

Potomac Almanac reporter Ken Moore delivers his mail-in ballot to the dropbox at Potomac Community Center, which will also serve an early voting site and a polling place.

# Potomac ALMANAC



## Vote Early

NEWS, PAGE 4

## ‘Shocking:’ County Fails to Distribute Funds to Needy

NEWS, PAGE 3

ATTENTION POSTMASTER:  
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REAL ESTATE SALES, 2 ♦ KENNY LOURIE, PAGE 7

ALMANAC PHOTO

OCTOBER 21-27, 2020

ONLINE AT [POTOMACALMANAC.COM](http://POTOMACALMANAC.COM)



# Potomac REAL ESTATE



**5** 13009  
Boswell Court  
— \$1,475,000



**7** 9820  
Glenolden Drive  
— \$1,385,000

**3** 10415 Grey Fox Road  
— \$1,495,000



**4** 10004  
Logan Drive  
— \$1,490,000

**August, 2020 Sales,  
\$1,680,000~\$1,368,000**

IN AUGUST, 2020, 82 POTOMAC HOMES SOLD  
BETWEEN \$5,800,000-\$305,000.



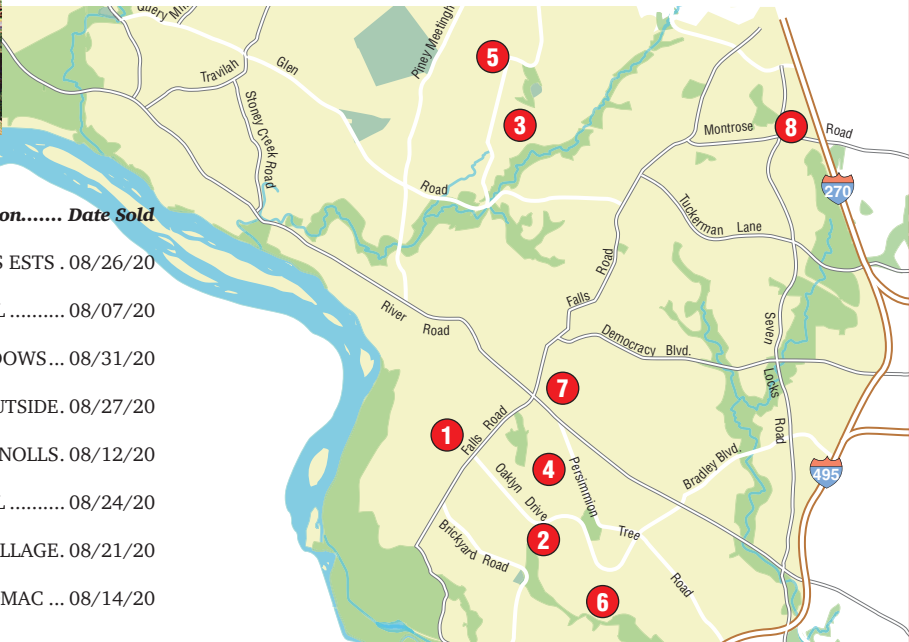
**1** 10820 Alloway Drive — \$1,680,000



**2** 10028 Avenel Farm Drive — \$1,653,000

| Address.....                         | BR | FB  | HB | Postal City..... | Sold Price... | Type.....          | Lot AC.     | Postal Code ... | Subdivision.....         | Date Sold |
|--------------------------------------|----|-----|----|------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1</b> 10820 ALLOWAY DR .....      | 5  | ... | 4  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,680,000 ... | Detached .. | 2.08.....       | 20854.. GREAT FALLS ESTS | 08/26/20  |
| <b>2</b> 10028 AVENEL FARM DR .....  | 6  | ... | 5  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,653,000 ... | Detached .. | 0.46.....       | 20854..... AVENEL        | 08/07/20  |
| <b>3</b> 10415 GREY FOX RD .....     | 5  | ... | 4  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,495,000 ... | Detached .. | 0.43.....       | 20854... GLEN MEADOWS    | 08/31/20  |
| <b>4</b> 10004 LOGAN DR .....        | 4  | ... | 5  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,490,000 ... | Detached .. | 0.97.....       | 20854. POTOMAC OUTSIDE   | 08/27/20  |
| <b>5</b> 13009 BOSWELL CT .....      | 5  | ... | 4  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,475,000 ... | Detached .. | 2.04.....       | 20854. GLEN MILL KNOLLS  | 08/12/20  |
| <b>6</b> 6 SANDALFOOT CT .....       | 5  | ... | 5  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,462,500 ... | Detached .. | 0.18.....       | 20854..... AVENEL        | 08/24/20  |
| <b>7</b> 9820 GLENOLDEN DR .....     | 6  | ... | 4  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,385,000 ... | Detached .. | 0.41.....       | 20854. POTOMAC VILLAGE   | 08/21/20  |
| <b>8</b> 12425 ANSIN CIRCLE DR ..... | 4  | ... | 3  | ...              | POTOMAC       | .. \$1,368,000 ... | Townhse ... | 0.05.....       | 20854.... PARK POTOMAC   | 08/14/20  |

