

CONNECTION

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On Oct. 31, artist Amanda Lutz painted an interactive mural featuring Virginia's state flower, the dogwood, at Fairfax City's Scout on the Circle development.

Mural at Scout On the Circle

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

BULLETIN

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

NOW THRU NOV. 19

Elementary Gym Class. 4-5 p.m. At Nike field, South County Middle School, 8700 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton. One hour, 2 days per week, outdoor elementary gym class for kids in grades K-6 taught by a former Division 1 athlete and current South County High School teacher. Cost: \$15 per class or 10 classes for \$120. Contact: <https://bit.ly/SCAAFallGym>

NOW THRU DEC. 13

Holiday Greenery for Delivery. 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thru Assistance League of Northern Virginia, P.O. Box 209, Herndon. The holidays are just around the corner and Assistance League of Northern Virginia has teamed up with Lynch Creek Farm to offer holiday décor. Purchase wreaths, garlands, and centerpieces for your home or as gifts for family and friends. Your orders will be sent directly to the recipients. Shipments to Northern Virginia should take about 5 business days. Assistance League will receive 15% of the cost of every purchase and 100% of any donations. Those funds will help the charity provide food, new clothing and books to many needy children in our community. Here's the link to shopping: <https://www.lynchcreek-fundraising.com/teams/250781>. Shipping is free. Contact info@alnv.org. Visit www.alnv.org.

THURSDAY/NOV. 12

Book Talk. 1-2 p.m. Virtual. Author Kayleen Reusser has just completed a new book focusing on personal accounts of prisoners of war. "Captured! Stories of American World War II Prisoners of War" includes stories of eight former POWs from three branches of the U.S. military: Army, Navy, and Army Air Corps. One story focuses on Springfield resident, Jerry Wolf. He and his crew were shot down from their B-17 over Germany in May 1944 and captured by German soldiers. As a POW, Wolf was imprisoned in German camps and forced to take part in a German Death March, trekking 60 miles in blizzard-like conditions. He was liberated in April 1945 by Allied troops. She will show photos of Paris, Battle of the Bulge, Omaha Beach, and more. Sign up at <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/7136586>.

NOV. 16-23

Operation Christmas Child. More than 4,000 locations will now offer a curbside drop-off option for the Samaritan's Purse project, Operation Christmas Child. Volunteers are preparing to collect shoebox gifts during National Collection Week, Nov. 16 - 23. Operation Christmas Child has been collecting and delivering shoebox gifts—filled with school supplies, hygiene items and fun toys—to children worldwide for more than two decades. For the nearest drop-off location, visit samaritanpurse.org/occ and clicking on "drop-off locations".

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NEWS

Matrix, Sunlight Discussed at Public Safety Committee

Community, advocacy groups and police give more than 2,500 suggestions on police reform; Governor signs reform bills from special session.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Police reform includes improving morale for police officers. “I’ve met with hundreds of Fairfax County police officers in recent months, in group settings and individually,” said Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee), “and to a person they have told me morale within the police department is the lowest that it has ever been.”

“This is a public safety issue that must be addressed in order to ensure that our officers are performing at the highest level possible, and that we are retaining the highly skilled law enforcement professionals that we have invested so much time and resources in training,” said Lusk.

“I’m glad to see that here, formally, as you know,” said Supervisor Pat Herrity (Springfield). “We’re already a little late.”

Last Tuesday, Oct. 27, Lusk announced a Community Input Matrix, a database of 32-pages of policy suggestions from residents, advocacy groups and law enforcement on the topic of police reform. These are suggestions from the community and groups, not official positions of the Board of Supervisors.

Lusk received and sorted more than 2,500 submissions over the last three months.

At the Board’s Public Safety Committee meeting he shared the suggestions he has received with the greatest frequency and items the Board of Supervisors could address in the near term.

ACCURACY AND ACCESS to public safety data was highlighted, including the need for FCPD to ensure its technology vendor has the capability to meet current needs, including gathering ethnic and demographic data.

James Walkinshaw (Braddock) said immediate release of data is critical. “Sunlight is the best disinfectant,” he said. “My view on data is to put the data out there and let people discuss it.”

Some advocates suggested the quarterly release of arrest and use of force data rather than waiting for annual reports issued by police.

“It’s important for all of us to know that both sets [total arrests and arrests of Fairfax residents] show disproportionate numbers,” with Black and Latino people overrepresented, said Walkinshaw. “That doesn’t mean that all of our police officers are racists; the world isn’t quite that simple. But it does mean that there are structures in our society, including here in Fairfax County, that push us towards a justice system that is disproportionate and unequal.”

SOME SUGGESTIONS came from the Fairfax County Police Civilian Review Panel.

“I’ve met with hundreds of Fairfax County police officers in recent months, in group settings and individually, and to a person they have told me morale within the police department is the lowest that it has ever been.”

— Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee)



“There are structures in our society, including here in Fairfax County, that push us towards a justice system that is disproportionate and unequal.”

