

The Arlington Connection

On the morning of his Eagle Scout Review Board, Charlie Gaylord inspects the food donations in the "Little Free Pantry" that he constructed for his Eagle Scout Project.

Little Free Pantry In Time of Covid

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Public Meetings Funding the Right Transportation Projects

You are invited to share comments on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding in the FY2021-2026 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Additionally, pursuant to §33.2-202, comments will be accepted for new projects valued in excess of \$25 million. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will consider your comments as it develops the FY2021-2026 Six-Year Improvement Program. The program allocates public funds to highway, road, bridge, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation projects. All federally eligible projects in the SYIP will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to document how Virginia will obligate its federal funds. Meeting materials were made available on Nov. 13, 2020 and continue to be at <http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/fallmeetings/default.asp>.

The public is able to provide feedback on the FY2021-2026 Six-Year Improvement Program Update at the virtual fall meeting on Nov. 24, 2020, which is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. and will be conducted using electronic communications in accordance with Item 4-0.01.g. of Chapter 1289 (2020 Acts of Assembly), as the COVID-19 emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe to assemble in a single location.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operation of the CTB and the discharge of its

lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities. All board members will be participating remotely. The public may view the meeting via live stream by clicking the "View stream" button at the following link: http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/public_meetings/live_stream/default.asp.

There will be opportunity for public comment. When announced, public comment can be made by calling 470-285-4495, followed by PIN 392 182 855#. Callers will be placed on hold until others in queue ahead of them have had the opportunity to speak. In the event there is an interruption in the meeting broadcast, call 804-729-6495.

The public is invited to share feedback on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding through participation in this virtual public meeting or by submitting comments through the online form, by email, or by posted mail by Dec. 3, 2020.

For information on roads and highways projects: Six-YearProgram@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or Infrastructure Investment Director, Virginia Department of Transportation, 1401 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219 or online form found at <http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/fallmeetings/default.asp>.

For information on rail and public transportation projects: DRPTPR@drpt.virginia.gov, Public Information Office, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond, VA 23219.

The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its services on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on these policies or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-2730 or the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-4440 (TTY users call 711).

News



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Patrick Moran, commercial space pilot.

From Yorktown High School to Outer Space

Patrick Moran chosen as pilot for commercial space travel program.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Patrick Moran is in his car headed for Spaceport America, New Mexico. He will assume his new job on Monday as a pilot for the Virgin Galactic team, preparing for commercial space travel.

Moran says the commercial civilian flights are projected to begin in 2021 after a couple more test flights. The program will carry six passengers at a time who have paid \$250,000 each for the experience of shooting 50 miles up into space, unbuckling their belts to experience weightlessness and gliding back to earth. When the Spaceship runs out of energy, it comes back to earth. He says the Spaceship doesn't go into orbit.

The trip into space takes about two and a half hours although the trip is preceded by several days of preparation time for the passengers. They have health checks to be sure they are physically capable and their heart can handle an extreme experience. There are several days of classroom training and a simulator experience to let them experience the Gs that they will encounter on the trip. And, of course, a celebration afterwards to share the experience with the family and friends who came to watch.

Moran will join six current pilots already at Virgin Galactic as well as another newly-chosen pilot who will enter the program with him.

Moran says in the beginning he will have a formal and rigorous training and build up. "I won't do the hardest stuff right away." Moran comes to the job after 20 years

as a Marine test pilot, an instructor, and the lead government test pilot for the Navy and Marine versions of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Moran says he retired from the Marine Corps about five years ago. After a couple of years he got back in the cockpit and became excited. He knew he wanted to fly again. "I had to get current, and then I got an offer from United back in December." Then COVID hit, and turned everything upside down. "I was sitting home without a flying job."

Then he saw the advertisement for the Pilot Corps on the Virgin Galactic crew. "I applied in early March and didn't hear anything for several months. "In July I got a call from HR who set up a Zoom interview with a panel of pilots." He said they brought in six candidates and hired two. "I had the credentials they were looking for, both commercial and military flight experience with over 3,000 flight hours in 34 different aircraft."

