

Great Falls CONNECTION

WELLBEING

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No line greets a lone voter who arrives shortly before 7:30 a.m. on Election Day 2020, Tuesday, Nov. 3, at the Precinct 328 Hickory, Great Falls Library.

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NEWS

Election Storm of the Century

Saying the vote counts is an understatement.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Election Day 2020 will go down in history. It may take a few days or weeks to count ballots, and what happens today, tomorrow and on Inauguration Day cannot be predicted. What is known is that COVID-19 affected nearly every aspect of the election, from how the candidates campaigned to how voters cast their ballots. On Nov. 2, the day before the election, national Covid cases soared to 100,000 cases a day. The Virginia Department of Health reported 1026 new cases in the Commonwealth, with increasing cases for 14 days and increased percent positivity for 21 days.

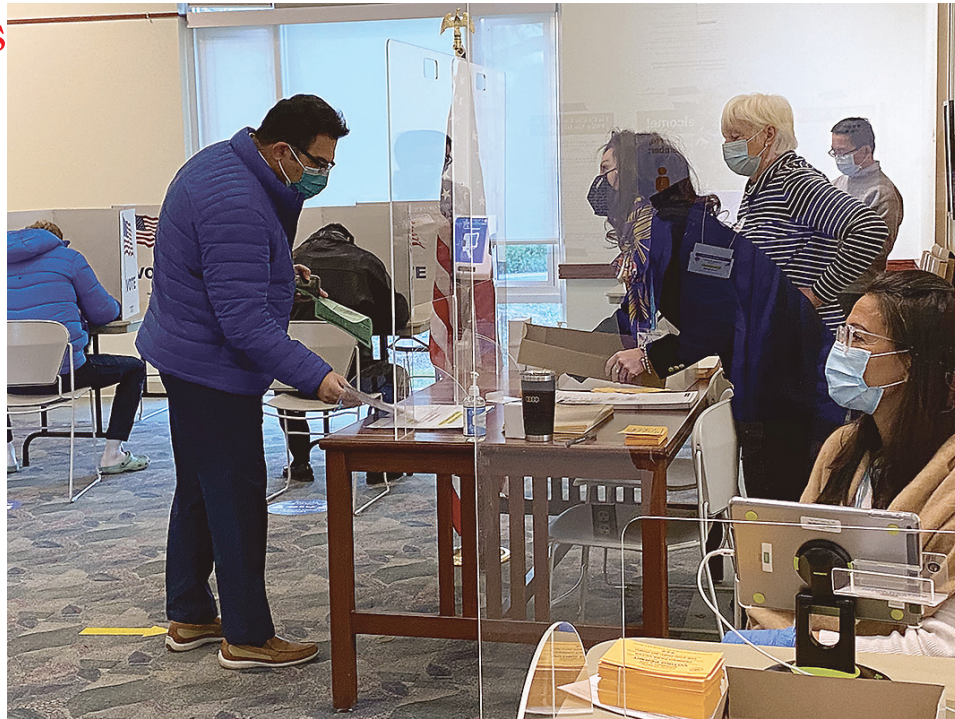
In a rundown of the 2020 General Election in Fairfax County, early voting ended on Saturday, Oct. 31. The County saw a record-breaking number of early votes cast. Long lines with lengthy waits became the norm at the County's early election sites such as the Herndon Fortnightly Library, North County Governmental Center in Reston and the Great Falls Library.

According to Brian Worthy, Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs there are 787,214 registered voters in Fairfax County. On Sunday, Nov. 1, the day after early voting ended, Worthy said that Fairfax County totaled more than 399,600 ballots cast in person when the polls closed Saturday. These are unofficial numbers and the final official vote total ultimately reported to the state may be different. Gary Scott, Fairfax County General Registrar and Director of Elections said the early votes cast amounted "to about 58 percent of what they thought the total turnout would be for this election." He added, "But we're still expecting to see at least 200,000 people cast their ballots on Nov. 3."

Well before dawn on Election Day 2020, Tuesday, Nov. 3., voters lined up at polling places across the County, including those in the local area. Tom Cranmer, a Fairfax County election officer at the Dranesville District of Fairfax County, Precinct 328 Hickory, Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike said that as of 7 a.m., an hour after the polling place opened, they had checked-in 100 voters. "A lot of people freezing outside."