— James Walkinshaw (Braddock)

Newly passed legislation at the state level could allow the Board of Supervisors to give new authority to the Civilian Review Panel, including investigative power. Lusk said the Board could also authorize hiring of an Executive Director for the review panel.

“We have a pretty big grouping and a serious number of requests and recommendations that have come in, so the idea here is to figure out how do we start to disaggregate them and take steps to act on them,” said Lusk. “We’re going to have to make a decision pretty much on each of them and will have some sort of response.”

Some matrix items will be referred to existing working groups to report back to the Public Safety Committee, for example the Body Camera Working Group and the Chief’s Data Working Group.

Included are some of the other near term possibilities:

- ❖ Consider and discuss implementation of state legislation related to the decertification of law enforcement officers who have been terminated or resigned for misconduct.

- ❖ Review training, recruitment and retention standards

- ❖ Accelerate the expansion of crisis intervention training for first responders.

- ❖ Build upon existing department efforts to expand cultural sensitivity and implicit bias training.

- ❖ Review entry level pay and benefits standards that may be affecting recruitment.

- ❖ Conduct a joint review with the School Board of student diversion programs to address inequities.

- ❖ Direct staff to undertake a review and update of the Ad-Hoc Committee recommendations.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Chairman Jeff McKay called the Matrix “a parking lot of ideas” that, in the future, “must be adjudicated by this Board based on data, input, conversation, and each of these would have to be acted on in some form.”

“Some of these will go off to other committees, some will go through this committee, but none of them will go anywhere before they come to the full Board for adoption,” said McKay.

View the draft “matrix” of community suggestions here: <https://www.fairfaxcountyt.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/police-reform/police-reform-suggestions.pdf>

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AT THE STATE LEVEL, Gov. Ralph Northam signed new laws on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020, including House Bill 5055 and Senate Bill 5035, which empower localities to create civilian law enforcement review boards. These new laws also permit civilian review boards the authority to issue subpoenas and make binding disciplinary decisions. Northam signed Senate Bill 5014, which mandates the creation of minimum crisis intervention training standards and requires law enforcement officers complete crisis intervention training.

Senate Bill 5030, omnibus police reform legislation, incorporates a number of critical reform measures passed by the House of Delegates including:

House Bill 5099 prohibits law enforcement officers from seeking or executing no-knock search warrants, making Virginia the third state to do so.

House Bill 5069 limits the circumstances in which law enforcement officers can use neck restraints.

House Bill 5029 requires law enforcement officers to intervene when they witness another officer engaging or attempting to engage in the use of excessive force.

House Bill 5049 reduces the militarization of police by prohibiting law enforcement from obtaining or using specified equipment, including grenades, weaponized aircraft, and high caliber firearms.

House Bill 5109 creates statewide minimum training standards for law enforcement officers, including training on awareness of racism, the potential for biased profiling, and de-escalation techniques.

House Bill 5104 mandates law enforcement agencies and jails request the prior employment and disciplinary history of new hires.

House Bill 5108 expands and diversifies the Criminal Justice Services Board, ensuring that the perspectives of social justice leaders, people of color, and mental health providers are represented in the state’s criminal justice policymaking.

House Bill 5051 strengthens the process by which law enforcement officers can be decertified and allows the Criminal Justice Services Board to initiate decertification proceedings.

House Bill 5045 makes it a Class 6 felony for law enforcement officers to “carnally know” an arrestee or detainee.

Governor Northam also signed Senate Bill 5018 which allows individuals serving a sentence for certain felony offenses who are terminally ill to petition the Parole Board for conditional release; and amended House Bill 5148 and Senate Bill 5034 which allow for increased earned sentencing credits. The Governor proposed a six-month delay to give the Department of Corrections sufficient time to implement this program.

Hail to the Chief-Elect

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



COMMENTARY

Tears welled up in my eyes last Saturday evening as the President-elect Joe Biden and the Vice President-elect Kamala Harris addressed their supporters and the nation for the first time after having been declared the winners of the presidential election. The words they said, the message they delivered, and the tone they set struck the chords that have been so vitally important to me and to many others throughout our lifetimes. If we seemed ravenous in listening to their words, it was because we have not heard them for too long and were hungering for inspirational and positive leadership.

The President-elect made his approach to governance clear: "I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide, but to unify—who doesn't see red and blue states, but a United States, and who will work with all my heart to win the confidence of the whole people." Start-

ing with that kind of attitude will go a long way toward his success in being a unifier.

My interest in politics goes back to my teenage years and has been influenced by the great speeches I have heard, not simply for the words that were said but because of the hope they offered and the vision for greatness for our country they inspired. I stood in the foot-deep snow at the United States Capitol on January 20, 1961 and heard a leader I revered, the new President John F. Kennedy, say in his inaugural speech, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Another inspirational moment came for me on my birthday, November 3, 2008, when Jane and I stood for hours in a crowd estimated at 80,000 people at the Prince William County Fairgrounds waiting for candidate Barack Obama who arrived at 10:30 p.m. for the final appearance of his campaign to be president. In

his usual inspiring way he told us, "I come away with an unyielding belief that if we only had a government as responsible as all of you, as compassionate as the American people, that there is no obstacle that we can't overcome. There is no destiny that we cannot fulfill."

