

Great Falls CONNECTION

SENIOR LIVING

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A new maple tree is planted at the Old Forestville Schoolhouse where the two white oaks previously stood.



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Express Lanes May Link to American Legion Memorial Bridge

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION



MAP BY THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The "495 NEXT" project limits.

Just when it seemed like the interstate network in Northern Virginia was completely outfitted with the toll lane options, transportation officials have etched out another project to stretch the 495 Express Lanes to the American Legion Memorial Bridge on the northern side of the Capital Beltway.

The proposed project, they are calling "495 NEXT," includes extending the 495 Express Lanes by approximately three miles from the I-495 and Dulles Toll Road interchange to the George Washington Memorial Parkway in the vicinity of the American Legion Bridge. It is a joint project from the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

In that corridor, plans include replacing existing bridges, adding bike and pedestrian trails, replacing existing noise walls and construct new walls where needed and installing stormwater management facilities. By doing this, it will reduce congestion, VDOT says, provide additional travel choices and improve reliability. Currently, a motorist on the existing 495 Express Lanes heading northbound hits the end of the express lanes just north of the Dulles Toll Road, and has to merge back into traffic, and it can be problematic. This extension is designed to eliminate that.

INTERCHANGES at Old Dominion Drive, Georgetown Pike, Live Oak Drive and the George Washington Memorial Parkway will be rebuilt as part of it. Maryland is looking into implementing express lanes, and these are proposed to include the American Legion Bridge which could link to the 495 Express Lanes with this extension. In November 2019, Governor Ralph Northam (D-VA) and Governor Larry Hogan (R-MD) signed the Capital Beltway

accord to create a new, unified Capital Beltway, replace the aging American Legion Bridge and relieve congestion at one of the country's worst traffic chokepoints, according to the VDOT website.

In the road building process, the plans are presented to the public and meetings are held to gather feedback. One such meeting was recently held on Nov. 18, via a VDOT live feed, and it was attended by VDOT engineers, elected officials and residents of the McLean area. VDOT laid out the data from the traffic studies to support the need for the lane extension, and the sound wall improvements to accompany it. Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) wondered why there weren't more sound walls at the George Washington Parkway, and was told the National Park Service was against it. "Just because they don't want it doesn't mean we shouldn't build it," Foust said.

Another element they looked at was the possibility of a transit option to Tysons Corner, with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation advocating for that option. "The county is strongly supporting a transit option," said director Tom Biesiadny.

THE OPPOSITION spoke out too. One commenter claimed the website was not up to date, had the wrong maps, and the studies were "just empty words," she claimed. Another person, "Debbie Butler," wanted to know what Maryland's plans were to connect the lanes.

At the end of the meeting, the VDOT project manager Michelle Holland promised to follow up on all items that were discussed during the online meeting.

Right now the timeframe for the project is loosely established, with the construction starting in 2021 and the project being completed in 2024. For more information, go to <http://495northernextension.org>

Great Falls Resident Wins a Nationally-prestigious Mitchell Scholarship

Great Falls resident and Harvard University graduate Kiran Hampton was awarded a nationally-prestigious George J. Mitchell Scholarship. He will spend the 2021-2022 academic year studying at Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland. Hampton was selected from a national applicant pool of 453, the most ever in the program's history. His bio is pasted below (with link to his photo) for easy reference.

Hampton recently graduated from Harvard with High Honors in History and Literature. As the President of Harvard Radio Broadcasting, he ran the

largest open organization on campus, setting and executing policy for a 24/7 commercial radio station with a large share of the Boston market. Hampton and his team grew WHRB administratively and financially while significantly increasing its membership and improving the quality of its broadcasting. Hampton is proficient in Arabic, was a Harvard Crimson Editorial Board Editor, and tutored students for the citizenship exam. He interned for the Democratic Caucus of the House of Representatives and was a ghostwriter/speechwriter for a Democratic candidate for Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney. At present he works with the Fairfax County NAACP, supporting



COURTESY PHOTO

Kiran Hampton

their educational priorities and justice initiatives. His father is an Iraq War veteran and Kiran wrote "The last four generations of my family joined the army and ... were both victims and agents of the white American imperial will." His academic interest is in administrative and economic institutions, "in particular, in the sliding schema of regulation, by which private organizations and the state enforce economic and social rules with maniacal harshness against the poor and flexible permissiveness against the powerful." Hampton has been admitted to Harvard Law. He will study Economics at Queen's University Belfast.