Elizabeth Schreffler, Chief Election Officer from Precinct 222 Reston #3, Reston Community Center- Lake Anne said there were 30 people in line when the polls opened. "I anticipate it will be pretty slow." At 9 a.m. Schreffler said, "We had 216 voter check-ins so far." At 10 a.m. Schreffler reported a total of 270 voter check-ins.

Visit the Virginia Department of Elections website, Nov. 3, 2020 General and Special Elections to view results.



A voter checks-in at the Great Falls Library polling place on Election Day 2020, Tuesday, Nov. 3



Separated by a plexiglass shield, Fairfax County election official Elizabeth Yang (far right) reaches toward the no-contact box to check the identification of voter at the Great Falls Library polling place.

PHOTOS BY
MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION

No line greets a lone voter who arrives shortly before 7:30 a.m. on Election Day 2020, Tuesday, Nov. 3, at the Dranesville District of Fairfax County, Precinct 328 Hickory, Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike.



VIEWPOINTS

What do you hope this election changes?

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION



"I hope this changes the balance."-
Raj Patel of Great Falls, HIT Contracting



"The divide in the country. I hope they find a way to settle it. We all live together at the end of the day."
-- Johnny Morgan, of Great Falls, 20-years construction



"I hope it changes the outlook of the country. It is a very depressing time at the moment." -- Patrick Dahiroc of Great Falls, Software Development



"I hope it brings back the civility and compassion we've been missing." - Joyce Burd, 30-year Herndon resident, teacher
"I'd like to see a united nation again. No more divisiveness." - Mark Burd, 30-year resident of Herndon, project manager.



"No more of the orange guy." - D. Singh, 3-year resident of Reston, government support

OPINION

The Results Are In!

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



COMMENTARY

This column is being written before election day with a schedule for publication the day after the polls close. It may be a bit optimistic to suppose that the results of the many election day contests will be known by the next day, but I surely hope for my own sanity and those I know that the results will be known right away. The eagerness of voters to see these elections over with is evident by the historically high number of persons casting their votes early. In some localities the number of votes cast early eclipsed the total number of votes cast in that place four years ago. The event reported on social media where a voter asked those standing in line how long they had been waiting to vote and got the response "four years!" may not have actually happened, but it certainly captured the sentiment of many including myself that the last nearly four years have been a disaster for

our country and its institutions. Pandemic aside we have much to do to restore faith in our institutions and confidence in each other and our communities.

In Virginia there were elections only for federal offices this year as state offices are filled in "off year" elections. Next year voters will choose a new governor—as Virginia governors cannot succeed themselves—lieutenant governor, attorney general and all members of the House of Delegates. While the results for federal offices are just coming in with some congressional races downstate reflecting the wide division of opinions reflected nationwide, there are those who are already lining up for the statewide positions that will be on the ballot next year. If you thought that some space would be freed up on your e-mail accounts with the elections this year being over, think again. Many people have already announced for election next year with

more no doubt coming soon from whom you will be receiving pleas for support and of course for funding to make their election possible.

While we understandably might want a respite from politics, the sudden shift in attention to the next election cycle is good news. It shows our faith in the system and our understanding of the need for healing and active work to repair the immense damage of the last nearly four years. The peaceful evolution of power has been a hallmark of the American system of government from its beginning, and the several attempts to disrupt that process have in the long run been over-ridden. I know the threats that have been made about the transition of power this year, but I am counting on an overwhelming vote result that will erase any doubts about the true winners. Over time with leaders who represent true American values we can deal with the needs of American citizens with honesty, decency, compassion, and equality. The people will have spoken, and the results are in. It is time to put the horrors of the recent past behind us and build a stronger country because we have had a glimpse of the alternative!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kindness During a Very Difficult Year

To the Editor:

The lines to vote early at the Springfield-Franconia Government Center were a 3-4 hour wait every day for two weeks. I was heartened to see people with children, pregnant women and disabled older Americans insist on voting in person rather than use the convenient curbside voting alternative. The determination emanated everywhere.

Then along comes World Kitchen: Peruvian Brothers delicious beef or vegetable empanadas handed out free to the voters. If that isn't enough, Mediterranean food take out restaurant chef comes along from "Little Sesame" and distributes free cauliflower shawarma pita sandwiches and water. . Delicious!

For once, I saw kindness during a very difficult year. I thank those companies for their acts of kindness and I wanted to let others know, the food was great!

Lillian Brooks
Springfield



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Voters lined up around the corner at Franconia Road on Monday, Oct. 26.

