last name/address, and cluster in phases over the first months of the school year.”

Followed by the Implementation Schedule

saying that students will start the year with virtual schooling. In-class sessions will be phased in later. Phases of the implementation were listed.

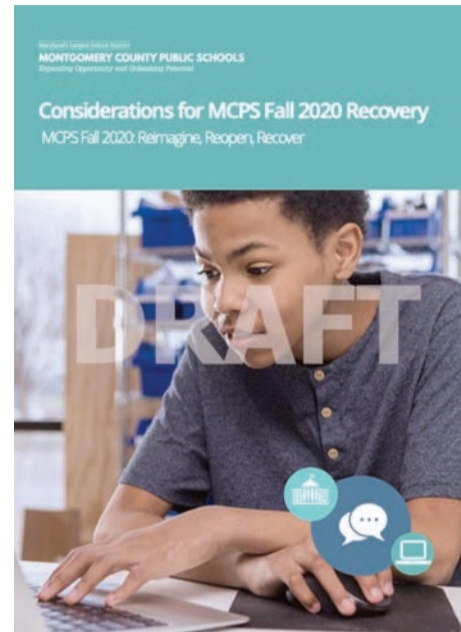
- ❖ Phases will last 2-4 weeks depending on school level and grade/age.

- ❖ Phases may be adjusted based on changing public health conditions and implementation experience.

- ❖ Details and dates will follow.”

In an introductory letter, Superintendent of Schools Jack R. Smith wrote, “... As you can imagine, this work has been challenging and incredibly complex. We have discussed and evaluated several possible models for reopening schools and the truth is, there is no one option that can address all of the instructional, operational and logistical challenges that our school system is faced with. We recognize that the abrupt closure of schools in the spring and the uncertainty about the fall has caused significant disruption and stress for our families. We’ve taken into account the many perspectives families have shared with us based on their specific needs and circumstances. Most importantly, we know all of the options we consider must be examined through the lens of equity and excellence, and ensure the health and safety of our 166,000 students and 24,000 staff members.

“I want to reiterate that this is just a draft guide and we will continue to amend, adjust



and improve these recommendations as we receive feedback from you — our parents, staff and students.

We know that you will have many questions and concerns as you review these draft options. We want to assure you that we will work with you every step of the way to address your concerns and questions in the coming weeks.”

Included in the document is a list of State

Requirements for Opening Schools and a list of MCPS Guiding Principles for reopening schools; a list of three sequencing phases for students to return to school, and two sample Instructional models. The first model for Blended Virtual Learning – a combination of home and school learning, and, the second, for all virtual learning.

At this stage, when in class learning returns, the plan is for students to go to school two days per week.

“The goal is for all grade levels to be in a school rotation by the end of November,” according to the document, all stakeholders; students, parents, faculty and staff are invited to provide feedback regarding the just published plan. To participate visit: [www.mcpssubmitfeedback.org](http://www.mcpssubmitfeedback.org).

Also Included is a page with just four Frequently Asked Questions with a note at the bottom stating: “An extensive FAQs about our fall recovery planning will be posted on the MCPS website in the coming weeks.”

To read the entire document visit: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/reopening/MCPSDraftRecoveryPlan.pdf>.

The Montgomery County Board of Education will meet virtually Tuesday, July 14 at the Almanac’s presstime. The meeting will begin at 12:30 p.m., discussion of the MCPS Recovery of Education Plan at 1:40 p.m. For more information visit [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe).

## Volunteers Work to Clean Trash Along C&O Canal

By PEGGY McEWAN  
POTOMAC ALMANAC

**P**otomac resident Allen Gorrellick runs along the path above the C&O Canal near Angler’s Inn about three times a week.

He was more than happy to be among the volunteers picking up trash along that stretch of the park on Saturday.

“I use this path all the time,” he said. “I have to give something back.”

The C&O Canal Trust, the non-profit partner of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park, sponsored the clean-up July 11 after cancelling its usual Spring Canal Pride clean-up events because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

“We generally have Canal Pride in the Spring, focusing on projects,” Rod Newton, Volunteer and Program Coordinator for the Trust, said. “Right now, we are focusing on trash only. It’s easier to social distance.”

Newton said about 50 people signed up for Saturday’s clean up. To conform with public health regulations around COVID-19, volunteers were divided into small groups of no more than 10.

The project covered the towpath



**Allen Gorrellick of Potomac picks up trash along the C&O Canal near Angler’s Inn Saturday as part of Canal Pride sponsored by the C&O Canal Trust.**

from Fletcher’s Cove to Billy Goat Trail A, below Great Falls. Working in their assigned teams, the volunteers met, received their trash bags and grabbers and spread out to gather trash left by the park’s visitors.

All together the group filled 45 large plastic bags with trash – more than 400 pounds.

“It’s more trash than usual, the park is getting a lot more use,” Newton said.