What are you grateful for on Thanksgiving 2020?

Jeff McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

"In 2020 I'm grateful for the residents of Fairfax County, who have shown so much compassion and empathy during these difficult times. We are lucky to live in Fairfax County and part of that is because of the people who live here. A lot has changed since I first took office at the beginning of year, but care for the community wasn't one of those changes. Residents stepped up to support their neighbors and so many volunteered their time this year. 2020 has been challenging, but I have so much hope for the future."



Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville)

"In a year when all aspects of our lives have been turned upside down by an invisible virus, I count my blessings.

I am thankful to be working with my outstanding colleagues on the Board, some of whom barely had time to settle in, as we lead the County through a pandemic with serious public health and economic consequences.

I am grateful to our health care providers, our non-profit and faith-based partners, and our amazing County staff who stepped up to meet the challenges caused by COVID-19. I especially appreciate our police, fire fighters, mental health therapists, and all those County employees who risk their own health by providing services directly to our residents.

I celebrate the re-elections of my friends Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton and Senator Mark Warner and the election of President-elect Joe Biden.

Finally, I am most grateful for my good health and that of my family and friends, and for the birth of my first grandchild, Jackson Willig Foust."



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON

I'm grateful for the extra time with my children and family.- Erin White of Great Falls, a government employee with daughter Reagan, 3



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON

Definitely that we've stayed healthy...We've been healthy and happy at home, so yes, we've survived, even throughout the whole pandemic, my parents too. They live in Philadelphia. We've seen them occasionally.- Lauren Vogel, of Great Falls, works at home for Arcada in Arlington. She is pictured with son William, 3.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

I am thankful for our customers and their continued support, and the community spirit they bring.- Elaine Shadid, Manager of the Great Falls Community Farmers Market

BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Mike Kearney of Great Falls

Even in these difficult times, with the pandemic, unemployment, and all the economic challenges, we still have a lot to be thankful for. First and foremost, I am thankful for a loving and supportive wife, daughter, circle of family and friends. I am thankful for a truly caring community; whose members work hard to do their part in maintaining our special village of Great Falls. I am thankful for all of the front liners, who bravely put themselves at risk to keep the rest of us safe, cared for and fed. I am thankful for the educators who are tirelessly and creatively finding ways to teach our children amidst enormous challenges. I am thankful for all the support community members have given to my business and community endeavors over the last 40 years and the staff and volunteers that I have had the privilege of working with. I am thankful for God keeping an eye on me and my family. He has thrown me a few curveballs over the last two years but has given me the privilege to stay in the game! I would like to finish with this: We have to remain strong, with a can-do attitude, like the little train engine pulling all the train cars up the mountain saying, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can," until finally the train reaches the top with a sigh of relief. We may yet be in for a crazy ride down the other side of the mountain, but holding tight together, I know we can make it. It takes a village and that's what we have!

Happy Thanksgiving Everyone.



PHOTO BY FCPS

I am grateful for the privilege to serve and do good for Fairfax and for the trust of our community. I am grateful for family and love that are too often taken for granted, for health and sustenance that God provides without due praise, and for the chance to try again with every new day. Abrar Omeish, Fairfax County School Board Member-at-Large



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

It might look and feel a bit different this year, but the spirit of Thanksgiving that brings us all together remains the same. I am thankful for my partner's love and support, and inspired by the continued perseverance of our students, parents, teachers, and staff. - Karl Frisch, Fairfax County School Board Member Providence District



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Every year, I am grateful for the love of my family, for the support of my friends, and for my health. This year I am especially thankful for my community. The Town of Vienna has given me the opportunity to serve them as mayor, and they have come together to show kindness to each other like never before. Happy Thanksgiving! #OneVienna - Linda Jane Colbert, Mayor of the Town of Vienna

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SEE VIEWPOINTS, PAGE 11



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Year-End Tax-Smart Moves to Consider

As 2020 draws to a close, you might wonder how you can improve your tax situation – especially in terms of your investments. Here are a few year-end ideas to consider:

Be a tax-loss harvester. In taxable investment accounts, you could sell investments that have lost value and use the losses to offset income from any capital gains you might have from selling investments that have appreciated. If you have an overall net capital loss for the year, you can deduct up to \$3,000 of that loss against other kinds of income, including your salary and interest income. Unused net capital losses can carry over to future years. This strategy works best if you're in a higher tax bracket now than you expect to be in the future.

