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CONNECTION

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Customer Tuan Nguyen is about to place a huge jackfruit into his basket at the newly opened 99 Ranch Market in Fairfax City.

'Stuff You Can't Find Anywhere Else'

NEWS, PAGE 8

Hollywood Musician Got His Start at Robinson Secondary

PEOPLE, PAGE 9

Tour de Mount Vernon Honors Dave Evans

NEWS, PAGE 5

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CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 9

BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

OCTOBER 8-14, 2020

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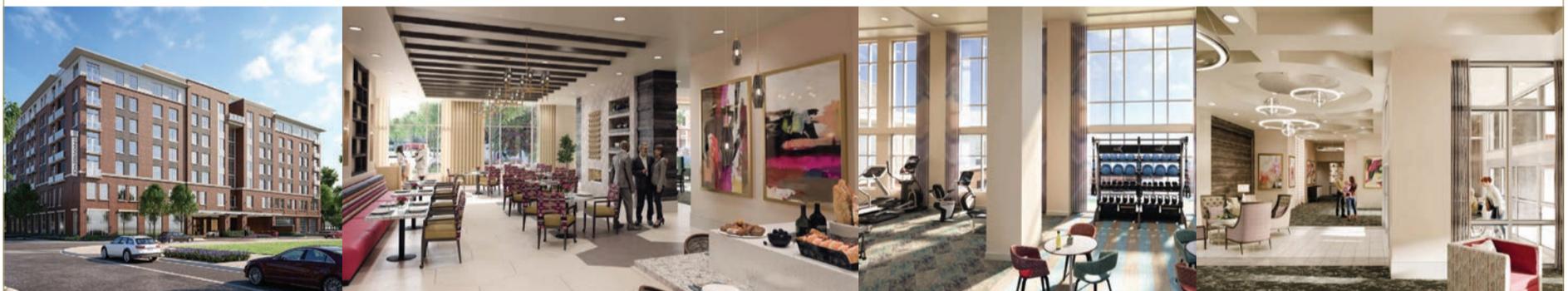
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NEWS



Panel of listeners: Supervisor Lusk, Commonwealth Attorney Descano, Police Chief Roessler, Fire Chief Butler, Deputy County Executive Rohrer, Independent Police Auditor Schott, and CRP Chair Doan in a Community Input Session on Public Safety in Fairfax County sit for three-and-a-half hours of community input on Public Safety.



Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Public Safety Committee, Rodney Lusk (D-Lee)

Gathering Hundreds of Ideas for Police Reform

Public input session part of effort to create more transparency in public safety.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Matrix

Police Reform Suggestions Matrix, Sept. 29, 2020, here:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/police-reform/police-reform-suggestions.pdf

In retirement, Randy Sayles, former Marine, former Denver police detective, former DEA special agent undercover in the U.S., Pakistan and Brazil, won a lifetime achievement award from Fairfax County for his efforts to make this county's police force and policies more equitable for all residents. Sayles also enjoyed clearing neighborhoods of debris, just one of the reasons the county also gave him an environmental excellence award last year.

But Sayles was also a Black man.

One morning at 4:30 a.m. when he parked on a median to clear litter from the street, Sayles was confronted by a police officer who ticketed him and refused to hear what he was doing or why he was parked where he was.

"Randy was so incensed by receiving this ticket, so affronted by the treatment he received as a Black person by this police officer, that he took the matter up with the Chief [of Fairfax County Police Department] directly," said Phil Niedzielski-Eichner, at a public input session hosted by the Board of Supervisors Public Safety Committee, chaired by Lee Supervisor Rodney Lusk last Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020.

Niedzielski-Eichner and Sayles served on Sharon Bulova's 2015 Ad Hoc Police Policy Review Commission, effectively advocating years for police reforms to combat systemic racism, including mandatory use of body worn cameras, the importance of programs such as Diversion First for people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities, de-escalation strategies, limiting police vehicle pursuit, and recognizing the sanctity of human life.



Diane Burkley Alejandro

"A few of us warned at the time that it would be a mistake to declare, 'Mission Accomplished.'" said Niedzielski-Eichner.

LAST WEDNESDAY, Sept. 30, Lee Supervisor Rodney Lusk, chairman of the Board of Supervisors' Public Safety Committee, held a Community Input Session on Public Safety in Fairfax County. Lusk launched a new website in July designed to be a one-stop shop for all previous and future law enforcement data published by Fairfax County, and to make publicly accessible a matrix of all police reform recommendations, and questions submitted by community members.

"This site is a first step in fulfilling a personal commitment to increase law enforcement transparency and accountability by offering easy to find, clearly organized, and interactive data all in one place," said Lusk. "Critical data remains unavailable, and much more community input is still needed."