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## Pausing for Farmland?

Council rejects task force, but sends solar proposal back to committee; vote by end of this year could allow solar in the Agricultural Reserve.

BY KEN MOORE  
POTOMAC ALMANAC

Advocates on two sides of important long term environmental goals, solar power for sustainable clean energy; and the preservation of farmland for food, have three council worksessions to get in sync. Or at least closer.

Solar advocates, including Councilmember Hans Riemer (at-large), say the county will never meet clean energy goals unless portions of the Agricultural Reserve are used for solar power. Advocates for the Agricultural Reserve, land set aside for preservation by the county 40 years ago, agree that solar power is important for the county to pursue -- just not in the Agricultural Reserve.

The Agricultural Reserve was preserved by past councils, intended to be kept as farmland in perpetuity. Especially, say farmers and advocates, when parking lots, rooftops, and other parts of the county have not yet shouldered their share of solar.

Riemer was pressing for his zoning text amendment during joint work sessions earlier this year to permit the industrial solar power in the Reserve. Andrew Friedson, the dissenting voice at joint committee meetings, said he was uncomfortable with the rushed process that would open up "sacred land" for an use otherwise not permitted.

"I've been very frustrated with the way in which it was handled. I didn't vote for the bill in its current form because I'm not comfortable with where it has ended up," said Friedson, Potomac's councilmember.

"I worked very hard to put forward what I thought were reasonable and thoughtful amendments that balanced these two critical important issues I feel very strongly about: the need to meet our ambitious climate goals particularly related to solar generation which can not be done exclusively on rooftops of houses and schools and county buildings ... and the commitments that we've made and the decisions we've made to protect the Agricultural Preserve," said Friedson. "I think there were certain perspectives that have been



Homestead Farm, in the Agricultural Reserve, is a major destination this time of year.

15604 Sugarland Road, Poolesville, Md. 20837

Open Every Day in October, 9am - 5pm, 7 Days a Week, Rain or Shine  
Face coverings required in market and enclosed areas; Market offers: Apple Cider, Pumpkins, Fall Squash & Gourds. Pre-Picked Apples, Local Honey, Fruit Preserves, Various Produce; Pick-Your-Own on Farm (requires admission); Pick-Your-Own Pumpkins: 65 cents per pound; No hay rides this season.



### More

See the Almanac's previous story for more background:  
[www.potomacalmanac.com/news/2020/aug/11/clean-energy-or-farm-land-or-both-montgomery-county/](http://www.potomacalmanac.com/news/2020/aug/11/clean-energy-or-farm-land-or-both-montgomery-county/)

diminished in this process and there are other perspectives that have been overblown."

"We have made big commitments on climate and we have made big commitments on preserving agricultural land in Montgomery County. ... Decisions we make as a body will have ripples that will last generations," said Friedson.

Council President Sidney Katz (D-3) asked on Tuesday, Oct. 13, for a short Task Force to work on the Zoning Text Amendment.

Katz said that solar companies were looking to build in the Agricultural Reserve because it would be cheaper. "Because you can't build on it, the land is cheaper, and that's exactly where people in the

SEE PAUSING FOR, PAGE 6

## The Buck Stops Here? Or Never Got Going?

Millions in grant and relief funding to help residents and businesses in need have yet to be distributed by the county.

BY KEN MOORE  
THE ALMANAC

Montgomery County received \$183,336,953 under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help county residents and businesses survive the pandemic. Funds must be used by Dec. 31, 2020. But on Tuesday, Oct. 13, executive staff highlighted specific programs and funds that have not been spent, months into the pandemic.

