

Tatum Safa, 6, spends  
some barn time with  
her pony Stormy.

# Potomac ALMANAC

## Many Faces of Pets in Potomac

PET ALMANAC, PAGES 2, 5, 6

## 40 Years of Preserving the Agricultural Reserve

AT RISK, NEWS, PAGE 3

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REAL ESTATE SALES, 2 ♦ KENNY LOURIE, PAGE 7

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## PET ALMANAC

### Clear the Shelters!

On Aug. 6, Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (#MCASAC) will be reopening its facility to the public for animal adoption, kicking off its participation in NBC/Telemundo's nationwide "Clear the Shelters" adoption event.

During the entire month of August, all adoption fees will be discounted by 50%.

For the continued safety of all, adoptions will be conducted by appointment only. Interested residents are encouraged to visit <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices/> for more information on appointment scheduling, and to view available animals. Standard adoption requirements and policies apply.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, people have shown great concern for the homeless pets of MCASAC. We've sent more animals into foster care than ever before, and continue to admit animals into our facility. We hope that the community continues to provide support, in the form of adoptions, once we reopen on August 6." (Deputy Executive Director Lex Lepiarz).



**Sam the Guinea Pig**

Meet Sam! 3 year old Sam is just about the most outgoing guinea pig you'll ever meet! He LOVES floor time and will even try to crawl up onto your lap. Sam likes listening to music, popcorning around during floor time, chewing on your pant leg for attention, and making the sweetest noises when you give him allllll the full body pets.

Sam was surrendered by his previous owner due to no fault of his own, and he is more than ready to make his next home his FOREVER home! Sam lived with other guinea pigs in his old home and would love to have a friend (fixed females or other males only!) in his forever home too!

To learn more about Sam and his friends, please visit our Small Animal adoption page below: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices/adoption/small.html>

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ADOPTING AN ANIMAL WITH MCASAC, PLEASE REVIEW THE COVID-19 ADOPTION PROCESS BELOW\***

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices/adoption/covidadoption.html>



**Tripawed Boomer**

Have you had a chance to meet Boomer yet? 12-week-old Boomer is a sweet, friendly, playful tri-pawed kitten who's been stealing our hearts over here at MCASAC! Boomer is a very happy, pain-free kitten who never missed a step (literally) after getting his back leg amputated. Boomer plays, pounces, and bounces around just like any other kitten.

Boomer's beautiful tabby coloring and bright green eyes may even catch your attention before anything else!

#MCASAC takes great pride and joy in being a safe haven for animals of all sizes, ages, breeds, disabilities, and backgrounds. If you are interested in adopting one of our many unique, wonderful rescues, please visit our Adoptable Pets webpage below: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices/adoption/index.html>

### MCPAW: Doing Everything Humanly Possible For Homeless Pets

MCPAW (Montgomery County Partners for Animal Well-Being) is the non-profit partner of the Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC). MCPAW works through MCASAC to keep homeless pets healthy and happy while awaiting adoption.

MCPAW'S goals are:

Reduce the number of animals that come to MCASAC

Pamper, protect and provide for animals inside MCASAC

Educate and engage the community in causes for animal welfare

MCPAW'S work depends on your donations. Here are some MCPAW programs in need of your support. <http://www.mc paw.org/>

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# NEWS

## Clean Energy or Farmland? Or Both?

Council moves forward with zoning amendment to allow solar fields, an industrial use, in the agricultural reserve.

By KEN MOORE  
THE ALMANAC

**A**ndrew Friedson was the lone dissenting voice, advocating for the Agricultural Reserve, land preserved 40 years ago by zoning laws to remain farmland forever.

"The Agricultural Reserve was intended to be forever. It was," said Potomac's Councilmember.

"Go back to 1980. The prospect of creating transferable development rights was for the purpose of forever. You can't undo a TDR, that's a permanent exchange," said Friedson. "In order to downzone and provide value to the farmers, in order to downzone and preserve that land into perpetuity."

County Council's action 40 years ago to preserve the 93,000 acres of land called for locally grown food, farms, fields and forests is considered visionary, creating "a national treasure."

"We became a pacesetter 40 years ago with our vision to set aside this land to be used for the production of food and fiber to give our citizens food security and access to locally grown foods. We are a model for other communities," said Todd Greenstone, of the Maryland Farm Bureau.