Lusk has received hundreds of suggestions from the community and his staff has compiled a matrix with the suggestions. Lusk has pledged that each person or organization that poses a question, suggestion, or idea will be addressed and answered.

"This year, the Public Safety Committee has been dealing with an unprecedented number of competing priorities," said Lusk, at the beginning of the public safety input session. "As a result, there has been limited opportunity for community input during our formal committee meetings."

"We are here to listen and to answer questions," said Lusk.

BLACK PEOPLE are on the receiving end 45.63 percent of the time when Fairfax



Chief Edwin Roessler

County Police use force, despite being 9.7 percent of the county's population, according to the FCPD yearly report.

"This isn't a problem from just this year. This has been consistent the last five years," said Sean Perryman, president of the Fairfax County NAACP.

"We need to have a sense of urgency about this and we need to get serious about this because this is affecting everyday people's lives," said Perryman.

The Fairfax County Office of the Independent Police Auditor is "facilitating a study by the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Cincinnati to identify patterns and trends in FCPD uses of force during 2016-2018 with emphasis on racial, ethnic, gender, or similar disparities across subpopulations," according to the Auditor's webpage. The UTSA team will issue a public report on the study's findings and recommendations and present it to the Board of Supervisors by early 2021.

"People who make up 46 percent of use of force will not care about a University of Texas study in San Antonio when they are beaten or subject to any kind of force that is used against them," said Perryman.

The Fairfax NAACP sent Lusk 45 recommendations for police reform, including ending the practice of having FCPD officers serve as school resource officers. Police in schools lead to what many consider a school-to-prison pipeline, criminalizing actions that should be handled as school discipline issues.

"The [Fairfax County Police] Department still struggles with transparency," Niedzielski-Eichner said. "Residents deserve to know what police are doing and use of force incidents should be reported on a regular basis



Phil Niedzielski-Eichner

rather than waiting for the annual use of force report."

Diane Burkley Alejandro, of ACLU's People Power program, said that the county has used force much less since the 2015 Ad Hoc Commission.

"We saw less use of force ... against white people," said Alejandro. Black people are still facing disproportionate and increased police use of force in Fairfax County, according to recent data.

"Where do we stand? Arrest disparity is increasing, use of force discrepancy is increasing and discipline disparity is increasing," she said.

While the overall number of arrests is declining, Black and Latino people are seven times and three times more likely to be arrested than White people, said Alejandro.

"What we are asking you to do, first and foremost, is admit there is a problem," she said. "My main question [for leaders at the dias] ... do you believe there is systematic racism in Fairfax?" She said if Fairfax County's leaders could not admit that there is systemic racism here, it was unlikely that police officers would embrace the needed change.

Chief Edwin Roessler's response: "We have a great department that is head and shoulders above everyone else in this country."

JUST AFTER GEORGE FLOYD'S death, a Fairfax County police officer tased a Mount Vernon man, despite de-escalation strategies underway by other officers and the Fire and Rescue workers who were called to help the man in the midst of a mental health crisis.

SEE POLICE REFORM, PAGE 10

Life Hangs in the Box Checked

HR for County Schools tells staff to make a decision.

MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Tia Williams is an instructional assistant with diabetes and severe asthma at Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). Choosing the box she checks Tuesday, Oct. 6, stating her intent whether to return to school for in-person learning or not, is an agonizing decision to make.. Williams comes from a family of people with diabetes and asthma. Six cousins and four uncles are dead from COVID. “I want to continue to work (and teach), but I also don’t want to bring (the) virus home to my family. When I talked to HR about my ADA application, they told me that I wasn’t approved because my principal said that none of the kids were going to be virtual, so

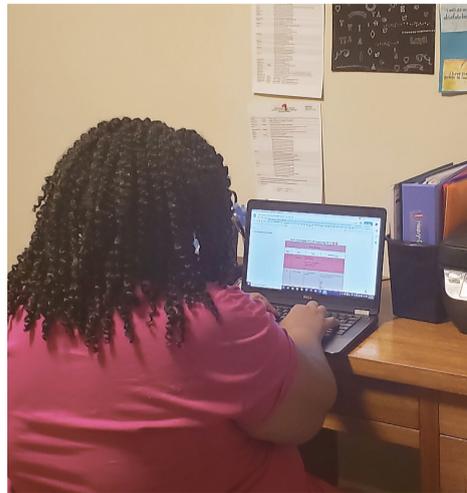


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Tia Williams, an instructional assistant at Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Woodson High School, must decide whether to return to school as in-person staff.