In an echo of President Kennedy's words, former President Obama this fall challenged the country with his words, "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek." And just as President-elect Biden reminded us of the unity of America, Barack Obama at the Democratic Convention in 2004 in a speech that brought him to the attention of political leaders had reminded us that, "There's not a liberal America and a conservative America—there's the United States of America."

While these quotes are words, they reflect attitudes and beliefs that can stir us to positive action to realize the potential for an honest and decent America that is open and inclusive and where the American dream can become a reality for all.

Dogs To Return To the People's House

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

With the Biden presidential victory, an engaging tradition will be restored to the White House - occupancy by a pet dog. President-elect Joe Biden and Dr Jill Biden have two German Shepherds in their family: Champ and Major. Biden's election will see Champ and Major elevated to the unofficial status of the nation's first dogs. Champ has visited the White House in the past with Biden; Major has not. President Donald Trump will leave office, likely to become the first president in 120 years, who has been without a dog during his entire term.

President's dogs have been followed closely by the public for decades. George H.W. and Barbara Bush's English Springer Spaniel, Millie, achieved celebrity status with her best selling book, which outsold both the President's and the First Lady's memoirs. Then came the Clinton's Buddy, a Labrador; the Bush's Barney and Miss Beasley, Scottish Terriers; followed by the Obama's Bo and later Sunny, Portuguese Water-dogs. Popularity of those breeds increased with their presidential link; children wrote letters to them; and first dogs sent autographed pictures to constituents.

Most U.S. presidents, 30 of 45 presidents, starting with President George Washington, have had pets, including at least one dog. Our first president is well-known as the founder of the American Foxhound breed. They were among the 17 dogs of various breeds with Washington during his two terms.

The first dogs to physically reside in the White House came with its first occupants, John and Abigail Adams. They were mixed breed pups named Juno and Satan. Abraham



Biden dogs Major (left) and Champ, set to become unofficial "First Dogs", here with Dr Jill Biden in this photo published around the world

Lincoln had two mixed breed dogs with him when he was elected, Jip and Fido. Only Jip accompanied him to Washington due to Fido's health, but Lincoln left detailed instructions for beloved Fido's care and comfort in Springfield. Fido has been a name linked to dogs ever since the public heard stories of Fido loyally following Lincoln in his travels around his home State of Illinois.

In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt's menagerie of 40 pets made the White House home, including six dogs. Rollo, a St Bernard, and Blackjack, a Manchester Terrier, were favorites. In 1933, Franklin Roosevelt, like Biden, had a German Shepherd, Majora, one of 12 dogs; though his most well known was a Scottish Terrier, Fala.

Harry Truman didn't want a dog and when gifted a puppy, he later gave it away, prompting thousands of letters from angry dog owners. Surprised by the response, Truman famously said,

"If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog."

After that, nearly every president has had at least one dog while in office. When Trump was asked why he was one of the exceptions, why he didn't have a dog, he responded that "the idea seems phony" that he had no time for a dog, saying, "How would I look walking a dog on the White House lawn."

Though Trump was reluctant to take on dog ownership, the Biden campaign perhaps recognized the public's continuing love for presidential dogs. They organized the Barks for Biden event at the South Run Dog Park in Springfield on Saturday Oct. 31, just prior to election day. Both as a celebration of dogs and as a reminder to vote. Dog ownership may not be the thing about Biden that convinced people to vote for him, but one is reminded of the quote, "You can usually tell that a man is good if he has a dog who loves him." - W. Bruce Cameron





BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Artist Amanda Lutz on her mural at Fairfax City's Scout on the Circle development: "I hope it brings some smiles to people's faces."

Interactive Mural at Scout on the Circle

On Oct. 31, artist Amanda Lutz painted an interactive mural featuring Virginia's state flower, the dogwood, at Fairfax City's Scout on the Circle development. It's outside the parking garage across from the Giant grocery store. Geared for Instagram photos, the mural will include a custom-made bench so people sitting there will look as if they're swinging on the Scout, circle ring in front of the

dogwood blossoms.

A mural artist from California, Lutz has been painting for about 15 years, and this project took her two days to complete. "It's to highlight the spirit of the area and honor the community," she said. "I hope it brings some smiles to people's faces."

— BONNIE HOBBS

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HOME LIFE STYLE

Thanksgiving Decor in the Era of Covid-19

Creating dining elegance at a distance.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Naoimi Patterson's Thanksgiving table is usually set with linen dinner napkins, cleaned and starched, and her wedding china, ecru with a platinum border. The guests include her 88-year old mother and a host of cousins. This year, she's debating a change.

"My mother is healthy, but because of her age, I'm nervous about having her around other people, especially my cousins who are in college," said Patterson who lives in Bethesda. "I still want it to be nice and I want to maintain our traditions."