"They called me back and told me I did great and they wanted to bring me to New Mexico for an interview." He continues, "The interview was awesome. I got to fly an experimental aircraft and pilot a spaceship in a simulator, to look behind the curtain. It was a test pilot amusement park."

Moran says as part of the pilot training he will fly the profile in a space simulator which is a way he can fly simulated parts of flight trajectory for the SpaceShip Two. He will also train to fly the carrier aircraft, VMS Eve. A lot of what he has already learned on earth applies to space travel. He has done

SEE FROM YORKTOWN, PAGE 6
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A Turkey in Every Pot AFAC orders 2,500 turkeys to feed needy Arlington families.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

A refrigerated Cisco semi-trailer sprinkled with raindrops pulls up in front of the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) headquarters on Wednesday, Nov. 11. It is packed full of turkeys.

"Next week is Turkey Week," Jolie Smith explains. Smith is in charge of development for AFAC and has been running a Hope Against Hunger effort to collect \$25 donations to provide a Thanksgiving dinner to AFAC's 2,500 clients.

"It may be more families at this time of the year, and it's possible we'll be ordering more turkeys." She says some people who are qualified to receive AFAC groceries come only once a year to get Thanksgiving dinner because it is so expensive. Smith says referrals to AFAC are up 45 percent this year due to COVID. "We don't know what to expect next week."

Alias Santiago unlocks the heavy back door of the trailer to check out the turkeys but the door won't budge. Smith calls for Warehouse Manager Ray Bynum who arrives,

analyzes the situation and gives the door a jerk and then a quick pop, and it comes loose. The door had frozen shut along with the turkeys.

Smith says the \$25 will provide a turkey and fresh produce that goes with a traditional dinner. "We always have potatoes and we'll have canned pumpkin and donated pie crusts and vegetables that go with a Thanksgiving dinner." She says that next week when the families come to pick up their regular supplemental groceries that they will receive eggs and milk and bread, plus the fresh produce and other holiday items they select and a turkey. They will pick it up at the end of the line "because turkeys are heavy."

Smith says when COVID-19 hit in March that AFAC had to take everything outside, and distribution of groceries changed. Families got a choice of protein, a bag of milk and eggs and two prepackaged bags in order to cut down on contact and ensure safety. Everyone was wearing masks. Smith says that fortunately they haven't had one case of coronavirus in the staff or volunteers.

Now AFAC has been able to re-

turn to the "choice model" since all of the safeguards have been in place. "We wanted to bring the choice model back. It is more dignified for the family. It's super important."

She says this effort will be repeated at Christmas with Chicken Week which will be the week before Christmas. Smith says donations for these Thanksgiving dinners may be made on the AFAC website until Dec. 31. She says, "In addition, we will have two matching grants that will allow us to double each contribution."

Anyone who wishes to donate nonperishable food to help AFAC provide food for the holiday dinners can drop it off at the AFAC warehouse located at 2708 S. Nelson Street or several other locations listed on the AFAC website. These food donations are particularly important this year since the annual national Scouting for Food initiative has been cancelled due to the coronavirus.

Each year Scouting for Food has contributed thousands of pounds of donated food to AFAC. Note some individual scout troops are

holding a food drive in their neighborhoods.

AFAC is a non-profit organization that supplies supplemental groceries to Arlington families in need. It was established in 1988 by a small group of residents and six congregations to feed 19 struggling families. Ten years ago the average had grown to about 1,100 families and five years ago to 1,700. Now with the challenges faced due to the impact of the pandemic, the number climbed from the new average of 2,400 to 2,885 in mid-March.