But the urgency and reality of climate change propelled the current Council toward new visions and goals of a sustainable Montgomery County, a county that produces its own clean energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2027 and eliminates emissions carbon emissions 100 percent by 2035.

"There is absolutely no way to do it without shifting the entire electrical grid to clean renewables," said Councilmember Hans Riemer (At-large). "Every time we flip a power switch, we plug in our phone to charge it, we plug in our vehicle to charge it, every time we use power, we are drawing from the grid. And as long as the grid is powered by coal, natural gas, we're creating emissions. And so the best most effective most rapid thing is transforming that energy grid to 100 percent clean renewable."

Riemer and co-sponsor Craig Rice introduced Zoning Text Amendment 20-01 that would allow solar, 1,800 acres or three square miles of it, in the Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County. And after more than 90 minutes of public testimony in March, and several hearings and seven hours of debate Council Committees the last



**"The Agricultural Reserve was intended to be forever."**

— Andrew Friedson

two weeks, at times technical discussions on soil type classifications and megawatts and rooftop feasibility, a joint committee voted 4-1 to move ahead; Friedson dissenting.

The full Council is expected to deliberate and vote in September.

**MOST ENVIRONMENTALISTS** would support both goals, but now they're pitted against each other; sustainable local farming on what has been preserved and pristine land versus industry to produce clean sustainable energy and where to put it.

"This is a tough issue, this a divisive issue, and I acknowledge that. It isn't an easy one, and it's one where our own family is split," said Riemer, who facilitated three committee meetings the last two weeks.

The Sierra Club gave Riemer's cause a jolt when it supported the zoning change to allow solar in the Agricultural Reserve.

"Sierra Club is a conservation organization. We believe strongly in sustainable agriculture," said Alfred Bartlett. "We recognize the urgency of what you are talking about, the need to decarbonize our electricity grid.

It's one of the main sources of carbon and other pollutants. ... That balance is what we've been working on. So we do absolutely support maximizing all of the feasible and available sites that are possible as quickly as possible, rooftops, and parking lots, and brownfields, and landfills and so on."

Bartlett said even if the county was able to maximize the use of rooftop solar, it would only create approximately one half the amount of energy Montgomery County would need to meet its clean energy goals. And it would require much more time.

"That points to the urgency of doing ground mounted solar," said Riemer.

"Everybody has said, 'Why can't we put that on rooftops; Not until we put these on rooftops.' That's what I've heard and if I thought there was a viable path for us to provide for all of that capacity on rooftops, of course that's what I'd be devoting my energy too," said Riemer.

Riemer and Rice envision farming coexisting with solar use, "Other countries are looking at this problem and they are not saying it's an either/or. You're not taking land out of agricultural use for solar, you're blending the two," said Riemer.

Riemer found support on the Transportation and Environment committee as well as the Planning, Housing and Economic Development committee that joined together to discuss this issue.

SEE SOLAR, PAGE 4

### VIEWPOINTS

**Alfred Bartlett, Sierra Club**



"We recognize the urgency of what you are talking about the need to decarbonize our electricity grid. It's one of the main sources of carbon and other pollutants. ... That balance is what we've been working on. So we do absolutely support maximizing all of the feasible and available sites that are possible as quickly as possible, rooftops, and parking lots, and brownfields, and landfills and so on."

**Ginny Barnes, Conservation Montgomery**



"It's premature to be opening the Reserve to such an obvious industrial use, not a community use. ... The work on Thrive 2050 is showing us how important assuring sources of local fresh food will become as the climate crisis worsens. The 93,000 acre Agricultural Reserve is needed to grow food, fiber and forests; it's vital to maintaining clean water and clean air. It is not to be sacrificed to a purely industrial use, no matter how green it may seem."

**Hans Riemer, County Council (At-large)**



"If I thought putting [solar] on rooftops and parking lots would get us a huge increase of energy, in the near future, I would be focusing all of my effort on how to do that, but I think that that is a long term strategy. And even when you max it out, it's only about half of what you need. ... There is no solution that we can do faster than cleaning up the grid, shutting down coal, gas and oil sources of power generation and replacing them with solar and wind. There is nothing we can do that is faster in its scale and is going to have a bigger impact than decarbonizing the electric grid. The only true short term strategy that humanity has is to clean up the grid."