Like many families, Covid-19 and the resulting safety precautions have changed the way they will celebrate Thanksgiving. Elaborate feasts might be scaled down, moved outdoors or held virtually. Though the structure is different, style needn't be sacrificed.

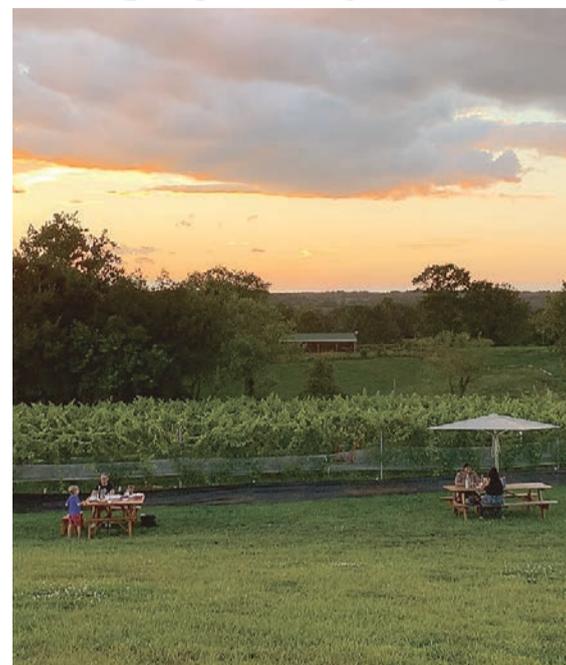


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE WALKER

An al fresco Thanksgiving dinner can maintain safety without sacrificing elegance.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA QUEEN DESIGN

A traditional table setting can add warmth to virtual Thanksgiving celebration.

"Shouldn't your dinner al fresco be just as lovely as the one you host in your formal dining room?"

— Anne Walker, interior designer and owner of Farm and Feast

"Outdoor entertaining has been on the rise for a decade, but now more than ever outside is the place to be," said Potomac based designer Anne Walker of outdoor home accessories and design company Farm & Feast. "Whether you have a formal outdoor living room complete with stone fireplace and patio, or a balcony outside your apartment, or something in between, your Thanksgiving holiday will be most successful this year if you gather outside."

If the temperature is mild this year, a turkey dinner outdoors can allow one to achieve both elegance and safety.

"Shouldn't your dinner al fresco be just as lovely as the one you host in your formal dining room?" asks Walker. "What could be better than enjoying a cocktail and some wine and cheese en plein air?"

Durable and shatterproof serve wear is a must when dining outdoors, suggests Walker. "Enjoying hors d'oeuvres from a marble and wood rustic cheese board and wine from a silicone-wrapped outdoor wine glass will lift your spirits, as will wrapping yourself in an organic cotton throw to stave off the chill in the fall air," she said.

When setting an outdoor table, consider rustic accessories so that the design flows with the natural surroundings.

"Spray paint a fallen tree branch or tumbleweed in gold or a similar warm autumn tone and use it as a centerpiece, suggested Lisa Queen of Lisa Queen Design. "Nest it with candles, small pumpkins, and other soft decor to bring it to life."

Add warmth to a virtual celebration by using traditional table accessories. "We brought some additional character to our table by mixing antique brass napkin rings," said Queen. "Not everything needs to match, and this is one way to make a tablescape feel unique and curated."

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Example of a trail section with a boardwalk and railings.

‘A Signature Place Where People Want to Be’

Fairfax City Council updated on George Snyder Trail.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Work is progressing on the George T. Snyder Trail project; and on Oct. 13, residents got to comment on it during a Fairfax City Council public hearing. First, though, Parks and Recreation Director Cathy Salgado presented an update.

It's a shared-use trail connecting Chain Bridge Road (Route 123) to the Wilcoxson Trail at Draper Drive, south of Fairfax Boulevard (Route 50). It'll be an ADA-compliant, asphalt trail with some sections of porous asphalt and others, concrete boardwalk.

Five bridges will span small tributaries and Accotink Creek, and part of the project will be constructed within Fairfax City parks. The trail will be 8-10-feet wide, and there'll be no blind spots at bridge approaches. It'll also improve regional trail connectivity within the City, with a design aimed at limiting impacts to environmental resources, right-of-way and utilities.

"We want this to be an experience for our residents," said Salgado. "We want them to be able to enjoy the environment and being outdoors."

The \$14 million project is being built with more than \$13.6 million in Outside the Beltway I-66 Concessionaire funding, plus \$360,000 in federal, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality money. It's nearing the 65-percent design stage, which includes plans for not only the trail and bridges, but retain-

ing walls, drainage improvements, stormwater management, lighting, landscaping and erosion/sediment control.

THE NEW TRAIL will connect to existing trail segments at Marketplace Boulevard, Stafford Park, Ranger Road Park and Draper Drive Park, connecting to neighborhoods, as well as to the City's commercial corridor. And Salgado said disturbances to the Resource Protection Area and floodplain will be minimized.