For example, the county has not disbursed only half of a \$10 million federal grant to address food insecurity. The county has sent out checks totalling just \$607,508 from a \$20 million federal grant for rental assistance and eviction/homelessness prevention, and appears to have spent zero dollars of the \$355,000 for housing for veterans and unsheltered adults.

"I'm afraid the game is going to be over before you even come up with your game plan," said Councilmember Andrew Friedson (D-1), who represents Potomac.

The Council authorized 31 different appropriations since the beginning of the pandemic. Some have been distributed such as \$5,996,576 of \$6 million in General Fund Reserves for Emergency Assistance Relief Payment Program and Food Security.

"The idea that our residents and businesses are struggling more than they ever have and are more vulnerable than they've ever been, when the needs are as challenging as they currently are, with an economic crisis and a public health emer-

gency, that our issue is not that we are going to run out of money too quickly but the clock will run out before these programs will be able to help these residents and businesses ... I can't tell you how frustrating that is," said Friedson.

Here are examples of resolutions with monies that haven't been distributed at all: nothing of a \$3 million for businesses assistance for medical and dental clinics; nothing from a \$40,000 grant for unemployment insurance outreach; nothing from a \$2.025 million to give assistance to dis-

tressed, affordable common ownership communities; and nothing from a \$5 million from an Emergency Assistance Relief Payment Program, a

"I am shocked by what we are hearing," said Nancy Navarro (D-4). "There are people right now here in Montgomery County suffering greatly because

they have no idea where they are going to be living."

"I think what you are hearing today, which I share deeply, is just an urgent need and a frustration, as people elected to represent people in this county and deeply deeply caring about people in this county and wanting them to get the assistance," said at-large council member Will Jawando. "And then thinking we were getting them the assistance in a timely fashion. And then to find out. ... and have explained more today in depth that we're not doing what we thought we were doing."

"When the reality of the pandemic came into full view, we responded at lightning speed to fund the programs that we

SEE THE BUCK, PAGE 6



# Vote Early, Election Day Will Bring Challenges

County to begin early voting Monday, Oct. 26; your regular polling place will likely not be open on Election Day 2020.

BY PEGGY McEWAN  
POTOMAC ALMANAC

**E**arly voting in Montgomery County for the 2020 Presidential General Election begins Monday, Oct. 26 and continues through Monday, Nov. 2. Hours at all early voting locations are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Eleven Early Voting Centers will be open across the County including one at Potomac Community Center, 11315 Falls Road.

Potomac Community Center is also the site of a Ballot Drop Box which is available now and will be through Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3. Ballots dropped on Election Day must be delivered by 8 p.m. that day.

Montgomery County is encouraging voters to vote early.

"Please help prevent long lines and reduce transmission of COVID-19 by requesting your ballot by mail and voting at home. However, if you must vote in person, you have the choice to mark your ballot by hand or using an electronic device. Masks are required [in polling places] and will be provided if needed," according to the Official Sample Ballot and Voting Information sent to voters by the Montgomery County Board of Elections.

Early voting centers in addition to the Potomac Community Center are: The Activity Center at Bohrer Park, Gaithersburg; Damascus Community Center; Montgomery County Executive Office Building, Rockville; Germantown Community Recreation Center; Jane E. Lawton Community Center, Chevy

Chase; Marilyn Praisner Community Center, Burtonsville; Mid-County Community Center, Silver Spring; Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department (The Ballroom); Silver Spring Civic Building; and Wheaton Library & Community Center.

According to the Board of Elections website, voters may go to any early voting site in the County to cast a ballot. Early voting results are tallied on Election Night, just like votes cast on Election Day.

Early voting locations will also be open on Election Day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Those not voting early may face long lines, since on Election Day there will only be 39 polling places open, compared to the usual 240.

"If you vote in person, expect to wait in line," the Board of Elections cautions.

There will be 39 centers open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day. Many usual polling places will not open because of the pandemic, but voting is permitted at any of the 39 voting centers.

Same day registration is available with proof of residency, according to the Board of elections mailing.

The County operates a 24-Hour Voter Information Line at 240-777-VOTE (8683) to answer questions about voting. To check on wait times on Election Day, visit [777vote.org](https://www.777vote.org) or text EV plus your zip code.