I needed to return. I do not feel like I have a choice. It is either my health or my job.” Williams is one of 653 teachers and sup-



FAIRFAX COUNTY
Sean McDonald, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources

port staff who must decide whether to return to in-person work in the school system this October, take a leave of absence, or resign. She works with deaf and hard of hearing students.

Fairfax County School Board voted their approval at a September 22 Board Meeting to decouple school reopening plans from staffing decisions and bring small cohorts of students and their teachers to school sites for in-person instruction. The division’s Department of Human Resources, under the signature of Sean McDonald, Interim Assistant Superintendent, sent an email to those staff members on Sept. 30 asking their teaching intent.

THE COHORTS included career and technical education classes, preschool autism

classes, English language learners and other special education students, such as deaf and hard of hearing students who Williams supports.

“These students represent 3.5 percent of the total student population and 653 teachers and other instructional staff... needed to provide instruction to these students,” said an FCPS spokesperson.

While the percentage appeared small, Becca Ferrick, President of the Association of Fairfax Professional Educators, said they were concerned for the future of FCPS. Based on the numbers FCPS shared, there were not enough employees prepared to return to in-person instruction to meet the staffing needs outlined. “By forcing the return, we may see that the issue becomes one of simply not having enough employees on the payroll anymore in order to meet those staffing needs...These employees will almost certainly be asked to ignore both scientific advice and their own ethical principles,” she said.

SEE SCHOOLS . PAGE 7

Staff Uncomfortable With In-Person School Plan

Fairfax County Federation of Teachers releases survey results.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Staff at Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are overwhelmingly uncomfortable with returning for in-person instruction given the incomplete information about the implementation that has been currently shared, according to a report released by the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers (FCFT) on Oct. 6 during a press conference. The report, representing 1,332 responses, detailed members’ feelings about the current reopening plan, workload experiences, planning time and well-being during week two of school year 2020-2021. The release came thirty minutes before some FCPS staff had to notify Schools’ Human Resource Department of their intention to return to in-person instruction, take leave or resign.

“We’re standing to lose a lot of staff members, if their hand is forced in this way,” said Emily VanDerhoff, FCFT Executive Board Member and First-grade Teacher at Hunt Valley Elementary School.

With the results of the survey made public, David Walrod, FCFT Executive Board member and Special Education Teacher at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, said, “I want to take a second just to highlight the importance of communication... No matter where we stand in the current opening, communication has been

where FCPS has really fallen short.”

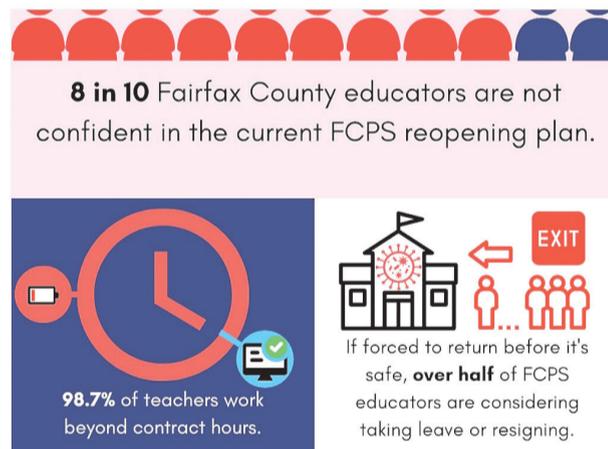
“Due to the circumstances and the overwhelming consensus of our membership, we are urging FCPS to delay reopening until there is a clear plan in place to keep everyone safe, and the district adopts our 11 Pillars of a Safe Reopening,” said Tina Williams, FCFT President during the press conference. According to Walrod, the pillars outlined measures to protect students, staff and families. “Unfortunately, a number of these measures have not yet been adopted by FCPS,” he said.

According to FCFT.org, based on the survey findings it urged FCPS to:

- Address the lack of planning time,
- Honor all staff ADA accommodation requests to work 100 percent virtually and
- Postpone opening of school buildings for in-person instruction until it has well-documented numerical metrics supporting the decision and FCPS can confirm that all of the safety guidelines laid out in FCFT’s 11 Pillars of a Safe Reopening are met.

FCFT represents education professionals and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and AFL-CIO.

FCFT’s 11 Pillars of a Safe Reopening
Clear transparent communication



Overworked, under pressure, and uncomfortable returning to in-person instruction, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers survey results of 1332 responses.

- A Virtual Work Option for All Staff
- Physical Distancing
- Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols
- Adequate School Ventilation and Building Systems
- Personal Protective Equipment and Face Coverings for all students and staff
- Rigorous Tracking and Tracing
- Controlled Community Transmission
- Comprehensive Staff and Student Supports
- Compliance
- Proactive School Closures

Highlights of FCFT’s Surveys

85.7 percent of respondents were not confident in the current reopening plan; 9.7 percent felt safe returning.