**Andrew Friedson, County Council (District One)**



"We have to ask ourselves what is the risk here. If we do too much, allow for too much, and there are issues, we can never change that, we can never take that back, we can never fix a problem that we potentially created by not fully understanding the breadth and magnitude of the decision that we make. If we do too little, which is possible, I recognize that, we can always come back next year and add to it, we can always come back two years from now and add to it. We can always come back at a later date and slightly, methodically and thoughtfully expand the amount of coverage as appropriate once we see how this works, what the impacts are. I feel strongly about protecting the Agricultural Reserve and trying to speak up for the farmers which are such an important part of Montgomery County and our community."

SEE VIEWPOINTS, PAGE 4



# Solar Could Supplant Agricultural Reserve

FROM PAGE 3

"This is a significant bill. We know it will provide enough energy to power 54,000 homes, if passed, that's a big piece of legislation," said Councilmember Tom Hucker (District 5). "We need a vigorous solar industry, working in all different areas."

**SLOW DOWN, BACK OFF,** said Ginny Barnes, of Conservation Montgomery.

"It's premature to be opening the reserve to such an obvious industrial use, not a community use. ... The work on Thrive 2050 is showing us how important assuring sources of local fresh food will become as the climate crisis worsens," said Barnes. "The 93,000 acre reserve is needed to grow food, fiber and forests; it's vital to maintaining clean water and clean air. It is not to be sacrificed to a purely industrial use, no matter how green it may seem. There is no doubt we must turn to alternative sources of energy. Solar will help us if sited in what are considered compatible places."

"We urge the County Council to slow down and back off of this proposal. The unintended consequences far outweigh moving forward with unnecessary haste," Barnes said.

The reserve is not the proper placement for solar because once that path is forged, it can't be turned back.

"I think we have to ask ourselves what is the risk here. If we do too much, allow for too much, and there are issues, we can never change that, we can never take that back, we can never fix a problem that we potentially created by not fully understanding the breadth and magnitude of the decision that we make," said Councilmember Friedson. "If we do too little, which is possible, I recognize that, we can always come back next year and add to it, we can always come back two years from now and add to it. We can always come back at a later date and slightly, methodically and thoughtfully expand the amount of coverage as appropriate once we see how this works, what the impacts are."

Montgomery Countryside Alliance, is an organization that pursues the mission "to promote sound economic, land-use and transportation policies that preserve the natural environment, open spaces and rural lands in Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve for the benefit of all Washington Metropolitan area residents."

Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance's executive director, said the agricultural reserve already serves a vital environmental presence and role.

"We reject the assertion that the reserve is not doing its part towards climate change adaptation and mitigation," Taylor said.



**"That's what we've been told for 40 years. Now it looks like that's not going to be the case moving forward."**

— Jeremy Criss

"The stated premise that our protected farmland and open space must give way right now to an industrial use because of urgency and in the absence of a comprehensive plan is deeply flawed. The record holds strong evidence from stakeholders including members of the county's climate change working group," said Taylor.

"I'm not here to argue against the advancement of renewable energy, I'm here to fend for the reserve," she said.

**FARMERS UNANIMOUSLY OPPOSE** the council's text amendment, said Jeremy Criss, of the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture.

"What was the agricultural reserve created for in the first place?" asked Criss. "Was it created for agriculture? That's what we've been told for 40 years. Now it looks like that's not going to be the case moving forward."

Criss gave several examples of farmers in the Agricultural Reserve with modest solar projects that followed the 120 percent rule, generating enough energy to power all

farm uses plus 20 percent to sell to the grid. He also gave examples of larger projects, from 25 to 85 acres, in nearby counties in Maryland that cause farmers grave concern.

"I am here because I want to make sure you know why the farmers are unanimously opposed to this policy. The legislative intent of the Agricultural Reserve is for farming for agriculture, the farmers believe, and they do support solar, but the farmers believe the 1,800 acre cap, while it's something that might be here today, there's nothing that you all can do that's going to tie the hands of a future council that would want to revisit and expand this cap. Once we establish this precedent, once we allow the Ag Reserve for something other than farming, we may in fact see significant acres of loss to the farmers," said Criss.

Many farmers in the Reserve lease rather than own their land, which means property owners could decide to switch uses to make more money with solar. "There's no way that farming is going to compare to the economic re-

turn that property owners are going to be able to appreciate once this ZTA is passed," said Criss.