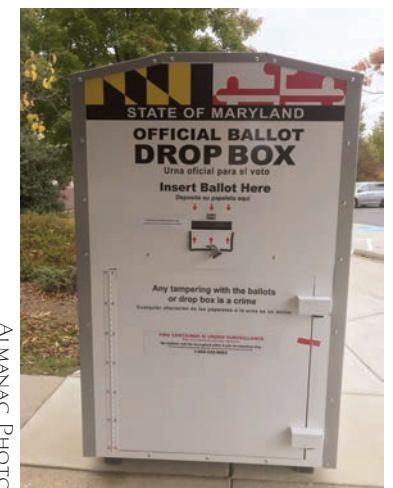
It's a complicated local ballot, with Board of Education and Judges, plus state and local ballot questions, which could have significant



Eleven Early Voting Centers will be open across the County including one at Potomac Community Center, 11315 Falls Road, where there is also a Ballot Drop Box. Ballots can be dropped until Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3. by 8 p.m.



Potomac Almanac reporter Ken Moore delivers his mail-in ballot to the dropbox at Potomac Community Center, which will also serve an early voting site and a polling place.



ALMANAC PHOTO

impact. See the League of Women Voters guide, <https://www.lwvmo.com/d.org/vote411-org>.

Your political party or County-councilmembers or other Elected

Officials might offer guidance.

For sample ballots and more information, see <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/VotingServices/SampleBallotVoterGuide.html>

lotVoterGuide.html

For all Election Day voting locations, see [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/VotingServices/vote-centers-2020.htm](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Elections/VotingServices/vote-centers-2020.htm)

## C&O Canal Superintendent Speaks at WMCCA Meeting

BY PEGGY McEWAN  
POTOMAC ALMANAC

**T**he October meeting of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association (WMCCA) was held via Zoom Wednesday, Oct. 14. The meeting featured electing the group's officers followed by an update on the condition of the C&O Canal National Historical Park by Superintendent Tina Cappetta.

Cappetta took over the role of Superintendent in January 2020, returning to a park where she worked as Chief of Resources Management 18 years ago.



Tina Cappetta

roughly half."

Cappetta said visits to the park "skyrocketed" after COVID-19 hit the area.

"We had a real challenge trying to manage, to keep staff and visitors safe," she said.

Eighteen years ago, she said, the park had

"Some things have changed since I was last here," Cappetta told the group. "It's interesting being back. I wondered what happened to the staff, there were 122 [on staff], now there are

3.5 million visitors per year. Last year there were five million visitors, and this year they are looking at 6 million visitors.

With the increase in the number of people, there is a lot of trash, she said.

"A lot of trash," she repeated. "Graffiti has increased and there is an increase in large parties, a challenge to our security staff."

"We are so thankful for the volunteers who have been helping us through the years and have stepped up to help [this year]," she said.

In another change, Cappetta said she is sad to see the [canal] boats are not operating at Great Falls or in Georgetown, but she

does expect they will be back next summer.

Another "sad thing" she said was the increased development next to the park which creates problems with erosion and water quality. She spent time talking about environmental issues relating to deer in the park.

The budget, too, has changed since she last worked at the park. When she last worked at C&O NHP the budget was \$7.5 million per year.

Last year it was \$9.5 million and this year it is \$9 million.

She spent time sharing some of the many improvements to the park that were recently

SEE C&O CANAL, PAGE 5

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## News

# C&O Canal Superintendent Speaks at WMCCA Meeting

FROM PAGE 4

completed, are now in the works and are planned.

The canal, she said, was in very bad shape when the Federal Government acquired it in 1938.

Among the current studies of the history of the canal one is the Historic Resource Study of African Americans and the C&O Canal from Antebellum to Post Reconstruction.

"African Americans did much of the work repairing the canal," she said.

Cappetta took a number of questions following her talk. WMCCA members are well acquainted with the park, and so had a number of questions ranging from what they can do to help, and when are some of the many volunteer services the park offered would be running again to specifics on repairs. What Cappetta could not answer she promised to get answers to and get back with the group.