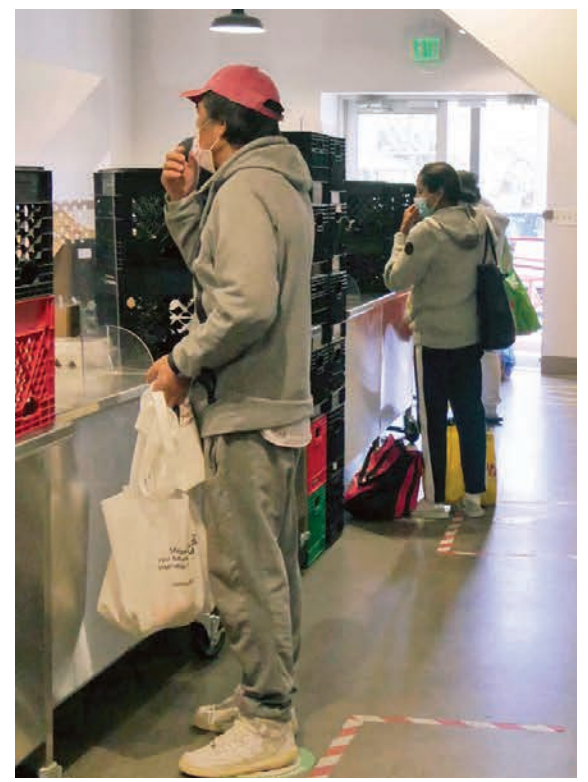
Alias Santiago, Jolie Smith and Ray Bynum open a cardboard box to inspect three of the 2,500 frozen turkeys ordered by AFAC for Thanksgiving dinners for their clients.



AFAC volunteers, wearing masks and plastic gloves, work behind plexiglass cubicles to distribute supplemental groceries to over 2,500 needy families. So far there have been no cases of coronavirus in the AFAC staff or volunteers.



Luke Alexander works in the warehouse bagging oatmeal for AFAC families, declaring there is a whole pallet in the corner and he is going to keep working until they tell him to stop.



AFAC families socially distance as they move down the line to load their bags with oatmeal, beans, and rice plus choice of meat, then on to the fresh produce, eggs and milk.

Eagle Scout Project Meets Pandemic Challenge

This year's Eagle Scout project took a different spin with the advent of coronavirus. Charlie Gaylord has built a "Little Free Pantry" outside the Arlington Central Library to meet the increased need for supplemental grocery assistance during the pandemic.

He said the pantry is about a 4x4-foot wooden box meant to hold non-perishable items like canned goods and cereal to be donated to Arlington County Food Assistance Center (AFAC). Gaylord said AFAC comes by regularly and picks up the food.

"I've been back to visit several times and it seems to be doing well. But," he continues, "unfortunately two weeks ago the wind took the door off and I'm in the process of repairing it."

Gaylord came up with his idea in April just as COVID was hitting. "The timing was pretty bad." He said COVID made the project significantly more difficult; it threw a rock into the equation."

The idea originated a couple of years ago when Gaylord saw a similar idea at a Farmer's Market in South Carolina. "I guess it has always been in my head. I wanted to see what would happen in Arlington."

The construction itself took about six hours. "I had help from several other scouts." But the entire project took about 50 hours from start to finish. The process began with the proposal packet, which has a description of the idea and the beneficiary, which in this case was AFAC, Arlington Food Assistance Center.

He had to get approval from the Library to build the Pantry on site, and it was difficult to reach them since they were struggling to get everything under control and couldn't divert attention to his request. After approval from AFAC, the Central Library and the local and district Scout leaders, the hard work began.

He had to raise money to purchase the estimated \$470 in Plexiglas, plywood, nails and screws to complete the project. "My idea was to convince other Scouts to mow lawns and give the money to me for the project. But I had to put caution in my emails during the coronavirus about knocking on



Charlie Gaylord builds his "Little Free Pantry" at the back entrance to the Central Library with the help of another scout in Troop 106 and his father.



On the morning of his Eagle Scout Review Board Charlie Gaylord inspects the food donations in the "Little Free Pantry" that he constructed for his Eagle Scout Project.

doors and talking to people about mowing lawns. I guess I got 10-15 people to help out and earned \$700. I gave the extra money to AFAC. Then came the construction. He collaborated with the family carpenter who gave advice on

the best materials for the project and helped him get the best deals. About 5-6 other Scouts helped to build it.

He has known he wanted to be an Eagle Scout since he began as a Cub Scout. Now the final step in

his Eagle Scout journey takes place on Monday when Gaylord goes before the Board of Review. "This will mean so much to me, and to see how my generosity and dedication has paid off since Cub Scouts, is a privilege."