Take into account any costs associated with selling investments and be aware of the IRS' "wash sale" rules, which prohibit you from claiming the losses if you purchase a "substantially identical" security 30 days before or after the sale of a position sold at a loss. You may want to work with a financial professional to find a replacement investment to keep you invested in the market. See your tax advisor before embarking on this type of tax-loss "harvesting."

Avoid mutual funds about to pay out taxable distributions. In December, many mutual funds pay out dividends and capital gains that have accrued over the year. If you're planning to buy shares of a mutual fund in a taxable investment account, avoid purchasing funds on the verge of paying large taxable distributions. Instead, consider a more tax-efficient exchange-traded fund (ETF) or mutual funds that aren't expecting large payouts. Conversely, if you were planning to sell a fund anyway, you could possibly reduce taxes by selling before the dividends are distributed.

Boost your tax-favorable contributions. If you haven't maxed out your contributions to your employer's retirement plan, health savings account (HSA), and/or IRA, make additional contributions for 2020 if you can. If your employer suspended 401(k) matches this year and you can afford it, consider increasing your contribution to make up for the lost amounts. Traditional pre-tax contributions are deductible and reduce your taxable income in 2020, while Roth contributions will generally reduce your taxable income in future years, when you take withdrawals from Roth accounts.

Consider strategies in a year without RMDs. If you're older than 72 (or 70½ if you were born before July 1, 1949), you typically need to take annual taxable withdrawals – technically called required minimum distributions, or RMDs – from your traditional IRA or 401(k).

However, you got some relief this year, as RMDs are not required because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, you may want to consult with your financial advisor and tax professional to determine if a distribution from a traditional/pre-tax account still makes sense. If you're in a lower tax bracket this year than you expect to be in future years, you may benefit from taking advantage of lower rates. Alternatively, if you don't need the distribution to cover expenses, you might explore if a Roth conversion makes sense.

Your key motivator, in all investment-related decisions, should be whether your choices will help you achieve your long-term goals. Within this framework, taxes do matter – so, do what you can to control them.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by April DuBois, your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC.

NEWS



Meadowlark Gardens displays a sea of lights and colors to highlight elements of the natural world and brighten the holiday season.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



NOVA Parks helps visitors leap into the holiday season with colorful light displays.

Area Light Shows Brighten the Holidays

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

This season NOVA Parks offers an opportunity to literally "brighten" spirits with three holiday shows. As a more somber country examines holiday traditions this year with an eye toward finding safe accommodations, spectacular shows with hundreds of lights and light sculptures await viewing now at: Festival of Lights, Bull Run Park; Ice & Lights, Cameron Run Park; and Winter Walk of Lights, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens.

The scale of the light shows has not diminished, but goes on with added safety protocols, in what has become a delightful area entertainment custom. The number of available tickets at Cameron Run and Meadowlark were scaled back to meet the latest State restrictions on entertainment gatherings; to reduce crowd size to one third capacity. Added protocols include: timed ticket entry, six foot social distancing, required masks, increased facility sanitation, and staff symptom and temperature checks. The drive-thru show at Bull Run is largely unaffected by the facility safety restrictions since participants remain in their vehicle.

Bull Run Festival of Lights first opened over twenty years ago. Its 2.5 miles include approximately a million lights and a large number of holiday displays. Remaining popular over the years, the show attracted 48,000 cars for the drive through event last year. A newer tradition, begun in 2012, the Meadowlark Botanical Gardens' Winter Walk of Lights show features unique nature themed displays over .6 miles of walking trails, created with over half a million lights. Its first year visitation of 36,000

jumped to about 75,000 walkers in 2019, who watched, among other displays, illuminated bees fly from their lighted hive, frogs leap, and bunnies hop. The newest show, Cameron Run's Ice & Lights, which opened in 2019, "transforms the Great Waves Waterpark into a holiday wonderland", says NOVA Parks, Operations Superintendent, Blythe Russian, who worked with other staff members to create the Meadowlark and newer ice shows.

Holiday light shows are almost as old as light bulbs themselves. Three years following Thomas Edison's first public demonstration of the incandescent light bulb, in 1882 his associate Edward H. Johnson was dubbed the "Father of Christmas tree lights" after decorating his tree with 80 walnut sized bulbs. By early in the 20th century, the availability of inexpensive electric power made it possible for the average person to decorate with electric lights instead of candles. The first public electric light Christmas holiday display is recognized as Christmas Tree Lane, a .7 mile display of lighted cedar trees along Santa Rosa Ave in Altadena, Calif. The Altadena tradition started in 1920 has continued every year after that, except during WWII.