52.9 percent of respondents considered whether to take a leave of absence or resign



Tina Williams serves as President of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers (2017-current) and has worked as a school counselor with FCPS since 2001 and also worked at Sangster Elementary School for 12 years.

if asked to return to work in person.

Respondents cited unsafe workplaces, incomplete information, poor communication, and lack of transparency as reasons.

98.7 percent of teachers and 65.5 percent of support staff worked beyond contract hours in the second week of school.

22.7 percent of teachers and 9 percent of support staff reported working more than 20 hours per week outside of contract hours.

Almost half of the teachers have less than the minimum planning time required by the county.

Over 80 percent of teachers and a majority of staff report that workload impacts their sleep, physical health, and mental health.

Tour de Mount Vernon Honors Dave Evans

On Saturday, Oct. 3, approximately 230 riders joined Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck for the 5th Annual Tour de Mount Vernon. Starting with a socially distanced rolling start at the historic Workhouse Arts Center, riders traveled through the southern portion of the Mount Vernon District, visiting many cultural and recreational sites, while enjoying several water vistas and building a sense of community. This year's ride included both 40-mile and 24-mile routes and featured stops at Mason Neck State Park, George Mason's Gunston Hall, Pohick Regional Park, Accotink Bay on post at Fort Belvoir and the new National Museum of the US Army, before returning to the Workhouse for friendly camaraderie and Dave's Famous Sweet Potato Chili. This year's ride was dedicated to the memory of Dave Evans who was a community champion, business leader and inspiration for Tour de Mount Vernon. Riding over a mix of roads and trails, including the Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail, cyclists wound through South County, glimpsing several of the historic and environmentally beautiful sites the area has to offer. Supervisor Storck sees the ride as an opportunity to share the beauty



Supervisor Dan Storck sees the ride as an opportunity to share the beauty and history of Mount Vernon.

and history of Mount Vernon. He commented, "I believe strongly in connecting people to places, history, culture and nature. The recent loss of my best forever friend, Dave Evans, made the ride more special this year. It was Dave who inspired me to create this community ride. I hope everyone will take a moment to reflect and appreciate our dear connections in life, the natural world around us and join us for the ride next year!"

A special thanks to all our Tour de Mount



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MT VERNON DISTRICT OFFICE

Approximately 230 riders participated in the 5th Annual Tour de Mount Vernon.

Vernon partners: Office of Economic Initiatives, FABB Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling, Workhouse Arts Center, La Prima Catering, Volunteer Fairfax and especially the Fairfax County Police for support in keeping riders safe on the roads. The event adhered to Governor Northam's COVID-19 phase III

protocols for social gatherings, including requiring masks and social distancing.

For those interested, the routes can be found here and additional ride information can be found here: <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/mountvernon/tour-de-mount-vernon-2020>.

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NEWS

Women of Influence: Jaworski and Barborek

Fairfax City's Commission for Women presented its first-ever, Women of Influence awards to City residents Janet Jaworski and Susan Barborek. The pair were honored during the Sept. 22 City Council meeting.

Jaworski graduated from University of California at Davis and Catholic University Law School and worked in real-estate development. She's a substitute teacher at Daniels Run Elementary and is chairman of Fairfax City's Planning Commission.

Barborek graduated from University of West Florida and University of Michigan and coached girls varsity gymnastics at Fairfax High. She is president and CEO of SOAR, a management consulting company.

After receiving their awards, Barborek said, "Thank



Janet Jaworski



Susan Barborek

you for this honor." Jaworski expressed her appreciation, as well, adding, "I look forward to having more women join us in 2021."

— BONNIE HOBBS

Fairfax City Helps Restaurants Ready for Winter

Fairfax City is launching a Winter Preparedness Initiative Micro-Grant, this Friday, Oct. 9, as part of the Fairfax City ReConnected Outdoors Program. It's aimed at supporting the recovery of the City's restaurant community with a temporary and measured expansion of outdoor dining.

It identifies guidelines to safely comply with outdoor-dining standards during the colder months. The City will partner with the Economic Development Authority to issue micro-grants to directly aid restaurants seeking to continue outdoor dining into the fall and winter.

The money will provide 100 city restaurants with a \$3,000 grant for expenditures such as heaters, lighting, furniture, fixtures, fire extinguishers and landscaping. Grants will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis, from Oct. 9 through Nov. 30, or as funds remain available.