A Generation Capable of Change

To the Editor:

What kind of world do you want to live in, a world where you have no problems or issues to fix in your community? A world where you are always living in comfort and safety? Or a world where you are constantly fighting for your people, fixing mistakes that your people did not even make. Any reasonable person would pick the first option, but some people don't have a choice. Why weren't we taught as students the many issues happening in our world right

now? Why are we only taught about events that happened years and years ago, that we cannot change or fix? Of course, students should be taught of this country's and this world's history. But what about the history that is taking place at this moment. So many young students have interests, passions, and goals they just can't accomplish in their position. They have no other option but to settle and push aside their dreams to make it through life. We need to be given the proper opportunities

that can help us find what we can strive for and what we love. We should be educated and informed about all the injustices happening right now because I know that young people can make a difference. This shouldn't be a debate or an argument, there just has to be change. I know so many young, bright, individuals that so desperately want to make a change, but simply don't know if their voices are being heard. They feel as if their efforts have no outcomes and words have no meaning. But

we, as a community, need to prove them wrong.

This generation is going to be the one to make a change, so they need support, love, a quality education, and they need someone to believe in them. Only then can they make the change they know deep down they are capable of.

Manal Khalid
Centreville
Westfield High School,
16, Junior

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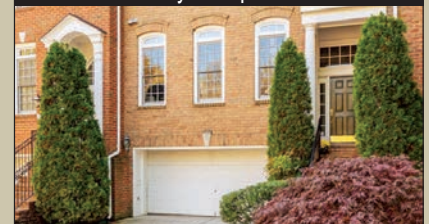
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Here's What's Happening at MCC!

The Old Firehouse

NOV 14 Snack and Paint
Saturday Nov. 14, 1-3 p.m.
\$35/\$30 MCC district residents
Preregistration is required

The Old Firehouse

NOV 16 Monday Game Challenge
Call of Duty: Warzone Challenge
Monday, Nov. 16, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

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NOV 18 The Unruly Theatre Project's
Virtual Improv Show
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 7 p.m.
Free; preregistration is required

The Old Firehouse

NOV 20 Virtual Family Fun Trivia Night
Friday, Nov. 20, 7-9 p.m.
\$5 per family

The Old Firehouse

NOV 21 Snack and Paint
Saturday, Nov. 21, 1-3 p.m.
\$35/\$30 MCC district residents
Preregistration is required

Community Events

DEC 7 MCC Fantastic Fall Scavenger Hunt
Ongoing through Monday, Dec. 7
Free registration
Registration is required

Closing Notice

MCC will be closed on Election Day (11/3),
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Day (11/26 - Friday, 11/27).



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NEWS

Before and After – Median Option

Existing

Proposed



The median option places the bridge closer to the pedestrian bridge.

Great Falls Bridge Rated in 'Poor Condition'

VDOT holds an information meeting on Springvale Road (Route 674) bridge over Piney Run.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Springvale Road (Route 674) bridge over Piney Run in Great Falls may not perform at the current reduced load carrying capacity for an extended time, according to a report shared during the Oct. 21 Virginia Department of Transportation virtual public information meeting. Dipali Patel, Project Manager Structures and Bridges, who provided details at the virtual public information meeting, said the existing simple span bridge with steel beams and timber plank deck overlaid with asphalt had been rated in poor condition.

During a bridge inspection in April of 2020, it was determined the bridge was in serious condition and would require strengthening to avoid closure. "Even with the temporary repairs due to the poor condition of the bridge and the severe corrosion...the load carrying capacity...has been reduced to 15 tons," Patel said. She added that the existing roadway did not pass the five-year storm, and neither would the proposed roadway pass the five-year storm benchmarks. Water would flood over the bridge.

The project's purpose is to improve safety

based on a summary of crash data. Between 2000-2019 there were 41 crashes, 39 percent of which were rear-ending collisions, and 7 percent side swipe type of accidents. A two-lane bridge would remove the need to stop, and a wider bridge would minimize side swipe accidents.

THE NEW PROJECT would replace the one-lane Springvale Road bridge over Piney Run with a two-lane bridge. VDOT considered two options for the project. Patel said that the first proposed roadway plan was the no median option, to widen the bridge to two lanes with two, four-foot-wide shoulders. The other proposed roadway plan was the median option, to widen the bridge to two 11-foot lanes separated by raised or splitter island medians with two, two-foot-wide shoulders. This plan was two feet wider than the no median option and a little closer to the pedestrian bridge. "The total length of the project will remain the same for the no median and the median options," said Patel.