Besides the trail realignment, raised crosswalks and new signage would be added to neighborhood intersections. Dark-sky-friendly lighting is planned for just the intersections and trail junctions. Boardwalk sections will have retaining walls and railings, and the bicycle/pedestrian bridges will be 14 feet wide, with concrete decks.

Retaining walls of varied heights, ranging from 3-17 feet high, will be built between the trail and private properties and will also reduce grading impact to the forest. Viewing areas, educational markers and rain gardens are also included in the project. Construction bids are proposed for advertisement in winter 2022 to be awarded that spring.

The most controversial part of the trail project is the plan to uproot hundreds of trees. "More than 1,200 trees were surveyed, and 500 trees will be removed within 1.4 miles of trail," said Salgado. Some 40 percent of them are tulip poplars and red maples. But they'd

SEE TRAIL, PAGE 11

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County Police Chief Resigns

Praised by many, Roessler also faced criticism and calls for resignation.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Police Chief Edwin C. Roessler Jr. announced his resignation last week, effective February 2021.

His resignation drew praise from many for his 30-plus years of service to the county through his work in the Fairfax County Police Department.

But the announcement came after police officers say their morale is the lowest it has ever been, and after calls for his resignation from some officers.

Hired in 1989 as a police recruit, Roessler served as interim Chief of Police in early 2013 before his appointment as Chief of Police in July of 2013.

“Chief Roessler has dedicated his life to protecting our community for over 30 years, as a new hire, patrol officer, interim chief, and eventually chief for the past 8 years,” said Jeffrey McKay, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

“His efforts, along with officers and our community, have made us the safest jurisdiction of our size in the nation. The Chief has worked with the Board on reforms that have solidified the police department as a leader in transparency and community trust.”



Edwin C. Roessler Jr.
FCPD

“Chief Roessler has dedicated his life to protecting our community for over 30 years.”

— Jeffrey McKay,
Chairman of the Fairfax
County Board of Supervisors

ROESSLER LED the department to national accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, while also maintaining state accredited status. The FCPD has been re-accredited by both entities during Chief Roessler’s tenure.

Roessler led the department through outside review of its use of force policies and community review by the independent Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission in 2015. Reforms led to enhancing diversity recruitment; increasing transparency; implementation of a body-worn camera program; establishment of a Civilian Review Panel and Independent Police Auditor’s office; and significant modifications to use of force policies, including de-escalation, duty to intervene, prohibition of choke holds, crisis intervention training and diversion programs.

FCPD training now begins with focus on the sanctity of human life.

Chief Roessler formed the Chief’s Diversity Council and partnered with community leaders to help form the Communities of Trust Committee.

During his tenure he prioritized wellness in the community and in the FCPD. Roessler worked to advance mental health support and resources in the FCPD. He also welcomed the addition of an officer-driven, post-traumatic K-9 therapy program and he and his wife raised K-9 Indy, who is now in therapy service with the FCPD Peer Team.

“Chief Ed Roessler is one of the greats in the history of the Fairfax County Police Department,” said Braddock Supervisor James Walkinshaw. “His efforts were key in helping make FCPD a national leader in transparency and accountability while maintaining our status as one of the safest large jurisdictions in the country.”

ROESSLER THANKED his staff and county residents and leadership for contributing to the department’s success.

“The FCPD is blessed with women and men, past and present, who understand their noble calling in life and are dedicated to serving and protecting others,” Roessler said. “I’ve worked alongside progressive law enforcement professionals, amazing forward-thinking strategic county leaders and great community advocates who have truly embraced the concepts of One Fairfax to ensure equity for all. Our county leaders, community and its great police department are positioned to continue to serve as a model for the next generation of policing in America.”

Supervisor James Walkinshaw (Braddock) said, “The men and women of the FCPD are some of the best-trained, most committed public servants in our community and the next Chief will have the honor of leading them into the future. That future requires a leader willing to acknowledge the inequities in the law enforcement and criminal justice systems and take bold action -- action that will sometimes face political resistance from defenders of the status quo -- to address them. I’ll be looking for someone with a track record and commitment to doing just that,” Walkinshaw said.

A recent meeting of the Board of Supervisors Public Safety Committee mentioned low morale in the police force.

“I’ve met with hundreds of Fairfax County police officers in recent months, in group settings and individually,” said Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee) at a committee meeting before Roessler’s announced retirement, “and to a person they have told me morale within the police department is the lowest that it has ever been.”

“This is a public safety issue that must be addressed in order to ensure that our officers are per-

forming at the highest level possible, and that we are retaining the highly skilled law enforcement professionals that we have invested so much time and resources in training,” said Lusk.

The Fraternal Order of Police called for Roessler to resign after he condemned the actions of an officer who was charged with three counts of misdemeanor assault and battery after tasing a man in the Mount Vernon District.

“Bolster The Blue,” a self-described conservative grassroots organization, held a press conference with Fairfax County GOP to say that their efforts helped lead to Roessler’s retirement.