"We understand that colder weather will require our restaurants to rethink some of their outdoor dining strategies," said Fairfax City Mayor David Meyer. "We want to ease that burden as much as possible by providing financial assistance to allow them to make needed accommodations to ensure outdoor dining can continue as long as possible."

"As city restaurants plan for the winter, these initiatives not only support health and safety measures, they add to the guest experience," explained Danette Nguyen, assistant director of Economic Development. "We're excited to build upon the Fairfax City ReConnected Outdoors program with this grant and provide an additional lifeline to our restaurant community."

For more information, go to fairfaxcityconnected.com/winter.

— BONNIE HOBBS

WEEK IN FAIRFAX

Children's Book Donations Sought

Fairfax City Connected Care is collecting books for school children. This program supports many families in Fairfax City who may not have access to books at this time because their school library is closed or has limited availability. So Fairfax City Connected Care wants to have a small library at its site from which children can borrow books to read.

Place books in the Book Donations box, Monday-Friday, from 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m., at the Green Acres Center, 4401 Sideburn Road in Fairfax. The box is next to the "Fairfax City Connected Care" sign in the gravel parking lot. For more information, email connected-care@fairfaxva.gov. There's also an Amazon wish list at <https://a.co/1eEkJOW>

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NEWS

Schools Tells Staff to Make a Decision

FROM PAGE 4

A copy of an email signed by McDonald dated Sept. 30 and obtained by the Connection read in part: "As we plan for student cohort groups to return for in-person learning, you have been identified as a staff member who works with one of the groups identified... There is a possibility based on student need that you will be asked to return to in-person instruction by your principal." In closing, the correspondence said, "Submit your response no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, October 2."

Human Resources provided a five-option plan to staff:

Return to support in-person instruction,

Submit an accommodation request under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),

Take an unpaid Leave of Absence (LOA) for the school year's balance if approved by the School Board,

Access leave under the FFCRA for childcare reasons and then return to support in-person instruction and

Resign or retire.

Upon learning of the email, Tina Williams, President, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2401, said in a statement to union members: "I was shocked to find out the FCPS gave hundreds of staff less than 48 hours to make a decision... This isn't a decision that can be made lightly since the district has not been transparent in its safety mechanisms, and the plans they have shown fall short of what we need." She urged members to mobilize and send a message to school board members, school leadership and Superintendent Scott Brabrand.

Tamara Derenak Kaufax is the Lee District Representative on the Fairfax County School Board. She said, "The Board and I were unaware that the letter was sent. I became aware as I began receiving letters from concerned teachers. I have asked for an explanation from our Superintendent regarding the timeline...I will work with my colleagues, our Superintendent, and his team to ensure that future communication comes without surprises and is supportive of the caring culture that FCPS strives to maintain."

ACCORDING TO A SPOKESPERSON for FCPS, due to feedback from some staff members about

the short timeframe to declare their intent on returning to school buildings, recipients of the initial communication received a second one on Thursday, Oct. 1. It extended the timeframe to respond to Tuesday, Oct. 6, at 4:30 p.m. In his second email to staff, McDonald said that the survey data would help inform the next steps needed for staffing. "Your response to the survey is not binding; however, your principal and/or HR will follow up with you regarding your intention," he said.

Melanie Meren, Fairfax County School Board, Hunter Mill District said on Facebook, "FCPS has received over 2,000 staff requests for accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) – an 8,000 percent increase from last year. Meaning they seek to be on leave. Meaning they won't be available to teach."

A spokesperson for Fairfax County Public Schools said, "FCPS regrets anxiety felt by these staff members. This has been a tremendously difficult period, and our staff have all worked hard to remain connected to their students and schools. We realize the hardships and sacrifices made by our staff and sincerely empathize with them."

Roza Qaradaghi is a Special Education Instructional Assistant at Westfield High School. "I just found that I'm pregnant. My doctor has advised against returning to in-person instruction given the ongoing pandemic. I need my wishes to be respected and to be given a virtual option.. My classes are going so well virtually I'm frankly confused why we have to return to in person instruction right now given the risks."



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The exterior of the new, 99 Ranch Market in Fairfax City.



People shopping in the store's produce section.

'Stuff You Can't Find Anywhere Else'

99 Ranch Market opens in Fairfax City.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When 99 Ranch Market, a leading Asian grocery store, recently opened its new store in Fairfax City, the pandemic meant just 50 people were allowed inside at a time. Yet the people waiting outside to enter didn't mind a bit.

It was a rainy Saturday morning, but some 200 people – wearing masks and holding umbrellas – stood in a line stretching from the front of the store, down the parking lot and over onto a residential street. Some waited as long as an hour, but they were just excited to be there for the grand opening.