The existing pedestrian bridge would remain; overhead lines and light poles possibly relocated underground, and the existing water main and fire hydrant anticipated to

SEE BRIDGE, PAGE 8

Proposed Bridge Aerial View – No Median Option



The no median option.

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Returning to the Balance of Nature

Growing native plants in Great Falls.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Oct. 19, the Environment & Parks Committee of Great Falls Citizens Association presented Native Plants by Dr. Meghan M. McGinty, a presentation she'd been dreaming about for years, McGinty said. Hosted by committee co-chairs Winnie Frost and William Denk, McGinty shared how she is restoring native plant gardens to sections of her property, from removing invasive plants to re-establishing forests and meadows.

During the hour-long program, McGinty listed plants that occurred naturally in the Great Falls ecoregion along with their values. McGinty peppered her comments with examples of how she converted her lawn's cultivation into a native garden of biodiversity. The one species crop provided no floral resources to feed birds and insects. "It's been an amazing transformation in just three years," she said.

McGinty said they made several changes to the property. They stopped using chemical pesticides, added birdbaths, removed invasive plants allowing natives to establish and participated in the Wildlife Sanctuary Program. According to McGinty, Plant Nova Natives is a campaign that solely promotes native plants. Spearheaded by Margaret Fisher, it offers instructional videos helping individuals with their "native plant challenges."

Next, McGinty spoke about Fairfax County's Resource Protection Areas (RPA). "Every stream, water, pond or lake should have a 100-foot native plant buffer around that water source. The goal... is to remove pollutants from the stormwater runoff," McGinty said.

THE PUBLIC can view RPA boundaries by filling in the street address on the County's website. McGinty learned her property was between two watersheds. While there were

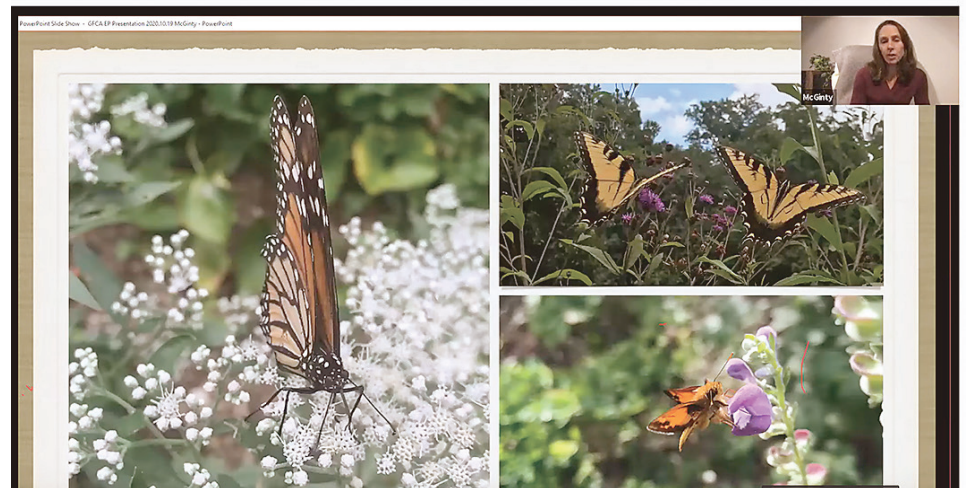


Meghan M. McGinty, a botanist with a PhD in Ecology and Environmental Biology.

no streams on her land, she considered it a "stepping stone" contributing to the region's healthy streams and groundwater and those beyond.

Turning her attention to specific native plants that proved best for the challenges of Great Falls gardening, ones that reduced erosion, resisted deer browsing and offered year-round foliage while tolerating a range of conditions, McGinty said she had no idea what "browsing" was like until she moved to Great Falls. "It's truly astounding, the level of browsing consistently throughout the year, not to mention their antlers, rubbing against the trunks," she said. McGinty offered as choices the Christmas fern and marginal wood fern, saying they resisted deer browsing and spread underground with rhizomes, thereby stabilizing the soil. Horsetail would need moist, rich soil. Robin's plantain, a perennial wildflower, "spread wonderfully." Partridgeberry, a trailing evergreen herb with white flowers, proved very slow growing but was a beautiful evergreen. The lyre leaf sage, an upright hairy perennial with large basal leaves purple-tinged in the winter, reseeded, naturalizing very well. Foamflower did get a little wilted in the winter but "hung in there," according to McGinty.