During the years between her

services at C&O National Historical Park, Cappetta served as superintendent of Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine in Baltimore; Hampton National Historic Site, Towson, Md.; and Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, Baltimore; the Women's Rights National Historical Park, Seneca Falls, NY, where she led the rehabilitation of the Wesleyan Chapel; as chief of interpretation and resources management at Booker T. Washington National Monument, Westlake Corner, Va.; education specialist at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, New Orleans; park ranger at Colonial National Historical Park, Yorktown, Va.; and Gettysburg National Military Park.

Last January when her assignment as Superintendent was announced, Cappetta said, "I'm honored and eager to lead the team in the park's next chapter, including celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2021."

## 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.

### FRIDAY/OCT. 23

Meet Jennifer Ryan. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Zoom Virtual Event sponsored by Friends of the Library Potomac Chapter. Jennifer Ryan will speak about her best selling books the Spies of Shilling Lane and The Chilbury Ladies Choir. The Spies of Shilling Lane her latest novel is funny WWII story about a woman who resolves to find and then rescue her missing daughter. Visit the website <https://www.jenniferryanauthor.com>. Join in Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/91018889970> Or Dial In: 301 715 8592; Meeting ID: 910 1888 9970

### FRIDAY/OCT. 23

Groundbreaking Ceremony. 12-1:30 p.m. At St. George Orthodox Church, 7701 Bradley Blvd, Bethesda. Blessing and groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a home for the elder members of the orthodox churches in MD/DC/VA, providing assisted living and memory care for eight individuals who will reside and receive care in the home after construction is completed in Summer 2021.

### WEDNESDAY/OCT. 28

Flu Shots Available. 2 to 6 p.m. At the Universities of Shady Grove Parking Garage, 9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville. This will be a drive-thru flu shot clinic. Schedule appointments on the County's flu website or call 311. Appointments are strongly encouraged but walk-ups will be accepted based on availability of vaccine. Two clinics will be held for children only, ages 6 months to 18 years old. These clinics will be held indoors.

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**CALENDAR**

1 2 3  
4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
11 12 13 14 15 16 17  
18 19 20 21 22 23 24  
25 26 27 28 29 30 31

**Let us know  
about an  
upcoming event**

[connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar](http://connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar)

~~Free and open to all~~

**Potomac Community Village**

**Halloween Happy Hour via Live Zoom**  
Fri, Oct 30, 5:00pm –6:00pm

Put on a costume, pour yourself a drink and join the fun with stories, songs & good conversation. Call Help Desk at 240-221-1370 or register at [20854HelpDesk@gmail.com](mailto:20854HelpDesk@gmail.com) by Wed, Oct. 28 at 12 noon to receive the link.

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Contact Jennifer at 301-299-2170 or [Jennifer@potomacpizza.com](mailto:Jennifer@potomacpizza.com)



# Pausing for Farmland?

FROM PAGE 3

solar industry would go first, and that's a concern for me."

Craig Rice, co-sponsor of the zoning text amendment, agreed that the county won't be able to meet clean energy goals solely placing solar on rooftops and parking lots. But "we also need to make sure that we are balancing our goals so when we look at our Ag Reserve and farming, really making sure that land that we set aside is productive."

"Those things are two important different dynamics that we have to balance. So from that perspective, I think we are doing the right thing, we are doing the right thing by pausing, making sure we can try to find out what the best way is to achieve that compromise," said Rice (D-2).

**THE COUNCIL SENT** the discussion back to the committees for worksession, declining to establish a task force.

Gabe Alborno (at-large) said 16 different "incredibly well organized groups with really amazing information" have come to meet with him and other members of the Council on this issue. "I have so appreciated the information, and it is something our staff has dug into

the last few weeks when this has come out of committee, and I don't disagree that we need some more time to be able to fully process and digest all this information."

But Alborno was concerned about the time a Task Force would take up.

"I'm not comfortable with six months, I think that's too long," Alborno said. "I'm not confident that there will be much more in ways of compromise. I believe basically the lines have been drawn."

"If what we want to do is take some more time and hear from some more voices and consider more ideas, I think that is fine. But the point is, we do need to move this to a vote, I think we should vote before the end of this calendar year," said Riemer.

"I know this process might have started out rocky but I think we're almost there," said Evan Glass (at-large).

"My recommendation is not to create a special task force or committee, it's quite frankly to send it back to the joint committee and be more inclusive to who we bring to that committee."