"This is our fifth store on the East Coast and the first one in Virginia," said Jessie Frost, a lead graphic designer with 99 Ranch. "Our target market are Asians, but we welcome all people to our store. We're really happy to be here in this beautiful City and hope to serve the community well."

Open daily from 9 a.m.-9 p.m., the 99 Ranch in Fairfax is at 10780 Fairfax Blvd., across from the former Paul VI High School. The 54,000-square-foot store offers a wide range of Asian delicacies, plus a brand-new interior design to enhance the customers' shopping experience.

FEATURING more than 20,000 items from around the world, 99 Ranch has a large, Asian, dry grocery selection, popular snacks, authentic sauces and convenient, frozen products. It also offers a full-service bakery, a hot deli area and a colorful variety of fresh vegetables and fruits, sourced locally and globally, all at competitive prices.

Choosing some green onions to take home, customer Linh Nguyen was pleased with the options he found. "There's a lot of nice produce here," he said. "So it's easy to



Stocking Fuji apples at 99 Ranch Market is store employee Darwin Edanil Sou Hernandez.



Ready to serve hungry diners at Mian Pull Noodle restaurant, inside the store, are (from left) Li Zaibang and Li Debiao.

select what I need to buy."

Available, as well, are meat and poultry from USDA-inspected facilities, plus both live and frozen seafood. There are more than 400 selections of seafood to choose from, and even complimentary services such as cleaning, frying and steaming.

The food court will eventually have six restaurants. The four initial ones are: Onezo, a Taiwanese boba shop; Kusina by Egg Time, a full-service cafe serving a fusion of modern Filipino flavors and American classics; Tamashii (Donburi sushi), a Japanese restaurant featuring a variety of ramen, plus teriyaki and onigiri meals; and Mian Pull Noodle, a Chinese restaurant specializing in hand-pulled noodles.

Lisa Stern drove 40 minutes from Purcellville to attend the grand opening. "I came just for this," she said. "I've seen people talking about it on Facebook, and I'd already known about this chain. And this store is beautiful – it's got a great variety of different items from all over."

AMONG HER PURCHASES were baked goods, dragon fruit, some unusual-looking mushrooms, tindora (mini cucumbers) and clams. "I like Asian fruits and vegetables," she said. "I've spent time in Asia, so I have familiarity with some of the stuff you can't find anywhere else – so it's kind of neat to see it here."

Tuan Nguyen came from Alexandria to be there for 99 Ranch's opening day. He bought a jackfruit, a 50-pound bag of rice, and fish and oyster sauces. "The prices are really good," he said. "The jackfruit is just 78 cents a pound; normally, it's about \$1.39 a pound."

"This store is part of a Taiwanese chain, with several stores in California," he continued. "I lived in San Diego, so I'm familiar with this franchise. This new store in Fairfax is very clean, and I plan to eat at one of its restaurants."

For more information, go to www.99ranch.com.

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PEOPLE

Hollywood Musician Got His Start at Robinson Secondary

A Fairfax man was nominated for an Emmy Award recently.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

As Emmy Award nominee Thomas Mizer climbed the ladder in the entertainment world, starting as a theater student at James W Robinson High School in Fairfax. Looking back, he realized "it's possible," to make it from Fairfax County to Hollywood. He looked back to his teen years when he played a part in "Once Upon a Mattress," at Robinson, and now he's working steadily with the cast of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," a nationwide hit.

"I was a student in the audience getting excited about the people on the stage," he remembered. He was recently on a Zoom call this month with the Emmy Awards, getting recognized for his musical lyricist skills with fellow musician Trent Resnor of the band Nine Inch Nails, who he idolized in the past. Mizer was in awe.

But it all started in Fairfax County. "The Robinson theater program was really great," he said. "It gave you opportunities," he added.

Mizer was nominated for his first Emmy this year, along with his partner Curtis Moore for "Outstanding Original Music and Lyrics," in the musical piece "One Less Angel" that was featured in "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." This Amazon Television series starring Rachel Brosnahan as Miriam "Midge" Maisel, a housewife in late 1950s and early 1960s New York City. Unfortunately Mizer didn't win the Emmy, but just being nominated was exciting. "On a national level, Miss Maisel is a big hit," he said.

As a songwriter with his partner Curtis Moore, he wrote five original songs for this acclaimed Amazon series, his website read, and this was the first time the hit show has ever used original music and received an Emmy nomination. Featured throughout the third season of the series, their work appears on the Marvelous Mrs. Maisel Season 3 Soundtrack Album, and Mizer is hoping a fourth season is in the cards for this series.