Other native plants that would do well in Great Falls, which reduced erosion, proved somewhat resistant to deer browsing and were shade-tolerant but were not evergreens, included yellow sedge and American alumroot. The Jack-in-the-pulpit plant fell into this grouping; however, McGinty said



McGinty's images of her thriving native plant garden. Where once was lawn three years later is home to butterflies and songbirds, in addition to skinks, toads, native insects, hawks and more.

she could not grow it since it preferred rich, moist soil, "loamy" not her clay. The button-bush McGinty noted was a large shrub and a great wildlife plant.

As for sun-tolerant native plants, McGinty mentioned grasses but cautioned to be sure they were native. Paw paw could only tolerate sandy soils like a riverbank stream. The vigorous growth of bee balm would be a sure bet for butterflies. "I discovered this year, every node that touches the ground roots in," McGinty said.

SUNNY HABITAT GARDENS attracted songbirds and butterflies. "If you build it, they will come," McGinty said. When attracting hummingbirds, McGinty recommended planting natives for year-round-nectar, red columbine and cardinal flower for example. McGinty said one of the things she wanted to highlight was that hummingbirds rely on the nectar's sugars. It is used to fuel their energy and high metabolic rate. "It's like their coffee," she said. Hummers eat insects. Just as crucial as offering nectar plants in the garden were plants that hosted a balance of insects. "We want a balance of beneficial and what we consider pests. In those environments we can also provide food for the hummingbirds," said McGinty.

Comments

Native Plant Sale - We have a native plant sale, usually the last Saturday in April or the first Saturday in May...anywhere between 800 to 1000 native plants, and... between 30 and 40 different species...We start the pre-ordering process generally around Jan. 15. - Hugh Morrow.

Transitioning Lawn to a Native Plant Garden - I planted the shrubs and the trees the first year...All around that, I laid down cardboard, right on top of the grass, then a very thick, two-inch layer of mulch. The benefit of this strategy is everything underneath is going to decompose. You have a great thick layer of organic matter. When you go plant next spring or next fall, you have earthworms; you have some organic matter; you've got some black soil. - McGinty

Plant Rescue - When we have a subdivision being built, or some type of construction, it is often an opportunity for us to go in and rescue certain plants that otherwise would be totally obliterated and sent to the dump...There is a new senior assisted living home that's going to be built...I know there are a lot of native tree saplings in there. - Bill Canis

Springvale Road Bridge Options Discussed

FROM PAGE 7

stay. "A complete closure of the bridge will be required... maintenance of traffic details will be provided at the public hearing stage," said Patel. The expected construction time was six months, and a partial closure or phased construction was not possible.

According to Patel, the scope of work was constrained to a bridge with minimal approach roadway work due to the limited availability of funds. The anticipated project cost was between \$4 million

and \$5 million. "The funding source will be determined after public engagement. This bridge does not qualify for State of Good Repair funds," Patel said. The bridge measured one foot shy of the required 20-foot length for State of Good Repair funds. She added that Bridge Maintenance funds might be used. The link to see plans and designs for the Springvale Road over Piney Run Bridge Replacement in Fairfax County is <https://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northern-virginia/springvale-over-piney-run.asp>.

Patel asked that when the public provided comments, they considered the travel-

ing public's safety, project limits, cost and timeline, traffic calming measures, driveway access, codes, and regulations. As for what was next, among other things, VDOT would solicit and evaluate community feedback, and once funding was identified, the project could move forward.

THE GREAT FALLS CITIZENS ASSOCIATION had formed a Bridge Working Group on the Springvale Road Bridge. At the Connection's press time, GFCFA understood that VDOT might confirm an extension of its comment deadline initially set to end Nov. 2.

Given such, the public could continue to submit written comments via the VDOT study website at <https://bit.ly/2HKEIGA>, by mail to Ms. Dipali Patel, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or email meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Reference "Springvale Road over Piney Run Bridge Replacement" in the subject line.

Several members of the GFCFA Bridge Working Group posted comments on the Springvale Road Bridge on the organization's website.

WELLBEING

Decompressing after a Divisive Election

Limit time on social media or watching post-election coverage.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The moments that stretched her to her professional limits came immediately after the 2016 presidential election. As a psychotherapist, Kendra A. O'Hora, Ph.D., owner of Wellness & Co., had to help her patients process the overwhelming emotions that they were experiencing after that tumultuous political season.

"That day was the hardest day of my career," she said.