**ANDREW FRIEDSON** has one month to influence other councilmembers.

"It's a question of what is the appropriate use for the agricultural reserve. What are the consequences for decisions that are made with changes to the allowable uses within the agricultural reserve. If we pursue policies that change uses within the Agricultural Reserve, what impact does that have on agriculture in Montgomery County and farmers who make agriculture possible. That's what we should be focusing on here," said Friedson.

He asked Councilmembers to be "a lot more understanding and sensitive to farmers" in the way they would to residential homeowners.

"The comparison to what you're talking about here is if we passed a zoning text amendment that said, 'We are going to allow 100-foot-tall buildings in all residential zones, but don't worry, we're going to restrict it, we're only going to allow 250 of them to be built.'"

He pointed to the irony of solar advocates having difficulty finding land that works for solar.

"The same challenges that we're talking about for solar, that it's hard to find land that works, there are similar challenges for farmers and finding land that's farmable," said Friedson. "We are passing a broad law that puts at risk a lot of very important prime usable farmland and it seems premature."

## VIEWPOINTS

FROM PAGE 3

**Jeremy Criss, Montgomery County Office of Agriculture**



"In conclusion, to make sure you know why the farmers are unanimously opposed to this policy. The legislative intent of the Ag Reserve is for farming, for agriculture, the farmers believe, and they do support solar, but the farmers believe the 1,800 acre cap, while it's something that might be here today, there's nothing that you all can do that's going to tie hands of a future council that would want to revisit and expand this cap. Once we establish this precedent, once we allow the Ag Reserve for something other than farming, we may in fact see significant acres of loss to the farmer."

**Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance**



"We reject the assertion that the reserve is not doing its part towards climate change adaptation and mitigation. The stated premise that our protected farmland and open space must give way right now to an industrial use because of urgency and in the absence of a comprehensive plan is deeply flawed. ...

"I'm not here to argue against the advancement of renewable energy, I'm here to fend for the Reserve."

**Craig Rice, County Council (District Two)**



"Look, I agree with you wholeheartedly that there needs to be a coexistence between energy conservation and agriculture. It's one of the reasons I've signed onto this bill from the very beginning. I do believe that there is a mix. ... So with this pilot program, what if it doesn't go well, what if it doesn't grow the crops and then damages the soil or whatever the case maybe. And then what happens? We have to be fair about understanding that there is concern about those. What happens if it becomes more profitable all of a sudden to do solar instead of farming?"

**Todd Greenstone, Montgomery County Farm Bureau**



"Montgomery County Farm Bureau is in opposition of ZTA 20-01. We are opposed to using up scarce, important agricultural land for such an endeavor at this time. ... It is our position that rooftops, parking lots and roadways make more sense logistically."

**Will Jawando, County Council (At-large)**



"What's been weighing on me is, of course, we need to allow for solar in some capacity for environmental reasons. I agree with that one hundred percent. Of course, we also need to make sure we have a stable and secure food supply in our Agricultural Reserve. I also believe that our Agricultural Reserve is a national model for preserving land for agriculture and is critical for ensuring that we have locally sourced food."



# PET ALMANAC

## Canoe Cruisers To the Rescue!

Sunday July 26, a group of paddlers with the Canoe Cruisers Association were enjoying an early morning trip down the George Washington Canal near the Trump golf course.

Suddenly we noticed a struggling hummingbird in the river. Adam Issenberg used his paddle to gently scoop it onto his sprayskirt. It sat peacefully, recovering, as we all admired it. It was then paddled over to the shore and placed on a rock. It flew off to our claps and cheers.

— BARBARA BROWN



## COVID Canine Relief

Chyna is a COVID miracle. In April, Farouk Chatman and his family lost their beloved rescue dog, Zoe, and their house felt empty and quiet. Farouk met Chyna from Potomac rescue group Pet Connect's and they just clicked. The volunteers saw the connection and worked fast to get him approved to take Chyna to her forever home, and she brought all her joy and enthusiasm with her. She settled in immediately like she was always supposed to be there, with her own yard, new toys, comfy beds, even her own couch. She follows Farouk's mom, Dr. Anita Chatman, in a parade of tail wags and spins. She is calm, gentle, and loving with Farouk's dad, Melvin

Chatman. And when Farouk comes home, Chyna is so overwhelmed with happiness she pulls him to her couch and lays on him to shower him with kisses. Farouk's fiancé, Potomac resident Emma Kimm, is delighted by visits from Chyna to walk in the woods. Chyna's favorite activities include playing fetch, smiling, and making soft dens for naps, and her favorite food is whatever you happen to be eating. At a time when the family is all home, Chyna has made it whole.