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE

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BULLETIN BOARD

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

POLICE HOST FILL THE CRUISER

Help spread joy this holiday season by donating new, unwrapped toys during the Arlington County Police Department's sixth annual Fill the Cruiser

Holiday Toy Drive. This year, with families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for donations may be greater than ever and your generosity helps ensure the holidays are bright for some of our most vulnerable community mem-

bers - children in need. Officers will collect new, unwrapped toys for children ages newborn to 17 at the following locations:
Friday, November 20, 2020, from 6 to 8 p.m. Lee Harrison Shopping Center - 2425 N. Harrison Street;

Monday, November 23, 2020, from 5 to 7 p.m. Ballston Quarter - 4238 Wilson Boulevard. A cruiser will be located between Ted's Bulletin and True Food Kitchen;

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 6





A litter of puppies



The zipper nose



The semipricket ears



A kindle of kittens

PHOTO BY KIM WILLIAMS

Try Not To Be a Semipricket This Thanksgiving

BY JOAN BRADY
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

I'm obsessed with my beagle's upper lip. I don't know why, I just am. Turns out it has its own name, it's a flews. The lower lip, you ask? Well that's just called the lower lip. Go figure.

If you've been following this column, you may have been learning new terms to describe animals and their behavior along with me.

I've learned about popcorning, the hilarious happy dance, from our friends, the guinea pigs. I now know that a clowder (or clutter) is a group of three or more cats. And that community cats are a way of describing cats who live on the streets and in the wild.

Last week, I learned that there is a term for dogs with faces that sport one light side and one dark side. I know Janis-faced is what you are thinking, but no, it's apparently referred to as split faced.

I thought it would be fun to put together a few fun terms that we can all use to impress friends and relatives during our COVID Thanksgivings. So let's get to it.

A snipec muzzle is one that is considered too pointy for the breed. A dog with a butterfly nose has a nose with randomly bright pink patches. If your dog's nose is pinkish and the breed generally has a black nose, well that's a dudley nose. Is your dog's head round on top, instead of flat? That's referred to as apple-headed. Have you ever seen a dog with an adorable fur stripe down the center of its nose bridge? That's called a zipper nose.

A litter of puppies is a litter, but a litter of



The split face

kittens is a kindle. Does your cat ever come over and give you a head butt? Well that behavior actually has a name, that's called bunting. And did you know that while a dog that isn't identified as any single breed is a mutt or mixed breed, a cat is referred to as a moggy?

Turns out when happy bunnies do that popcorning jump with a twist thing, it's doing a binky. And apparently pet shops are used to receiving frantic phone calls from new bunny owners, who, when seeing this for the first time, think their new pet is having a seizure.

Have you ever seen a horse make a sort of toothy duckface, where they curl their upper lip? That's called the flehmen reaction. Apparently lifting that upper lip draws air into the auxiliary olfactory sense organ on the roof of their mouths which allows them to better perceive certain scents and pheromones. But seriously, does it really matter why, when the expression is so awesome?

Mammals hibernate, but reptiles brumate.

During brumation the animal is in a state of sluggishness that's slightly more active than hibernation. Hibernating animals, as you know, don't wake up until it's over. But lizards and other reptiles may stir to take a sip of water. Seems like this one has an opportunity for expanded use right now. I know quite a few people who have described very similar behavior as a way to get through the COVID-winter. I found a lot of great material, but for now, I'm going to close with this potentially useful little term, the semipricket. This name for the jaunty little ear that bends over at the top, may have a place as the per-

fect insult to sling at an annoying adult sibling during your Thanksgiving Zoom. You're welcome.

ArPets is a weekly feature for highlighting the well-loved pets of Arlington as well as animals who are available for adoption. If you or your dog, cat, iguana, bunny, rat or any other pet, has an interesting pet story to tell, send email to: joan@joanbradyphotography.com.

Joan Brady is an award-winning Connection Newspapers columnist and local photographer specializing in pets, children and families and contemporary business portraits.

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I thought she was grinning for the camera, turns out it was the flehmen response.

PHOTOS BY
JOAN BRADY



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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

NEWS

From Yorktown High School to Outer Space

FROM PAGE 2

training in gliding and in spins. But it will be different when he does the glider training for when the shuttle comes back to earth and “when you push the big red button that goes straight up.”

He says, “It will take several years to get into space. There will also be duties on the ground like the mission control, the group who talks to the crew in space.”