Supervisor Pat Herrity said, “I want to start by thanking the Chief for his many years of service to the residents of Fairfax County. It has been a difficult time to serve in law enforcement. As we begin a new chapter in the history of our Police Department, we will need to find a leader that will address the needs of our officers, build on our legacy as a nationally respected and recognized department and keep at the forefront their primary mission — to protect and serve all residents of the county and keep us the safest jurisdiction of our size in the country. There is a lot of work still to be done and I am committed to working with the Board to address the many issues facing our officers and the department.”

South County High Student Tests Positive for COVID-19

FCPS cooperates with the County Health Department, informs families.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A student at South County High School in Lorton has reported testing positive for COVID-19 according to a bulletin sent by Fairfax County Public Schools on Monday, Nov. 9. South County High School Principal Gary Morris made the online announcement in a letter to families in cooperation with the Fairfax County Health Department. Morris said the Health Department would initiate contact tracing and work to identify this individual’s close contacts and give appropriate public health guidance.

On Tuesday, Nov. 10, Kathleen Thomas, a spokesperson for Fairfax County Public Schools, clarified the case. “The student was not participating in in-person instruction,” she said. Thomas added that they have their COVID dashboard with data available at <https://www.fcps.edu/return-school/fcps-confirmed-covid-19-case-reporting>. Updated Nov. 10, the Virginia Department of Health

Dashboard reported Fairfax County showed no COVID outbreaks in an educational setting.

In his letter, Principal Morris said, “Any student or staff member identified as part of the impacted cohort will receive notification if it is necessary to temporarily transition to distance learning or teleworking until contact investigation and tracing is completed.” If families did not receive a Health Department call, Morris said they were not considered exposed. If the Health Department did advise additional action, FCPS would provide further communication.

FCPS began the 2020-21 school year with virtual learning for all students. On Oct. 5, small cohorts of select students started returning to school for in-person instruction. In his Oct. 23 online Message from the Superintendent to parents and FCPS Staff, Scott Brabrand said, “We have had no incidents to cause concern.” The division continues to open in-person instruction to additional students whose families chose that instruction model.

Fairfax High Presents ‘The Laramie Project’

PHOTO COURTESY
OF KATE PARR

Fairfax High School’s new Director, Chris Whitney, and the FX Players will present “The Laramie Project,” a virtual, livestreaming production, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Nov. 19-21, at 7:15 p.m.

The play centers on the citizens of Laramie,

Wyo., and their reactions to the real-life, vicious attack and murder of gay college student, Matthew Shepard, by two local men. Playwright Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project interviewed Laramie residents and produced a documentary based on their filmed interviews and journal entries.

“The Laramie Project” brings those subjects to life and compels the audience to consider social issues such as homosexuality, sexual politics, social class and privileges, and the difference between silence



Senior Kate Parr portrays Ro-maine Patterson.

and condoning violence. These topics are as relevant in today’s society as they were when this happened, 22 years ago.

The ongoing pandemic makes this virtual production unique in that students are rehearsing their scenes virtually with the director and other actors and filming themselves at home and in nearby locations. Then all the filmed scenes will be edited together for the livestreamed event.

Tickets are \$8, adults; and \$6, students, via www.fxplayers.org. After ticket purchase, a link to the livestream will be emailed, and the production may be viewed on any device with Internet access. For more information, see the Website or call 703-219-2350.

— KIM KLAIN

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Bears Spotted in Fairfax County Backyards

In the fall, black bears may be roaming for food.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

To a hungry black bear, food particles in the trash can or a bird feeder full of seeds is the perfect reason to venture into a backyard in Fairfax County to have a feast. With winter coming, and their long hibernation, the fall months are a good time to fatten up, so that's what they're looking to do, and a few have been spotted recently in Fairfax Station and Burke.

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) was not surprised when his office got the calls over the last couple of weeks. "Just about every year we have bear sightings in the county and we regularly remind our residents on social media and in our newsletters on how to safely coexist with bears. This year there have been more sightings, this is likely due to the additional number of residents at home and/or enjoying the outdoors during the pandemic," Herrity said.

According to Katherine Edwards, Wildlife Management Specialist with the Fairfax County Police Department, the area black bears have wandered in this year, and she's gotten reports of bear sightings in Annandale, Chantilly, Centreville, Clifton, Fairfax, Falls Church, Oakton, McLean, Reston, and Vienna during spring through early fall this year. "While seeing a bear in a yard may be surprising to residents, bear activity in Fairfax County is not as uncommon as one might think," Edwards said via email. As in the case of other Virginia wildlife, as their natural habitat shrinks, they stick to wooded areas and there are many green space corridors in the county they use as travel pathways. Some go to backyards, where the trash, pet food and bird feeders are so that's what attracts them.

"Unattended pumpkins left outside from Halloween or used for fall décor may also serve as a



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

In a Fairfax Station backyard, a bear is checking out the bird feeder for an afternoon snack.

food source and an attractant for bears and other wildlife in our communities," Edwards said.