From NY to LA

Upon graduating from Robinson in 1989, he went on to Northwestern University and got a degree in theater and English. Then he moved to New York City, where he lived for 23 years before getting the musical composition part and moved out to Hollywood. Some of his accomplishments in New York included a position as copywriter for national media brands including Comedy Central, Amazon Studios and Food Network. In his "prior" life as an actor, Mizer appeared in roles



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED
Tom Mizer, right, and songwriting partner Curtis Moore.



Album cover



Tom Mizer was always an east coast guy until Hollywood called.

Off-Broadway and at regional theaters and starred as "Steve" in the First National Tour of Blue's Clues, Live!, during which he played two sold-out weeks at Radio City Music Hall.

"In a roundabout way, I'm doing what I prepared for," he said, but the move to the west coast was a change. He started out as "an east coast kid," but added that in Los Angeles "the weather is everything it cracked up to be," he said. "Maisel" does film in New York so he flies back all the time, or he did before the COVID-19 quarantines hit. "It is definitely a challenge," he said of the pandemic.

Revisiting Robinson

On one of his trips back to this area to visit his father in 2018, Mizer made a side trip to Robinson when Robinson Theater was producing a show he helped write/conceive called "School House Rock LIVE!" He saw the show with his father and spent time with the cast and crew after the show telling stories and answering their questions. "He was kind, gracious, generous, and positively effervescent," said Robinson Theatre Teacher Megan Thrift. Other local talents in Mrs. Maisel includes a dancing waiter played by another Robinson alumni Josh Israel and one of the dancers in the USO show was Khori Petinaud who went to Centerville High School.

Out in Hollywood, Mizer's job is not just to sit back in his LA apartment and write the lyrics though, he does get to be on the set, seeing how his songs fit in. "We don't just turn in songs, we were there for all of it," he said, "really being a part of the story process from beginning to end."

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An Update About Some Down Time



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not that I want to give you a blow-by-blow concerning my treatment switch over to thyroid cancer from lung cancer but the last two columns were written four weeks ago in the same week in expectation of a weekend away, so these observations will be new-ish in that they will be hot off the press, so to speak. Away with the kind of friends who are empathetic, sympathetic and who never make me feel pathetic in any of my struggles. In short, the best kind of friends. This is important because when one in the group goes above and beyond in the wrong direction, like heading from one's present cancer direction to a yet altogether new less desirable cancer direction: stable non small cell lung cancer stage 4 being treated with immunotherapy to stage 4 papillary thyroid cancer being treated with chemotherapy, is hardly a conversation that makes for fun even if I now have my own sort of "BOGO." And though the 'shopping 'buy' may be familiar, the cancer 'buy' is not nearly so familiar. Generally speaking a "BOBO offer is of interest, a cancer one not so much. In fact, it's not much of a bargain at all.

The worst of now being treated for papillary thyroid cancer is the array of side effects which are manifesting. They're not exactly debilitating, they're just one big nuisance broken into about eight different nuisances - and I will spare you the details. The net effect of all these side effects is that for the first time in approximately two years, and I feel extraordinarily lucky to be able to say this, once again I feel like I have cancer. And though it's unlikely it's simply side effects which are doing all the talking, rather than the cancer metastasizing, which it already has anyway since the thyroid cancer is now in the lungs, it's impossible not to consider the consequences. I mean cancer doesn't just travel around to make new friends and influence people. It sort of has a task: to damage and destroy. And I have to admit: feeling as if I didn't have cancer is much more preferred than how I feel now.

Nevertheless, it's not as if I feel at death's door (well, not the front door anyway). It's more a feeling of death being at the back door. Not a direct assault, mind you, more of an indirect one. And I'm sure they still count as much as all the others. Unfortunately, I fear an accumulation of these indirect assaults can cause as much cumulative damage as a direct hit. Ergo, I'm wondering if this rear-type assault/indirect-type hit is an indication of future/perhaps even present trouble? Moreover, I wonder if having to defend myself on two fronts (primary and secondary) will weaken the resistance. Because as many World War II movies as I've seen, the resistance rarely seemed to have enough supplies to carry out their mission.

Being in a new battle, even it involves familiar elements: blood pressure readings, EKGs, CT scans, lab and face-to-face appointments, doesn't totally regularize the experience. The reason being that this familiarity is breeding contempt because I have been there and done that. Yet, here here I am having to do it all over again and I find myself quoting Shakespeare or the Three Stooges: "something is rotten in Denmark."

Being a cancer patient is like being unable to send your legs out for a walk as Lt. Com. Henry Blake wanted to after a long period of surgery during a particularly high-casualty episode on the television series, M*A*S*H. And as a previously diagnosed as "terminal" cancer patient, neither can I disconnect from my mortality thoughts any more than Henry could exercise his legs. So what I'm left with is either bucking up or venting to friends and family. I'm lucky to have an outlet. I imagine it is much more difficult for those who don't.