Moran graduated in engineering from the University of Virginia and says as part of his duties he expects to work with the engineering team on different aspects of system design including risk management, gathering and analyzing data.

Moran says he was always interested in science in high school but he thinks it all began because, “I had

an uncle who flew helicopters in the Navy when I was about 9, and I guess that planted a seed.” He applied for Naval ROTC at University of Virginia “and when the decision point came, I moved in that direction.”

Before college Moran’s family lived in Arlington where he remembers getting on the bus at the stop near H.B. Woodlawn where he headed to Yorktown High School every school day. He played football at Yorktown where he graduated in 1990. “I remember Bruce Hanson, my football coach. It was his first year there. I think he is still there. And my science teacher Mr. Zeto.” Moran says looking back he appreciates “how lucky I was that I went to Yorktown. I have awesome memories, and I had great teachers. They were head and shoulders. They prepared me for success.”

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 4

Tuesday December 1, 2020, from 5 to 7 p.m. Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church – 830 23rd Street S.;

Wednesday, December 2, 2020, from 5 to 7 p.m. Arlington Assembly of God – 4501 N. Pershing Drive.

Toys will be distributed by the Police Department to community organizations throughout the month of December.

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

Story Time with Santa. 9-9:50 a.m. Via Zoom. The Junior League of Northern Virginia presents Story Time with Santa. Delight in the magic of the holidays and start your day the merry way with story time with Santa! Stay in your favorite pajamas while having an enchanting morning with stories

from jolly old St. Nick. Family price includes 2 adults, 2 children. Your Zoom link will be sent to you the week of Nov. 15.

\$25 per family (2 adults, 2 kids)
\$5 per additional child

Website: <https://www.jlnv.org/story-time-with-santa/>

TUESDAY/DEC. 1

Get Focused. 5-6 p.m. Virtual Meeting. Join EcoAction Arlington and the Arlington County Chamber of Commerce in a virtual event featuring Brian Kane who will share his experience in developing a certified sustainability program for his school. Cost is \$10. Visit the website:

<https://www.ecoactionarlington.org/get-involved/events/>

HOW SHOULD ARLINGTON SUPPORT ITS TREES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Arlington is developing its Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, which will provide strategies to support current conditions and future possibilities to advance Arlington’s stewardship of its trees and natural resources.

Share your perceptions, interests and aspirations about the county’s conservation and maintenance of our ecosystems over the next year to inform the development of this plan and bring your priorities to life.

Sign up here: <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/fnrp/>

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

Legals

VIRGINIA:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF KING WILLIAM

IN RE: ESTATE OF CHARLES ROBERT PARNELL, DECEASED

ORDER UP PUBLICATION

The object of this suit is to have the Estate of Charles Robert Parnell, Deceased, settled and paid out to all heirs.

It is ORDERED that Christine Royer appear at the above named Court and protect her interest she may have in this matter on or before December 17, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

It is hereby ORDERED that this Order be published once a week for four successive weeks in the Arlington Connection as her last known address was in Arlington, VA.

It is ORDERED that the Arlington Connection publish this Order for the time specified and send the Certificate of Publication and bill to Carl J. Witmeyer, II, Esquire at 9562 Kings Charter Drive, Suite 200, Ashland, VA 23005, to be paid by Peggy George, Administrator of the Estate.

It is ORDERED that the Clerk of this Court send a certified copy of this Order to Carl J. Witmeyer, II and to the Arlington Connection upon entry by this Court.

ENTER: 11/10/2020

B. Witmeyer, II
Judge

I ASK FOR THIS:

Carl J. Witmeyer, II
VSB # 15790
THE WITMEYER LAW FIRM, LLC
9562 Kings Charter Drive, Suite 200
Ashland, VA 23005
(804) 752-0130

Legals

Be a part of our **Wellbeing** pages, the first week of every month.

Delight in our **HomeLifeStyle** sections, the second week of every month. Peek at the top real estate sales, glimpse over-the-top remodeling projects, get practical suggestions for your home.

Celebrate students, camps, schools, enrichment programs, colleges and more in our **A-plus: Education, Learning, Fun** pages, the third week of every month.