PetConnect is a Potomac-based rescue group. See [www.petconnectrescue.org/](http://www.petconnectrescue.org/) to help or see available dogs, kittens and cats for adoption.



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE STEVENS

**Mark Loock and his dog Bear on a hot day in River Falls.**

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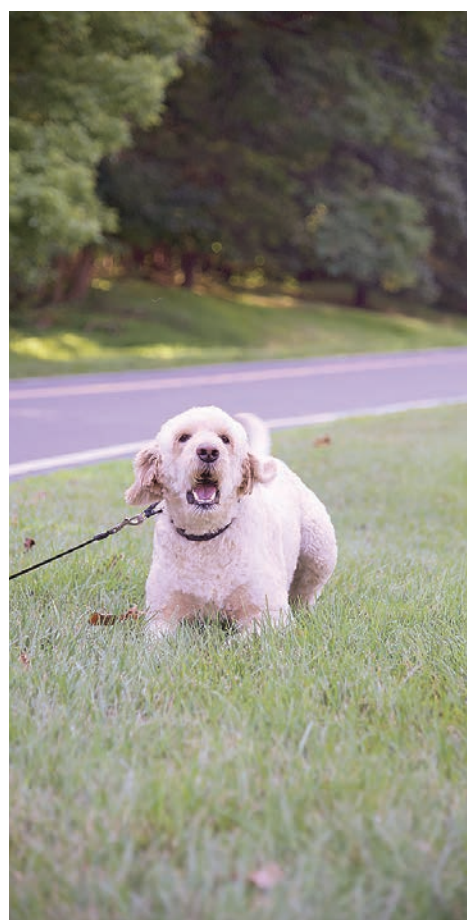


PHOTO BY DEBBIE STEVENS

**Michelle Murphy's dog Doogel**



PHOTO BY DEBBIE STEVENS

**Meredith Morton's dog Sammy.**



PHOTO BY DEBBIE STEVENS

**Debbie Stevens' daughter, Jessie Stevens, on her mother's horse, Gus, at Potomac Horse Center.**

POTOMAC ALMANAC ♦ JULY 29 - AUGUST 4, 2020 ♦ 5



# Potomac Sports a Plethora of Pets

BY PEGGY McEWAN  
POTOMAC ALMANAC

**A** quick poll of pets in Potomac Elementary School families resulted in a variety of animals playing a number of roles.

During this time of coronavirus COVID-19, no in-school days and reduced socialization, pets are proving to be a big help.

"We were bored at home and looking for stuff to do," Alissa Miller, mother of three daughters, wrote in an email. "I heard from a friend about the chick hatching program and recontacted Rent-a-Coop and signed up (there was a waitlist!). So, it is a 4-week program. You are given two baby chicks (about 1 week old) right away, as well as a brooder (cage) for them to live in, and all the other supplies. You are also given 7 fertilized eggs and an incubator. You set the eggs in the incubator and it counts down to day 21. At day 21, they hatch. I have some videos of this, and it was THE MOST incredible experience ever. You are also given a special candling light and at specific times during the 21-day period, you 'candle' the eggs, which is just looking at their development inside the shell with a special light. If some of the eggs aren't developing, you discard them, so they don't infect the others. It is most definitely an amazing biology program and we learned so much. A lot of the preschools and kindergartens do participate in this program, which is just so exciting for the kids to observe."

A week after the chicks hatch, they are returned to Rent a Coop, a Germantown company with two programs: coop rental or hatching rental. Miller said they chose the hatching rental because the coop rental had a waiting list. Now that they have enjoyed baby chicks, they are expecting the coop rental to arrive in August.

"It was just so much fun," she said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALISSA MILLER

**Jana Miller, 12, holds one of the chicks she and her sisters hatched and cared for this summer. They plan to get a coop and raise new chicks until they are old enough to lay eggs.**

Kasia and Kevin Swierczek and their four children have chickens too. They chose to go the do it yourself route, ordering chicks from a mail order catalogue, My Pet Chickens. Right now, they said, they have six chicks and enough chickens to supply themselves and some neighbors with fresh eggs.