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

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NEWS

Police Reform: More Transparency Needed

FROM PAGE 3

What happened afterwards, Perryman said, was as disturbing as the video of the officer tasing the man. "When Chief Roessler did the right thing and held the officer accountable, many of his officers turned on him for it. That shows a problem in the culture in the Fairfax County Police Department."

Not everyone agreed.

During last Wednesday's hearing, Brenda Tillett of Bolster the Blue advocated for Roessler's removal, saying morale is low among officers and distrust of their chief is high.

"They have to replace him with someone who does not hide but who stands boldly with them," said Tillett. "How does an irrevocably broken relationship between the chief and his troops best serve the safety of our community?" she asked.

She was also critical of Fairfax Commonwealth Attorney Steve Descano, who charged the officer in the taser incident.

"He has created an environment where the officers are the hunted and he is the hunter. Our officers have admitted they are afraid to use force of any kind to keep themselves and others safe," said Tillett.

Descano, who took office in December 2019, made a presentation to the Board of Supervisors' Public Safety Committee on Sept. 22, explaining that his office is drastically under staffed given the workload it is facing. He asked for funding for more \$19 million, 137 in additional staff to meet the need. The Board of Supervisors will provide \$1.9 million from the carryover package towards the implementation of phases 2 and 3 of the body-worn camera program in FY2021. This includes a 40% increase to the Commonwealth's Attorney's budget with 15 new positions in their office to help with review of body camera footage, Chairman Jeff McKay said in an email to residents.

CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER Dawn Butorac appeared at the public input session to ask for a step towards equity.

The Office of the Public Defender handles 6,000-7,000 cases a year, roughly 75 percent of criminal charges in Fairfax, said Butorac. And 44 percent of her office's clients are Black and roughly 40 percent of the jail population is Black, she said. "We are there to act as a check and balance to the system. We are there in court everyday challenging the arrests and searches and constitutional violations and general overreach by the police and prosecutions," she said.

Everyday, her clients bring a focus on how the county is not working, how there are vulnerable populations suffering with mental illness, substance abuse issues, trauma, lack of economic opportunity and education, homelessness, and a myriad of other issues.

"The pay difference between my office and Mr. Descano's is quite astronomical," she said. "You have to ask why. Why should that be tolerated? Why should a prosecutor get paid more than a public defender?"

Lusk handed the question to David Rohrer, deputy county executive for public safety.

"I don't know that I'm prepared to commit or answer your question directly. Certainly, we have studied this issue for the last year or so. And I'll certainly commit to working with you and our Department of Management and Budget to continue to do the comparison studies, as well as I know there are ongoing efforts at the state level," he said.

FCPD has 1,400 officers, Butorac said. She has three investigators. Public defenders make three-fifths the salary of county prosecutors.

The police have a \$190 million budget, Butorac asked for \$800,000.

"A priority should be put to helping these individuals," she said.

"This country is prioritizing prosecuting and locking up Black and brown people and that needs to end."

BULLETIN BOARD

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

OCT. 10 AND 17

Haven of Northern Virginia will host a free two-day virtual workshop "Your Journey through Grief." The workshop will consist of two sessions, from 1:30 - 3 p.m. Saturday Oct. 10 and Oct. 17. Registration is required and participation is limited. Those interested must commit to both sessions. To register, email Haven of Northern Virginia at havenofnova@verison.net.

FRIDAY/OCT. 16

The Electoral College Explained. 2-3 p.m. Zoom event sponsored by the City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street, Fairfax. Join via Zoom and learn about the Electoral College - What it is, how it works and if it's relevant today. Pre-registration is required. A Zoom link will be provided one day prior to the event. This program is free of charge. For more information, visit <https://librarycalen->

dar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/7158761

WATERSHED CLEANUPS

Do your part to help the environment. Volunteer for a "Watershed Cleanup Days" event at a park or recreation center near you this fall. These community service events are great for individuals, families, service groups and students. Work outdoors helping to clear Earth's arteries by removing tires, bottles, cans and other debris dumped in local waterways. All ages are welcome to take part. Cleanups are currently scheduled:

Saturday, Oct. 17, 2020: Ellanor C. Lawrence Park;

Saturday, Oct. 24, 2020: Lake Fairfax Park;

Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020: Cub Run RECenter, Hidden Pond Nature Center, Providence RECenter and Riverbend Park.

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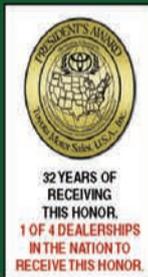
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