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NEWSPAPERS

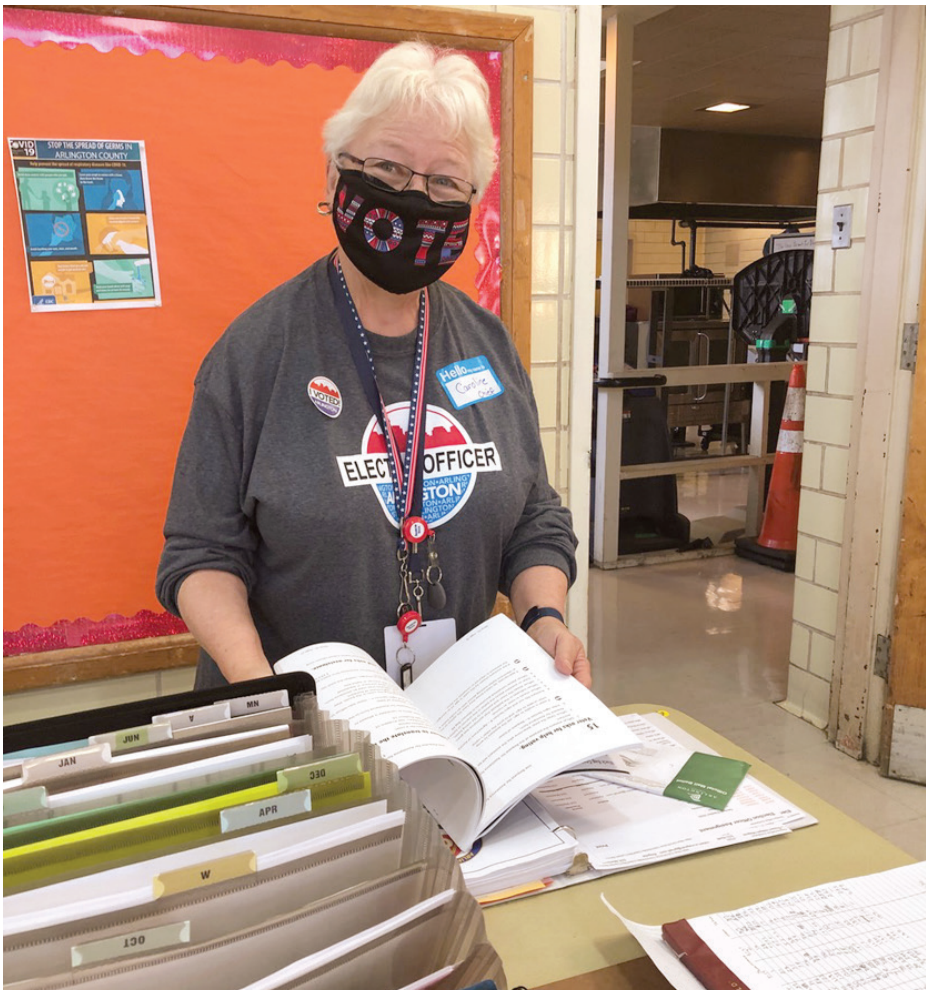


PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

Caroline Klam is a familiar face at the Madison Community Center where she has overseen elections for many years. Election officers are guardians of the vote and this year, essential personnel taking on the risk of coronavirus too.

Election Officers in Arlington Protect the Votes

Action was slow at the community center because of early voting.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

As precinct chief, Caroline Klam has been watching over elections in Arlington for a long time. She is a familiar face at the Madison Community Center during elections, and always happy to offer her take on the turnout. During the primaries in July she worked hard to keep person-

nel safe while voters came in, but lines were short with low turnout of about 250 voters. On Nov. 3, she was even better protected, with glass partitions for the staff and boxes to pass documents without contact. But turnout was also low: she only had 300 voters late in the day. This didn't reflect actual numbers of voters, though. Most voters had voted by mail or early in person, with about a 90 percent turnout for her precinct.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

NOW THRU DEC. 15

Annual Membership Drive. The Port City Chapter of the National Charity League (NCL), a premier mother-daughter volunteer organization, invites women with daughters currently in 7th-12th grade, to join its chapter of 200-plus active mothers and daughters who reside in or attend school in Arlington, Alexandria, Springfield, Crystal City, or Washington, D.C. Visit the website: www.nationalcharityleague.org/chapter/portcity/