**THE SOLAR INDUSTRY** has been heard, Katz said.

"If we go forward with the ZTA



At Rocklands Winery, in the Agricultural Reserve: Cabernet Sauvignon grapes pulled, marking the end of harvest for their estate fruit. [www.facebook.com/rocklandsfarm](https://www.facebook.com/rocklandsfarm)

the way it is today, the cheapest land, the most inexpensive land involved where solar could be would be the Ag Reserve. Let's face facts, if someone can get the cheapest land, the industry is going to go there first. They are not going to go to the parking lots of a commercial building and lease there, they are not going to try to negotiate shopping centers or whatever, because it's twice as much," said Katz.

Jeremy Criss, Director Agricultural Services for Montgomery County, said farmers unanimously oppose the zoning text amendment to allow solar in the Agricultural Reserve.

"I was one of the four votes at the committee and I made my points clear there that I was voting for it but I looked forward to additional conversation and changes at full council, said Will Jawando

(at-large).

"I think it's always good to hear from more people through the legislative process, which we're in," said Jawando. "More input is always better."

**COUNCILMEMBER NAVARRO SHARED** a personal anecdote of her father who died in 2015. He was a petroleum engineer in Venezuela, who decided later in life that he wanted to buy a plot of land in the Andes region of Venezuela where he could grow food and be self-sufficient and sustainable. "There was a larger issue he was thinking about, which pertains to food security," said Nancy Navarro (D-4).

She remembers putting on a mask and gloves, buying groceries for the family early in the pandemic with unstocked shelves, and thinking how lucky Montgomery County is to have the Agricultural Reserve as a resource.

"I had this real awareness of what a treasure it is for us and how tangible the use of that land can be for Montgomery County residents and really the region," she said.

Because of the pandemic and food insecurity, "there's been this renewed appreciation for preserving this incredible treasure."

PHOTO FROM ROCKLANDS VIA FACEBOOK

## The Buck Stops Here? or Never Got Going?

FROM PAGE 3

knew were going to keep our residents healthy, keep them safe and keep them open for business as best we could," said at-large council member Evan Glass.

"We have to do better because our residents need it. "It is disappointing, it is frustrating, it is all of those things. You've heard that," said Craig Rice (D-2).

**"THE BOTTOM LINE** is we appropriated money responding to the needs and the feedback of our residents and the money has not gone out to help in the middle of a global pandemic and in the middle of an emergency. There's just no excuse for that," said Navarro.

Executive staff explained the complexity and difficulty of dealing with FEMA and other parts of the federal bureaucracy.

Tom Hucker (D-5) asked where is the county executive?

"I'm a little flabbergasted by this whole report. Do you know where

the County Executive is? I would have expected the County Executive to be coming in and making this presentation. This is not one, this is like five or six of the most

**"This is food and shelter and so many problems right in front of our constituents every day, I can't think of anything more important than what we are talking about right now."**

— Tom Hucker (D-5)

important issues facing the county," said Hucker. "It's hard enough to say to our constituents that we don't have money to keep your business open or we don't have money to keep you in your apartment but it's heartbreaking to tell them we have the money, we have it and it's in a bank account, we just haven't given it to you yet."

When executive staff tried to

take responsibility, Hucker voiced frustration. "It clearly rises to that level. You shouldn't have to go back and communicate our frustration to him. The buck stops with him. He ought to be here to say here's what's happening, ... so we're attacking this as a team."

"This is food and shelter and so many problems right in front of our constituents every day, I can't think of anything more important than what we are talking about right now," said Hucker.

"It should have been a conversation," said Rice. "I don't move mountains, but I know people who

can. Again, there needs to be a closer connection in communication between the Council and the Executive so we can work together so we can meet these priorities that we all care about. The missteps that were made not solving this earlier is putting our community and our constituents who are most at risk in jeopardy. And that's not okay."

**"I am shocked by what we are hearing. There are people right now here in Montgomery County suffering greatly because they have no idea where they are going to be living."**

— Nancy Navarro (D-4)

**THE NEXT DAY**, Montgomery County issued a release, saying "surveys indicate an estimated 20,000 households, or 15 percent of the 130,000 rental households in the County, are behind on their rent and at risk of eviction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. County Executive Marc Elrich encourages all concerned renters to act now to take advantage of available financial, legal and counseling resources to help avoid eviction actions."