But chickens are not the only pets the Swierczeks have.

Kasia also said they have two Maine Coon cats, several tadpoles and four fish.

Tatum Safa, 6, got a pony just as COVID hit, her mother, Marisa Safa, wrote.

"He has been a lifesaver and given my daughter a sense of security and normalcy," Marisa wrote. "Tatum has been able to



**Sebastian Swierczek, 9, holds one of his family's two Maine Coon cats.**

spend time at our barn, Poplar Hill Stables, almost daily, and I am grateful to them and Stormy for helping her get through virtual kindergarten!"

"Stormy is 7 years old and a Welsh Pony," Tatum wrote. "Stormy is a hunter pony who loves to jump and to get cookies. I love him very much."

Dogs are known as Man's Best Friend and that goes for children too.

Asher Affens, a rising third grader at Potomac Elementary School, spent time with Abbi Moco, a terrier-beagle-boxer mix that belongs to a friend and learned a little about that best friend connection

"We just puppy-sat for a friend and it did wonders for [Asher] who is usually somewhat scared of dogs," his mother Adina Braun wrote on Facebook. It was good for him.

The smiles and comfort that come from pets has a scientific name: The Pet effect.

"Also known as the human animal bond,



PHOTO BY PEGGY McEWAN

**Shady Margaret McEwan, a nine year old Domestic Shorthair Cat loves when her owner works at home ... so many papers to relax on! So many Potomac Almanac stories to delay by refusing to move! Shady was adopted from Montgomery County Humane Society when she was two years old and has been a favorite with Almanac reporter Peggy McEwan and her grandchildren ever since.**

is the mutually beneficial relationship between people and animals that positively impacts the health and well-being of both. Any pet owner will tell you that living with a pet comes with benefits, including constant companionship, love and affection," Steven Feldman executive director of the Human Animal Bond Research Institute, wrote.

In a survey of pet owners, he wrote, "74% of pet owners reported mental health improvements from pet ownership and 75% of pet owners reported a friend's or family member's mental health has improved because of pets in their lives."



PHOTO COURTESY MARISA SAFA

**Six year old Tatum Safa, a first grader at Potomac Elementary School, takes her pony, Stormy over low jumps at Poplar Hill Stables in Poolesville.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALISSA MILLER

**Twins Sasha (left) and Reese (in orange) Miller play with newly hatched baby chicks that came from Rent-a-Coop.**



## PET ALMANAC

Some bespoke doghouses are donated to charity auctions.

PHOTO BY  
LA PETITE MAISON



# Doghouses Built for Luxury and Charity

From marble floors to glass roof tops, when it comes to the options for dream doghouses, the sky's the limit.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE ALMANAC

**M**arble floors and winding staircases might come to mind when imagining a dream home. These features also characterize luxury doghouses, says former Bethesda architect and interior designer Alex Dooley, who has designed and built 12 high-end canine abodes during the past year.

"I've just started selling most of what I've built to family and friends," she said. "I've given 10% of my profit from the sale of my doghouses to animal shelters."

What was once considered an outdoor dwelling place for the family dog is now often considered a second home for pets as they are considered members of the family and spend most of their time indoors.

"People usually use the houses when they're entertaining outside and want a comfortable place for their dogs," Michelle Pollak, interior designer and owner of La Petite Maison, where she creates custom doghouses.

Options for design and furnishings are nearly limitless, says Pollak who creates bespoke doghouses that have included hand painted wallpaper and marble floors. "I've even made wrought iron chandeliers," said Pollak. "We've had doghouses that were large enough to have 12 people standing inside."

Such indulgence draws criticism, Dooley acknowledges. "I believe that there is a way to enjoy things that you love and also contribute to the greater good," she said. "I donated two homes for charity auctions."

One such charitable event was an exhibit at the Norfolk Botanical Gardens called Barkitecture, where visitors walked through a maze of dog-sized mansions. Most were designed by architects and donated to raise money for the botanical gardens and other nonprofit organizations.

"One of the most memorable was a two story dog house with stairs," said Kelly Welsh of Norfolk Botanical Gardens. "You could tell the ones that were made by architects because they were striking and had clean lines and nice elements."