This year's election however, has been much worse, notes O'Hora. "It's unlike anything I've ever experienced in my therapy office," she said. "For the first time ever, we are offering appointments this week specifically for those who are struggling to process."

The divisive 2020 election season has been a source of significant tension, not only locally, but nationwide. Nearly 70 percent of adults in the United States report feelings of stress as a result of this year's cycle, according to a study by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Adding the recent racial unrest and the coronavirus pandemic that's caused record deaths and wreaked havoc on the economy, the current environment — with no relief in sight — has left three out of four adults anxious about the nation's future. The current political season provides the perfect storm for mental health issues that will last for decades, say local mental health professionals.

It's understandable to feel stressed, overwhelmed, exhausted, and anxious right now, says Heather V. Ganginis Del Pino, Ph.D., licensed psychologist and associate professor of psychology at Montgomery College. "If your feelings start to interfere with your everyday life and if having those feelings are causing you distress, you might want to seek help from a professional, if one is available to you," she said.

Shock, anger, relief, disillusionment and even neutrality are all normal at this time, suggests Fairfax therapist Jana Wu, LCSW. "Emotions might run the gamut and might shift as the days progress or after engaging in dialogue with others."

"You may be asking yourself, 'What's normal to feel right now?'" added O'Hora. "The long and short of it? Everything. Most people know that anger, frustration, annoyance, and stress are what we like to call iceberg or secondary emotions. In a sense, they are what's on the surface, when there's oh so much more underneath."

Social support is important, particularly for those without access to mental health therapy, added Del Pino. "It can feel good to help someone else,

so check in on friends and family that you know are struggling or donate your time to a cause that is important to you," she said.

Limiting the amount of time one spends on social media or watching post-election coverage can help ease feelings of distress, said Wu. "Take in material that inspires and speaks to your values," she said. "Speak to and engage with community that also shares your values about next action steps to take. Practice self-care and care for others in your community, environment, and home. I personally meditate and listen to sources that inspire me to engage in life in a thoughtful way."

Focus on the bigger picture advises therapist Steven Rosenberg, Ph.D. "Avoid contentious situations and confrontations over political differences," he said. "You are not going to change anyone's mind. Remember, just as you have your own political views, others are entitled to have theirs. Let them. The issues facing our country can't be resolved in one election. Volunteer for an organization that is working on an issue or cause that you feel strongly about."

Decompress by showing yourself compassion and withholding self-judgement, says Del Pino. This could mean making sure you take care of yourself through exercise and sleep, she said. "You can spend breaks doing something you enjoy or just breathe while

giving yourself time to notice your own feelings and thoughts. If you are feeling stressed or anxious about the outcome of the election, acknowledge your stressful feelings and thoughts but also try to notice any feelings that might be hiding under the anxiety and stress.

It's important for parents to recognize and help children process intense emotions, says Del Pino. "Help children process

their feelings by simply asking them how they feel. Let them know you are there if they need to talk," she said. "While acknowledging that this is a stressful time in our country, parents should avoid expressing their own opinions. If you have young kids, limit the amount of news you are watching with them around and instead play a game, sit with them while they do homework, engage them in conversation, or do something active together."

Maintaining a consistent daily schedule, particularly with regard to sleep, suggests Del Pino. "[It] is so important, especially during times of stress," she said. "If your child is having trouble sleeping, or if you are, encourage your child to read something fun before bed or download one of the many free mindfulness or sleep applications that will help your child get in the mood for sleep."



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lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known



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News



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Haunted Maze Held in Great Falls

Friday evening, Oct. 30, Troop 55, Celebrate Great Falls and Cornerstones Business Services, Inc. of Great Falls offered a haunted maze for the community. The outdoor maze attracted close to 300 visitors with advance reservations for specified time slots and maintained Covid protocols. As the traditional Celebrate Great Falls Spooktacular was canceled this year, this venue provided a welcome alternative for the community.



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Questions? E-mail sales@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9431

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CALENDAR

HAYFIELD HAWKS FUNDRAISER

The Hayfield Hawks football team is trying to raise money in order to provide players with new practice equipment and uniforms. Due to COVID, all of the fundraising is virtual this year. They have partnered with local businesses to create a discount card, which can be purchased for \$25 and entitles the cardholder to discounts and perks at a number of local restaurants. Delivery of the discount cards will be by mail /contactless and all proceeds will go directly to the program and helping the student athletes. Email Meredith Richard at EVHenderson@fcps.edu or call 703-408-4212.