"We are offering a coordinated package of supports to help renters take action to stay in their home," said Elrich. "I urge all affected renters to apply now for rent payment assistance; contact Maryland Legal

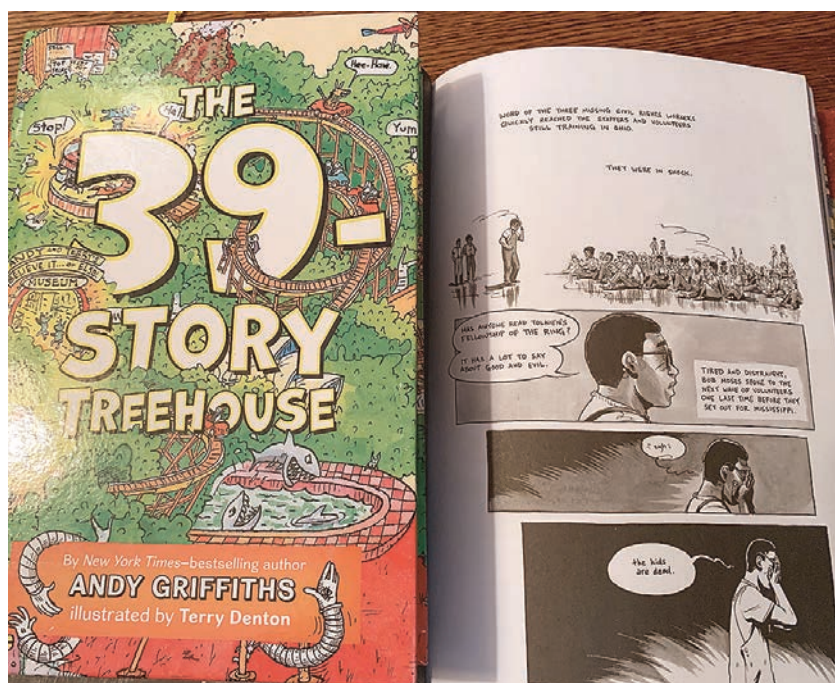
Aid if you receive a court notice; and, access free services to learn your options, get answers to your questions and help you take steps to avoid eviction." "Rent support (\$20 million available): Renters are urged to Apply Now! for the COVID-19 Rent Relief Program – Phase 2. Renters also can call 311 (240-777-0311) to apply for rent payment assistance. Approved households may receive up to \$4,000 toward rent. The program continues to accept applicants and anticipates serving 5,000 households by Dec. 30.

Assistance is based on availability of funds," according to the release.



Graphic novels and audiobooks on topics students enjoy can help engage those who don't enjoy reading or find it difficult.

PHOTO BY  
MARILYN CAMPBELL



# National Book Month

Month-long celebration focuses on engaging families in reading, writing and literature.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
POTOMAC ALMANAC

It's a line from the Pulitzer Prize winning classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird* that is at the heart of the literary philosophy of Anne Briggs, web services and communications librarian at Montgomery College Library.

"The character Scout Finch says, 'Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing,'" said Briggs. "This National Book Month, help make reading as natural as breathing for your children."

Established by the National Book Foundation in 2003 and held each October, National Book Month was created to celebrate the importance of reading, writing and literature. Educators and librarians such as Briggs, are encouraging families to celebrate the month together.

"Use [this] month as an opportunity to refocus on the importance of reading in your family," she said. "Take time to read or listen to audiobooks with your children, working with your child to pick the books that interest them."

In fact, some educators encourage parents to focus on helping children choose books that spark curiosity. "Just because a book is award-winning and highly recommended by your friends doesn't necessarily mean your child will latch onto it," said education consultant Arash Fayz, co-founder and executive director of LATutors123. "Encourage your child to identify topics that they enjoy learning about or would like to learn about and let them pick out a book themselves. This will empower them to feel a sense of ownership over the book choice."

National Book Month is also a time to under-

score the connection between avid reading and the quality of one's writing skills. "While we don't have a lot of empirical data, we do see that people who are prolific or creative writers are also voracious readers," said Michelle LeFrance, an associate professor in the Department of English at George Mason University. "People with an exposure to a wide variety of books also have a great sense of curiosity."

For students who have difficulty reading or simply don't enjoy it, Le France says, "Let them read what they are interested in and worry less about the quality. Audiobooks and graphic novels, which don't get enough credit, can share stories in deep ways. I would suggest them for kids who tend to be reluctant readers."