Volunteers were asked to follow extra precautions while in the park



**Dan Ramsey pauses during a morning of trash collection along the C&O Canal Saturday. About 50 volunteers registered to help at the event sponsored by the C&O Canal Trust.**

to help. They had the following list for a guide:

- ❖ Masks are highly encouraged for all staff and volunteers while volunteering in the Park. Gloves are required.

- ❖ Keep a social distance of at least 6 feet between participants not living in the same household.

- ❖ Anyone not feeling well should not enter the Park or participate in any Park-related programs.

- ❖ Participants must supply their own gloves, close-toed shoes, wa-

ter bottles and water, snacks/food (as needed), and facial coverings (if desired).

- ❖ Tools such as garbage bags, rakes, shovels, etc. will be provided by the C&O Canal Trust.

Canal Trust President Robin Zanotti said the Canal Pride project concentrated on trash pick up because the Park saw a 50 percent increase in visitors during the quarantine.

“That influx of visitors resulted in a lot of litter in the Park, and we are excited that we can now get volunteers out to pick up this trash,” she said.

Volunteer Dan Ramsey was happy to help. He lives in Clinton and, though he does not use the park often, he said he has been helping on Canal Pride days for years.

“I enjoy it,” he said. “It gives you a good feeling.” Another Clean-up is scheduled along the western end of the Park on Saturday, July 25 from 9 a.m. to noon. To register visit [canaltrust.org](http://canaltrust.org).

### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The C&O Canal Trust Board of Directors approved a Board Resolution at their June meeting affirming the Trust’s commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Although the statement had been in the works for

months, its passage now – as the nation reckons with its history of racial inequity – underscores how imperative it is that we continue to integrate these important principles into all facets of our organization.

Our Canal For All program, which focuses on connecting African-American and Latinx communities in Montgomery County with the C&O Canal National Historical Park, began in 2016 as a concerted effort to bring traditionally underrepresented audiences out to the Park to work, play, learn, and serve.

This program thrives on partnerships with organizations who work with youth of diverse backgrounds, including Identity, an organization that provides opportunities for Latinx and other historically underserved youth to reach their highest potential, and Community Bridges, which empowers girls from diverse backgrounds to become exceptional students and leaders. Through Canal For All, youth from these organizations have participated in a variety of activities in the Park, including Latino Conservation Week, bike rides on the towpath, educational hikes around Great Falls, stays in Canal Quarters lock-houses, and clean-up activities as

SEE VOLUNTEERS, PAGE 7

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)

# A COVID-19 Summer Gives Time for Reading

From current events to mysteries, books can fill time and lead to lively family conversations.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

During a recent 12-hour car ride to their summer home in Michigan, the Leland family finished two books, "Bridge To Terabithia" by Katherine Paterson and Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird." They plowed through the audiobook version of both classics. While encouraging her children to read during the summer is usually met with eye rolls, Meg Leland says that her 14-year-old-son and 12-year-old daughter were more receptive to audio books, and when they listen as a family, meaningful discussions ensue.

"We have a lot more free time this summer, so I say audio books are fine because at least they're absorbing books and exercising their brain more than they would if they were constantly texting their friends or playing video games," she said. "But I'm still trying to get them to read more books with real pages."

As COVID19 restrictions have curtailed the traditional activities like camp and vacations, families like the Lelands have more free time to fill. The constraints and limitations have left many children bored and parents struggling to decrease screen time and get their students engaged in reading.

"Since this past school year ended on an academic roller coaster, it's important to pull together a balance of fun and light academics like reading," said education consultant Lisa Cram. "Picking up a book might be the last thing some children want to do, so parents have to get creative."

That creativity, says Cram, needs to be rooted in structure.

"Create a daily schedule that includes time for reading or other academics, but also includes time for recreation," she said. "Predictability will let kids know what to expect, so they'll be less resistant to academics especially if they have another activity to look forward to."

While Cram doesn't believe that all screen time should be eliminated, it shouldn't be the only form of recreation. "Physical activity is just as important as academics," she said. "Ride bikes and go on hikes as a family."

Audio books are a way to infuse long summer days with literature, but she believes that there are other methods for motivating children to delve into physical books as well. "Obviously one of the most effective ways to inspire children to

## Book Suggestions for Summer Reading

"Roll of Thunder, Hear Me Cry," by Mildred Taylor

"The Girl Who Drank the Moon," by Kelly Barnhill

"Brown Girl Dreaming," By Jacqueline Woodson

"Finding Audrey," By Sophie Kinsella

"I'll Give You the Sun," by Jandy Nelson

"An Ember in the Ashes," by Sahara Tahir

"The Silence of Fountains," by Ruta Sepetys

"Love from A to Z," by S. K. Ali

"SLAY," by Brittney Morris

"It's a Whole Spiel: Love, Latkes, and Other Jewish Stories," by Katherine Locke and Laura Silverman

"Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You," by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

"My Hero is You, How Younger Kids Can Fight COVID19," by Helen Patuck, (free as a PDF)

read is for parents to read and model that behavior," said Cram. "Beyond that, read books on how to do a particular activity and then do it together as a family. Children can read about gardening and you can plan a family garden together. Cook a meal or a dish from a book that you've read."