NOW THRU JAN. 21, 2021

Mah Jongg Cards. 8 to 10 p.m. To order, click on the link below (or copy and paste it into your browser), download the form. Order by January 21, 2021: <http://bit.ly/2021MahJongg>. Cost: \$9 for small cards and \$10 for large cards. Email: iva.gresko@www.connectionnewspapers.com

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GET MORE WITH SNAP

Arlington and Alexandria Farmers' Markets accept SNAP/EBT (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) cards for purchases. SNAP/EBT customers can purchase farm fresh produce at local area farmers' markets and get matching bonus tokens to add to their purchases. Virginia Cooperative will be on-site at several local farmers' markets of Alexandria and Arlington to provide more information on SNAP and offer food tastings, prizes and more at the Arlington Farmers' Market, N. 14th and Courthouse Road (second Saturday of the month) and Columbia Pike Farmers' Market, 2820 Columbia Pike (third Sunday of the month).

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I'm Here to Report



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As my brother, Richard, has often said: "If the oncologist is happy then I'm happy." Let me update that sentiment slightly: If the endocrinologist is happy then I'm happy." And so we should all be happy. Yesterday, I had my post CT scan telephone appointment with my endocrinologist to discuss the previous day's lab work and the two days previous scan. She was "very encouraged." "News," as I told her, "with which I can live." And more than just the words she spoke, it's the manner in which she spoke them. Her tone was positive, uplifting; she was very pleased. I could almost see her smiling. After hearing it all, she didn't need to tell me to have a nice weekend. I was well on my way. Oddly enough, I have learned to take good news in stride. It's the bad news that has a tendency to knock me off my gait.

Prior to this Friday morning call, I had received, electronically, as I usually do, the automated releases of both my lab work and the radiologist's report. Having been down this road for nearly 12 years now, I am not unaware of discouraging results. The words I read and the numbers I see always tell a story. And even though I'm somewhat experienced, the interpretation and meaning of it all doesn't automatically jump out at me. Oh sure, I'm familiar enough and certainly know what lab results (levels) generally speaking are problematic (creatinine and bilirubin particularly). But there's so much more that I don't know. Moreover, there is no real breakdown-type summary to clarify beyond all my reasonable doubts as to what is happening in/to my body. I'm sort of left to my own devices. Devices which have proven to be unreliable - and certainly ones not very educated on the matter at hand. If this were about baseball, I wouldn't be clueless at all. But it's cancer and science and medicine; all the subjects I know very little about.

Released automatically, I receive the same document that the doctors do. That means what I'm reading is the actual report, written by a doctor for a doctor. The report is full of medical jargon. And though there are "impressions," provided as well as an organ-by-organ characterization, until I speak with one of my doctors and have them review the report with me, I'm never quite sure if what I think I understand is wishful thinking or whether my worst nightmare is happening during the day.

As a result, there are lots of words and medical assessments that are lost on me. It's not like reading a baseball box score when I know what everything means and its significance. Sure, there are many familiar words, but there are more that are not. Obviously "no new sites of metastatic disease I can understand and appreciate, literally. But "aortic atherosclerotic calcification" and intrathoracic and axillary lymphadenopathy" I don't. Understand them? I can barely pronounce them, let alone spell them. And as much information is provided in these reports, I feel as if I need a scorecard to identify all the players and determine what it all means.

Now when I have that follow-up phone call with the endocrinologist/oncologist, the report is explained. However, the explanations are not chapter and verse, they are more like sentence and paragraph. They're short and hopefully, as it was time, sweet. Of course, I could ask more questions but as the comedian Dennis Miller once joked on the radio: "I don't care how the popcorn is popped, I just want it to pop." So too am I less concerned with the popping (details). I want to know if I'm going to live or die. Unfortunately, the reports - and the conversations don't really offer a glimpse into the future as much as they attempt to clarify the present - which apparently is as good as it is likely to get. If 11 years - and nine months as a cancer patient has taught me anything, it has taught me to be grateful for any good news, however indeterminate.

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

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