NOW THRU NOV. 12

Haunted Wine Tours. Sunday to Thursday, 6:30 p.m.; 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. At The Winery at Bull Run, 15950 Lee Highway, Centreville. The Haunted Wine Tours are back for the fifth year in a row, in a new condensed version, so you can enjoy real ghost stories and award-winning wine all while staying safe. Due to the restrictive environment surrounding COVID, there are far less tickets available this year. Therefore priority access to tickets go to wine club members.

NOW THRU DEC. 7

MCC Fantastic Fall Scavenger Hunt. Join your friends, family and community for McLean Community Center's Fantastic Fall Scavenger Hunt. This exciting fall virtual event allows for you and your team to compete against others and win prizes. This is the perfect event to stay local and have fun with your friends and family. The Fantastic Fall Scavenger Hunt is a game played on a smart phone in which teams complete 75 missions (or challenges) both indoors and outdoors. Missions include answering questions, taking specific photos or videos, finding a specific item, geocaching or completing specific tasks as given in a list provided by the Game Master. The scavenger hunt will take place in and around McLean and from your own home. Participants work in small teams of 4-10 players. Team captains must be 16 years old or older. Visit the website www.McLeancenter.org.

NOV. 3 TO DEC. 6

Nature's Palette. At The Loft Gallery of Occoquan, 313 Mill Street, Occoquan. Featuring work by Patricia Hafkemeyer and wood artist, George Jones III. Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Sunday, Noon-5 p.m. Artist's Reception: See Facebook Live Reception on Saturday, November 7 at 3:30 p.m. at <https://www.facebook.com/loftgalleryoccoquan>

FRIDAY/NOV. 6

Nature at Night. 5:30-7 p.m. At Riverbend Park, 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls. Discover what critters are on the move in local parks after people go home for the day. Join the "Nature at Night" program at Riverbend Park, and learn what happens in the forest, on the river, in the pond and at the meadow after dark. Enjoy a nighttime hike, make an awesome craft, get a peek at nocturnal critters, and discover how these animals wake up when we go to sleep. Cost is \$8 per person. Call 703-759-9018.

FRIDAY/NOV. 6

Wilderness Walk. 1-2 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Get off the beaten path with a naturalist and explore some of the less popular trails at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. During this program for adults, you will identify plants and learn which animals left behind the tracks you discover in the park. Cost is \$7 per person. Call 703-631-0013.

FRIDAY/NOV. 6

Campfire and S'Mores. 7-8:30 p.m. At Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Come to Lake Fairfax Park for an evening campfire and s'mores the whole family can enjoy. During the "Campfire Fridays"

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program, you will explore the wonders of the natural world through events, such as nature walks, interactive activities and animal presentations. Learn about nature and our place in it. Topics for this monthly program vary by date. The cost is \$12 per person. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult. Call 703-471-5414.

NOV. 6 THRU HOLIDAYS

Santa at Springfield Town Center. Santa and his reindeer will be arriving at Springfield Town Center on Nov. 6 to kick-off the holiday season. In an effort to create touchless experiences and accommodate varying levels of visitor comfort, Santa will be available at Springfield Town Center via numerous experiences and offerings: Picture with Santa; Virtual Experience; Family Pet Photos on Mondays; Family Photos and Visits with Santa. Reservations are required for all Santa and photo offerings.

SATURDAY/NOV. 7

Flag Retirement Ceremony. 11 a.m. At Fairfax Fire Station 38, 6001 Oday Drive, Centreville. American Legion Post 1995 will conduct a flag retirement ceremony on November 7th at Fire Station 38 located at the corner of O'Day Drive and Stone Road beginning at 11:00 am. The public is invited to participate and/or to donate American, state, or county flags for a respectful retirement.

SATURDAY/NOV. 7

Raising Theatre Babies. 2 p.m. Part of Theater and Parenting. Artists reimagine their lives in theatre post COVID-19. Part of the Virtual Round Table Discussion Series at 1st Stage in Tysons. Free. In these forums, they'll talk and share questions and thoughts with artists, actors, designers, musicians and directors about experiences they have faced as professional artists. Artists participating include Debra Kim Sivigny, Bob Barlett, Ron OJ Parsons, José Carrasquillo, Thembi Duncan, and more. Pre-registration is required and space is limited. Registration at www.1ststage.org.

NOV. 9, 16, 23

Family Fishing. 11 a.m. to noon. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Park staff will provide all the equipment and bait you need to start you on your way to creating your own fish tales. The program is designed for family members age 5 to adult. Cost is \$10 per person. Meet at Shelter Call 703-323-6600, or visit Burke Lake Park.