Black bears are the most common variety of bear in this area, but they stay away from people so the risk of an attack is minimal. "To our knowledge, based on the reports we have received, this bear has not exhibited any abnormal behavior that might be considered a risk to public safety," Edwards said.

Bearwise program was developed by black bear biologists and is supported by State wildlife agencies that supplies information and solutions that help people, neighborhoods and communities prevent problems and keep bears wild. They operate in the southeastern United states. Of the 15 states that Bearwise works with, Virginia ranks second behind North Carolina for the number of black bears with an estimated 18,000 roaming around.



On the Fairfax County website, there is a special page for bear information.

8 Ways to Make Your Property Unattractive to Bears

Preventing problems with bears is a shared responsibility. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Fairfax county wildlife management specialist recommend the following simple steps to reduce your chances of encountering a black bear in your neighborhood:

- ❖ Secure your garbage in bear-resistant trash cans or store it in a secure building.
- ❖ If you have trash collection service, put your trash out the morning of the pickup, not the night before.
- ❖ Do not store household trash, or anything that smells like food, in vehicles, on porches or decks.
- ❖ Remove bird feeders if a bear is in the area and keep them down for 3-4 weeks. Bird feeders are a common lure for bears in Fairfax County.
- ❖ Keep your grill clean. Do not dump drippings in your yard.
- ❖ Don't put meat scraps in your compost pile.
- ❖ Don't leave pet food outdoors.
- ❖ Make sure your neighbors are following the same recommendations.

Report Bear Sightings to the Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline 1-855-571-9003

If a resident sees a bear in their yard, from a safe distance, they should make loud noises, shout, or bang pots and pans to scare the bear, Bearwise said. To prevent surprising a bear, make noise and check the area before proceeding or letting pets outside. If someone unexpectedly surprises a bear, they should make themselves look bigger by raising their arms, repeat "Hey, bear" while backing away. They advise people not to run: do not turn your back, do not play dead. If a bear is up a tree on or near the property, they should give it space, not approach the bear, and bring pets inside to provide the bear a clear path to leave the property.

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High-Flying Peace Bird in Van Dyck Park

Sky and clouds are reflected in Peace Bird, the 6-foot-tall, brushed-aluminum sculpture flying high in Fairfax City's Van Dyck Park. Designed by New Orleans-based artist Michael Cain, it was placed there in memory of late Fairfax resident Armistice Turtora, its atop Armistice Turtora Field, next to the memorial bench and plaque describing her six decades of service to the community.

She organized and served as the first president of the City of Fairfax Federation of Citizens Assns. and was a longtime member of Fairfax's Commission on the Arts. Turtora was also the first chairman of Fairfax's Parks and Recreation Board, which she helped establish, and she tirelessly advocated for the purchase and development of parks throughout the City.

When Van Dyck Park was built in the 1960s, she fought to keep its open field – known as “The Bowl” – as a place for unscheduled play and activities. And in June 2016, that spot was officially renamed Armistice Turtora Field in her honor. She died in 2017, a month shy of her 91st birthday.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

A close-up look at Fairfax City's Peace Bird in Van Dyck Park.



Armistice Turtora

According to Molly Grimsley, past Commission on the Arts chairman, the Peace Bird's verticality and motion suggest “hope and new experiences,” while also bringing “a sense of peace and meditation” to all those who view it.

— BONNIE HOBBS

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-Werner Heisenberg

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Announcements

TAX NOTICE
CITY OF FAIRFAX

REAL ESTATE TAX PAYMENTS ARE DUE

Real Estate tax bills have been mailed and are due
Monday, December 7, 2020

LATE PAYMENT PENALTY

To avoid incurring a 10%, \$10 minimum, late payment penalty and interest of 10% per annum, **payment in full must be received or postmarked by close-of-business on Monday, Dec. 7, 2020**

Taxes may be paid online, by mail, or in-person to the City Treasurer's Office (City Hall, Suite 234) 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding holidays)

IMPORTANT

Even if you do not receive a physical bill, to avoid late payment penalties you are still responsible for requesting a copy and remitting payment by Monday, December 7, 2020

For Additional Information, please check the City website at www.FairfaxVA.gov or call (703) 385-7900

CALENDAR

NOW THRU THE 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.

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.

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>

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.

NOV. 13-15

Northern Virginia Christmas Market. Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the Dulles Expo Center, 4368 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Features 150 fine artisans from 20 states selling fine arts, pottery, jewelry, stained glass, wood, photography, fiber arts and more. Admission \$10/adults; \$5/children. Visit www.emgshows.com.

SATURDAY/NOV. 14

Music to My Ears. 2 p.m. Musical Direction; The Other Sound Designer. Artists Re-Imagine 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 is available at www.1ststage.org.

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.

Trail Update Presented

FROM PAGE 7

be replaced – in a minimum, 1:1 ratio – with a wide variety of native trees and plantings.