**"While we don't have a lot of empirical data, we do see that people who are prolific or creative writers are also voracious readers."**

— Michelle LeFrance, Ph.D.,  
George Mason University

"Reading allows readers to learn and to grow and to imagine and to use their creativity and to be moved," added education consultant Karen Gross. "It's key is to increasing vocabulary and a love of words and a sense of the power of words."

While a family trip to the library might not be an option during the pandemic, local public libraries are offering virtual access. From an All American Girl Club event in Alexandria and a parent-child book clubs in Fairfax County to a family story time in Montgomery County, and middle school science fiction and fantasy book clubs in Arlington, families can enjoy literature without leaving home. "Most public libraries are offering free virtual events to help families remain engaged with reading during the pandemic," said Briggs. "Making time for reading and storytelling in your family can help you raise lifelong readers and learners, and enjoy the educational and emotional benefits that come with reading."

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## "I'll Think About That Tomorrow"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

What I'm thinking about - and being thankful for, today, is the disappearance of all the side effects I've been experiencing during the last four weeks or so since I began my pill regimen for my papillary thyroid cancer treatment. Too many to list but upwards of a dozen side effects which encompass all activities from those of daily living to others pertaining to just plain living. Let me reprint the warning that came with the pills: "People using this medication may have serious side effects. However, your doctor has prescribed this drug because he or she has judged that the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects." Put that in your pipe and smoke it. That's what I have to smoke every day, if you know figuratively what I mean?

The bigger question, the overriding concern/anxiety is what exactly the thyroid cancer is doing now having been left unmedicated for the last nine days? How irreparable is the damage being done when the cancer has been left unchecked? Moreover, to the extent there has been some damage, is restarting treatment even an option or have I already failed the tolerance test? Being a cancer patient is a never-ending series of questions and/or concerns for which there is hardly clarity. As I have been led to believe/educated since my initial lung cancer diagnosis, there will be no more guarantees coming.

But of course improvements in cancer treatment and ongoing research have improved survivability, and with many patients, myself included, turned the cancer treatment into a chronic disease type protocol, like diabetes. Nevertheless, cancer is in control, the doctors are not. There are no slam-dunks in cancer treatment. How would I ever be able to unwind myself from years of stress and fear just because? I couldn't. A cancer patient today sort of means, I'll likely be a cancer patient tomorrow. I don't see how I could shake that self-image.

Somehow, I must, as I'm trying to do now, exult in the joy of a semi uncomplicated, side-effect free existence because ..., it's not guaranteed. I must try even harder to compartmentalize the unknown while savoring this known, relatively easy time. It's not promised and it's not necessarily likely to occur again, certainly not after I return to treatment. But maybe, my new normal will be switching on and off treatment, sort of like I did while being infused with alimta. Though I still had my CT scans quarterly, so long as the scans showed stable, we kept extending the interval between infusions. The goal being to balance effect on the tumors with the quality of life (freedom from side effects and infusion appointments). Eventually, we stretched the interval to as much as seven weeks from the original three enabling me to live - occasionally, a semi cancer free life. Perhaps this on-again, off-again schedule might apply to this recent thyroid treatment. I have to hope because the side effects, as I alluded to initially, have been affecting my quality of life. And if there's one factor driving my better-than expected survival, it has been my attitude, which has derived directly from my management of side effects. Anecdotally speaking (or presuming) being in a good mood, being able to function with normal parameters (to quote Data from "Star Trek: Next Generation") has been a tremendous contributor to my life expectancy (my oncologist refers to me "as his third miracle").

But I can't know for sure. And of course, that's the crux of the problem for many of us cancer patients. One can never know for sure if you're helping or helping; and since guarantees stopped being made on the ground-zero day you were diagnosed with a "terminal disease" it's often difficult to know which path to follow. Right now, it's easy to follow the path which is creating a more normal/pleasant quality of life. But at what cost? I can't know what the tumors are doing. Perhaps, in taking a break from treatment, I have unleashed the cancer once again. That's my dilemma: reconciling the present with the future, the fear with the familiar, the hope with the inevitable. And it's likely I'll never know if what I've done has been a help or a hindrance. Yet somehow, I have to make plans and decisions. "Tomorrow is another day." Lest, I be gone with the wind.

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



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