Not all high-end doghouses are built for family pets, says Pollak. Some are created and purchased out of a sense of benevolence. "We once built a house for a woman who'd rescued several dogs," she said. "The doghouse had to accommodate all of the dogs, including one that was disabled. He couldn't stand up very well so everything was built around his needs."

Pollak also recalls building a house for someone who lived in an apartment complex that didn't allow pets. "The woman had been taking care of a stray alley cat and wanted a three room cat house that she could leave outside," she said. "The cat would sleep in one room, eat in one room and use the litter box in another room."

There are even design options for non-traditional pets. "One man wanted a potbellied pig house that was a replica of his house," said Pollak. "He kept it in the grand entrance of his home so that the pig could hang out inside."

Not all luxury doghouses are limited to the affluent. "Our clients range from those who are wealthy to those who save their money because they want a really pretty doghouse," said Pollak.

While her houses generally range in price from \$9,000 to \$35,000, Pollak equates purchases of a luxury doghouse to buying designer clothes, shoes and other items with a high price tag.

"It's like buying a painting or a piece of jewelry," she said. "These doghouses are beautiful works of art and with all the stressful events going on in the world, beauty can be soothing. People underestimate the incredible power of beauty."

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## Wait. What?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

"Thyroid cancer." Again? I thought the point of last week's surgical biopsy was to genetically-sequence a lung cancer tumor. Now you tell me the radiologist/pathologist found more thyroid cancer. As it already has happened, my oncologist - in coordination with my endocrinologist, said that my most recent CT scan showed "excellent results" (from my previous thyroid cancer treatment - which ended with radioiodine therapy), and furthermore noted that the thyroid cancer was confined to my neck. Yet a few weeks later, the thyroid cancer is back in my lungs. What happened? Or more importantly perhaps, what didn't happen?

Well, if I understand what my oncologist said to us over the phone on Wednesday, disappointing as it initially sounded, it might not be at all bad. Apparently, the dose of radioiodine (nuclear medicine) I received had been modified (reduced) due to my pre-existing kidney function issue. Since this modification was not a "normal" dose, it didn't locate all the thyroid cancer tumors; the smaller ones, that is, so the presumption was that all the thyroid cancer had been found, identified and eliminated. Until last week's biopsy found otherwise. What does it all mean? I'll try to explain, although I'm sure I'll get lost in the science somewhere.

I still have two types of cancer: non small cell lung cancer and papillary thyroid cancer. However, I may have thyroid cancer in the lungs which actually may be better than having lung cancer in the lungs. The reason being: papillary thyroid cancer is curable whereas non small cell lung cancer is not (it is treatable though). Moreover, thyroid cancer is slow-growing and at present, so small that there may not be any treatment to follow. To learn more definitively what is happening in my body, I'm scheduled for a PET scan this week and then another surgical biopsy the following week. This time the biopsy will be a lung biopsy. This will get tissue from within the lung (a bit of a lung-collapsing risk), not from the periphery (the lymph nodes). Presumably, this biopsy will provide some clarity.

According to my oncologist, I have a dozen or so tumors in my lungs, some of which may be thyroid cancer. Unfortunately, it's not practical or prudent to biopsy all of them so a complete assessment will not be possible. Therefore, an educated guess will have to be made: continue to treat the lung cancer with immunotherapy or not, and/or only treat the thyroid cancer which given its small size and slow-growing nature wouldn't require any treatment - for now. And might not for years.

But if there are more tumors that are lung cancer - which the doctors can't confirm, and I'm not receiving any treatment for them (because of the thyroid cancer diagnosis), won't my lung cancer tumors grow? And since one medicine doesn't work against two types of cancer, I may not be receiving treatment for the cancer that's really active and receiving treatment for the cancer that is not active. And the only way to find out what types of cancer exist is to biopsy each and every tumor - which is not going to happen. As my oncologist said in response to our characterization of this damned if I don't and damned if I do scenario as being very complicated: "Mr. Lourie has always been a complicated patient."

As I review this column and reconsider what my oncologist has advised going forward, it's not only complicated, it's confusing and a bit disorienting. What exactly do I have and what are the risks, and more importantly: what is my life expectancy? Nevertheless, as my oncologist said: "I'm glad we did this biopsy." Me, too.

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