Other methods for making reading more enticing, says Cram, include reading a book and watching the movie or selecting books that are related to current events. "COVID19 is an obvious topic," she said. "A suggestion for middle school students is 'Fever 1793' by Laurie Anderson which deals with the 'The Yellow Fever Epidemic and can lead to a discussion about resilience and survival. For younger children I suggest, 'My Hero is You, How Younger Kids Can Fight COVID19,' by Helen Patuck. It's free as a PDF and teaches children the ways that they can stay safe."

Literature for sparking meaningful conversations about racial injustice abounds, Karen Bental, Librarian at Oakridge Elementary School. For younger children she suggests "Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice, by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins and Ann Hazzard. "[It's] a direct entry to conversation about what is happening today," she said.

"This summer is what it is and there's very little that we can do to change it," added Cram. "But we can finish out the last half of summer more in a meaningful way that doesn't lead to brain drain."

## Volunteers Work to Clean Trash

FROM PAGE 6  
part of Canal Pride.

Thanks to funding from the Montgomery County Council, a Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) program was added in the summer of 2019 in partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Recreation's TeenWorks program and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

This program allows teens to work alongside

National Park Service staff to preserve the C&O Canal's assets and learn job skills.

Besides continuing our work in diversifying our programs, the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resolution calls for an organizational culture welcoming to all people and calls for the formation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee that will guide the Trust's progress towards these ideals.

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## It's a Twofer



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

And not just Tuesday, either. All week in fact, I'll be waiting to hear the music. One day, I'll hear from my oncologist and on another day, I'll hear from my endocrinologist. What I'll hear first is the status of my underlying non small cell lung cancer, stage IV (diagnosed Feb., 2009) and later in the week, I'll get results concerning my most recent party crasher: papillary thyroid cancer, stage II, diagnosed Jan. 2020. This will be the first time I will have been waiting for results simultaneously, concerning TWO cancers that I now have. (What? One wasn't enough?) And B.B. King thought the thrill was gone. For those of us unlucky enough to have been diagnosed with two different and active cancers, this is the kind of week which tests your mettle and is as far away from thrilling as one could possibly imagine.

C'est la vie, or at least it is because I'm not ready to be morte. Who says taking five years of French between seventh and eleventh grades was a waste? Here I am 50+ years later and I'm still able to dip into that old bag of tricks. I fear however, that the longer I'm still living as an active, still-being-treated cancer patient, the more my health is at risk. Cancer is not exactly a friendly visitor. Rather it's the kind of uninvited guest that takes up residence in your home and never leaves, like dust mites, fleas and mold. In some instances, you know they're present; in other cases, you're told. And the longer they stay, the worse the situation becomes.

My cancer diagnosis was sort of like that, a surprise. A lifelong non-smoker with no immediate family history of cancer, I woke up one day with a pain in my left rib cage. A few days later, after the pain had migrated to the other side, combined with difficulty I was having catching my breath, I decided to go to the Emergency Room. A brief examination followed but revealed very little to the doctor. He suggested I return in a week to see the pulmonologist. Which of course, I did.

By that time, the pain had totally subsided and I remained pain-free for the next eight weeks until I got "the call" from my internal medicine doctor advising me that the previous week's biopsy confirmed a malignancy. Then I was in pain, emotionally - and afraid, as you can probably imagine.

But here I sit, 11 and one half years later, living proof that a "terminal" diagnosis is not necessarily terminal. Somehow, through a combination of conventional wisdom/treatment, some non-Western alternatives in the form of pills and potions and a good attitude which has meant keeping my glass half full while trying to maintain a good sense of humor, I have been lucky enough to see my beloved Boston Red Sox win their third and fourth World Series Championships of the 21st century. (Their first two championships in 2004 and 2007 were pre-Kenny's cancer diagnosis.)

But looking backward, as gratifying and rewarding as it can sometimes be, has not been my modus operandi. My 'operandi' has been to walk quietly, laugh heartily and be positive (like our friend, Ray's blood type) and not presume any facts which are not yet in evidence. Moreover, try taking any and all news in stride and be a patient patient (which is not double talk) and put one foot in front of the other and see where it leads.

For me, it has led to a future that I wasn't supposed to have and a present for which I am eternally grateful, even during weeks such as these when I'm about to enter when my life, vis-a-vis what I am told by my oncologist and endocrinologist, is hanging in the balance not once, but twice. Really, twice is a bit much, don't you think? I mean, I think I'm doing my unhealthy bit by having one type of cancer. There's really no extra credit/extra benefit in having two types, especially at the same time. Nor is there any BO-GO-type discount on my health insurance costs. Quite the contrary, actually. But if I'm still alive to complain about it, then I'm still alive and that's nothing to complain about.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for  
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