"I'm concerned we'll lose 500 trees – about 42 percent of those surveyed – even with the one-for-one replanting," said Councilmember Sang Yi. "We'll lose 7 percent of the tree canopy, because the new trees will be smaller than the ones there now. I hate to see good trees getting removed, and I'm glad an independent arborist will assess the plan."

"There are 4,000-5,000 trees total," replied Salgado. "And we'll replant at least 500 trees."

CALLERS during the public-comment portion of the meeting had mixed reactions to the overall proposal. Sarah Ross, with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, said building this trail and its connections to other parts of the City carries out Fairfax's motto of "Live Life Connected."

"We strongly support this," said Douglas Stewart of Fairfax City Citizens for Smarter Growth. "It's a great, multiuse

trail for people and has the potential to be a signature place where people want to be. It'll connect to Northfax and to regional trails, too, without people having to drive."

However, he added, "We're concerned about the eastern transition to Fairfax Boulevard. The sidewalk at Draper Drive should be widened and the intersection improved to make it safer for pedestrians."

Judy Frasier, though, was opposed to the project. "Fourteen million dollars and 7 acres of forest will be lost for a 6-minute bike ride," she said. Frasier also didn't like the asphalt that would be added and said dead trees should be left alone because they "provide incredible habitat for animals and birds."

Agreeing, Katie Johnson urged the Council to "Reconsider the trail's alignment to diminish the tree loss."

But Sonya Breehey, president of the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling, supported the trail. "We must do all we can to get people out of their cars," she said. "And a connected trail system does just that."

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As Second Opinions Go ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... it was first rate. A confirmation - of sorts that I have (and have had in all likelihood) thyroid cancer and not non small cell lung cancer. And I say 'sorts' because the medical records transferred did not include the original pathologist's report on the tissue sample taken in 2009 and not all the scans from the nearly 12 years of treatment either. Nevertheless, this second oncologist summarized my cancer as being thyroid; partially because I'm still alive. Generally speaking, lung cancer patients don't survive years beyond their prognosis. Addition by subtraction you might say. Unfortunately, lung cancer does what it does: grows, and when it doesn't, it's reason to consider another diagnosis. My primary oncologist had often said that the tumors in my lungs never acted as he had anticipated.

Good news then. Great news. I don't have the "terminal" cancer with which I was originally diagnosed. I guess that explains why I have lived so many years past the "13 month to two year" prognosis that I was initially given in late Feb., 2009. Rather than having an incurable disease: non small cell lung cancer stage IV, I now have papillary thyroid cancer stage IV. Hopefully, I will be able to live with it much as I had lived with the apparent lung cancer" day by day, scan to scan. However, the day to day stress may be less because the worst case is not necessarily a scenario that I have to anticipate. Granted, it's still cancer, and from what I was told, still incurable, but for the moment, very treatable. Surgery is likewise not an option and there is still medication - with side effects, that will remain part of my life, but there is life that remains. Moreover, there also remains regularly scheduled CT scans and lab work that will monitor my condition. And it is not until I receive the results from these diagnostic procedures that I can truly appreciate the change in my diagnosis.

It's not that I don't trust this second opinion, it's more that I've spent the last nearly 12 years thinking one way and changing how I think now after one 45-minute appointment is not quite how I can roll.

Besides, my thyroid cancer has metastasized to the lung. And though it has been slow moving, it has moved. And it is rare. At present, it is responding to the medication but there are no guarantees in the cancer business, and I will continue to live from one scan to the next. I am grateful to be out from underneath, apparently, this terrible weight of fear and inevitability. However, as a long-time cancer patient, I can't simply presume that life resumes as per usual, with per-usual being a pre-cancer-type life. Regardless of now being a thyroid cancer patient and not a non small cell lung cancer patient, I still am a cancer patient. As such, I still retain all the feelings and anxieties. I will still attend all the meetings, if you know what I mean? I can't simply disconnect or forget all that I've endured these past 11-plus years

And lo and behold, I have a CT scan this Wednesday. By the end of the week, I will likely learn if my newly diagnosed thyroid cancer is still responding to treatment or whether there is something rotten in Denmark (me being Denmark). Even though I have a new working diagnosis - thyroid cancer, which on the face of it, is much less serious, I can't approach my life any differently than I did before. Cancer is in charge, and until it tells me, so to speak, via scans and lab work, that it's OKAY to breath normally, I won't be able to. Now more than ever, almost, even with this new information, I can't forget where I've been and what I've been told. It was lung cancer once. Perhaps, it can be again. For the moment, I'm going to try and enjoy my new-found status. But with the incomplete medical records painting a less-than-definitive picture, I will go along with the second oncologist's assessment, but only from a distance. Unfortunately, having been told one thing before, and now being told another very different thing, doesn't change the facts on my ground. I still have cancer.

And it's still incurable. That problem remains.

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

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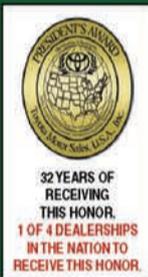
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