NOV. 11, 13, AND 14

Christmas Bazaar for Charity. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At 1025 Bellview Place, McLean. Sale of new and vintage Christmas items, including a huge collection of ornaments, tabletop decor, and kids' crafts, handmade wreaths and gift items. All proceeds donated to Jill's House and Operation Christmas Child.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 11

Saluting Independence. 10 a.m. Virtual event. Join in Saluting Independence as they present the Col. E. David Woycik, Jr., Esq., USA (Ret.) and Lance Corporal Matias Ferreira, USMC (Ret.) Outstanding Service Award. The virtual event honors veterans and raises support and awareness for Canine Companions, a non-profit organization that provides highly trained assistance dogs to children, adults and veterans with disabilities at no cost to the recipient. Unable to attend the premier? The event will still be available for you to watch at your convenience. Registration is required to receive access to the event. Register now at www.cci.org/salutingindependence. A suggested donation of \$75 would be appreciated.

SATURDAY/NOV. 14

Lesson Zero. 7:30-10:30 p.m. At P.J. Mulligans, 2310 Woodland Crossing Dr., Herndon. More information available on www.youtube.com/lessonzero or www.reverbnation.com/lessonzero.

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Better Late Than Never ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... to get a second opinion about one's first cancer; especially if there's now a second cancer to consider. For most of the nearly 12 years during which I've been a cancer patient, my diagnosis has been non small cell lung cancer stage IV. Within the past 10 months or so, it has become apparent and subsequently confirmed by a surgical biopsy of a tumor located in my lungs, that I have papillary thyroid cancer. The big question remains - and has not been agreed to by my endocrinologist and oncologist, is whether I have two types of cancer or just one. And moreover, whether I've always had two types or one primary - previously undiagnosed, that has now metastasized after 10-plus years from the thyroid into the lungs?

From my understanding - or actually what I've been told, it's possible, though hardly prudent to biopsy all the remaining tumors in my lungs to confirm exactly what type (types) of cancer I have. According to my doctors, the medical risks to me are too great. Therefore, the decision has been made to treat the thyroid cancer and to monitor - for lack of a better description, the lung cancer. And I can live with that (hope to live with that I should say). Nevertheless, it seemed an opportune time to get, for the first time in my cancer life, a second opinion. This week, after waiting out the transfer of medical records and a thyroid cancer specialist's evaluation, Team Lourie will be going to the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University Hospital for an independent assessment. To say we are extremely anxious is an understatement.

When I was initially diagnosed in late Feb., 2009, we did not get a second opinion. Perhaps we were naive, but at the moment the oncologist told us my diagnosis - and prognosis: non small cell lung cancer stage IV. he was not the least bit perplexed and the path forward seemed clear, and we didn't question him too much. A week later, I began chemotherapy. I have never wavered in this decision and I have no regrets about the path I chose. The fact that I have lived years beyond my prognosis has occasionally given me moments of curiosity as to why I was so amazingly lucky to have survived when so many others have not. Not wanting to look a gift oncologist in the mouth (if you know what I mean), I rarely thought to ask. I mean, I was doing so well.

Then about two years ago, a lump appeared under my Adams Apple. Upon examining me/it, my oncologist characterized it as a clone of my lung cancer and did nothing more than note its size and shape when he regularly examined me until the first of three biopsies (of a lymph node) was ultimately performed. It indicated thyroid cancer. This was new information to my oncologist. And so I was referred to an endocrinologist. She took one look at my "Adams Apple tumor" as I called it, and did a needle biopsy right then and there - in her office. She called me two days later with the results. Again, it confirmed thyroid cancer which subsequently led to the removal of my thyroid a month or so later. A few months after that, a hospitalization followed for radioiodine treatment to locate and kill any remaining thyroid cancer. Within another month I began chemotherapy treatment for thyroid cancer. Which is how I am presently being treated. Nothing more has changed. However, we wondered, what about my lung cancer? It was not being treated? As George Costanza asked after having sex with the cleaning lady on an old Seinfeld episode: "Was that a bad thing?"

And so we have taken steps to find out what it is we don't know that maybe the doctors know. Unfortunately, my original tissue sample is too degraded to re-biopsy, but all other relevant medical information has been transferred. I don't suppose we'll be able to go too far back in time, but given the future that I ended up having, there's no time like the present to review the past.

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



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