Since the 1960s, people have been outlining private homes with lights. It became a family entertainment to drive around between 8 and 10 p.m. to view the lights each season.

The NOVA Park shows cater to the public's appetite to view ever larger holiday light displays.

All tickets for the NOVA Park shows must be purchased online (no walk-ins) at nova.parks.com. for shows running until Jan. 3, 2021.

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING



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Financial Advisor

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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 DEC. 9

Light Up McLean Holiday Decorating Contest.
Registration is free; the competition is limited to the first 15 registered households. The Old Firehouse is holding a new competition for tax district residents. This is your opportunity to show off your home in all its holiday splendor. Think your holiday decorations are the best? Enter the competition and prove it. The judging period begins Sunday, Dec. 20 and ends Sunday, Jan. 3. Your neighbors will vote for the top two winners in the following categories:
Best Overall: Exceptionally attractive, unique and complete design with that utilizes space and resources well.
Most Creative/Original: Exceptional use of creative ideas and lots of originality evident in design.
Best Holiday Theme: Eye-catching decorations

that clearly communicate a fully-conceptualized theme.
Questions? Contact Andrew Carter at andrew.carter@fairfaxcounty.gov or call the Old Firehouse at 703-448-8336, TTY: 711.

NOW THRU NOV. 30

Great Falls Virtual Studio Tour. Online. 100s of Pieces of Original Art. Featuring 2-plus Studio Shops. Featuring Paintings, Photography, Furniture, Pottery, Fiber, Jewelry, Gifts, Mixed Media and More. You'll be able to pick up your purchases in the Great Falls Village Centre ... among other options. Things are a little different this year. Instead of the self-guided physical tour visits throughout Great Falls, guests can venture into artists' creative spaces without climbing into their cars. Visit www.greatfallsstudios.com.

Fairfax Water

NOTICE OF WATER RATES AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

December 10, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

At 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 10, 2020, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA. The meeting will also be available online for remote attendance. For more information, visit fairfaxwater.org/meeting-schedule.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2021, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,320 to \$4,400[†].
- An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$18,030 to \$19,610.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,370 to \$1,430[†].
- An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$14.40 to \$14.85[†].
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$3.20 to \$3.33 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- An increase in the Peak Use Charge from \$3.85 to \$3.90.
- An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$49 to \$50.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and the Peak Use Charge.
- A decrease in the Overhead Charge for Labor from 104% to 102%.
- An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge from \$39 to \$40.

[†]Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$196 million budget for calendar year 2021*. Water sales are expected to provide \$168.9 million and the remaining \$27.1 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

- \$1,000s -		
Category	2020	2021
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$59,083	\$61,352
Power and Utilities	10,730	10,815
Chemicals	7,869	7,928
Purchased Water	5,014	8,364
Supplies and Materials	5,507	5,784
Insurance	1,230	1,100
Fuel	535	700
Postage	586	620
Contractual Services	13,779	14,102
Professional Services	1,336	1,298
Other	2,296	2,452
Sub-Total	107,965	114,515
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(10,313)	(10,763)
Total	\$97,652	\$103,752

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$42,358,365
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$38,400,000

* Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

A copy of the proposed changes can be viewed on our website at fairfaxwater.org/rates.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing (in person or remotely) or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Karen Barnette at 703-289-6029. Interested parties may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, to be included in the record of the public hearing.

Great Falls Senior Center Announces Upcoming Zoom Events

Great Falls Senior Center (GFSC) has announced monthly events scheduled for December through February inviting the members to Zoom sessions until they can see each other in person.

- ❖ Dec. 8 – Madrigal Singers – Holiday Selections;
- ❖ Jan. 19 – Mary Ann Jung Presents Amelia Earhart;
- ❖ Feb. 16 – Our Very Own Betsy Knabb will guide us around The National Por-

trait Gallery.

No Great Decisions event is scheduled for December but there will be a January program – details to follow.

Information and details for each event will be sent by email in time for members to register and receive a link to the event.

If you need help and would like to learn how to Zoom to monthly events contact MaryJo Fox at mjwfx1491@gmail.com or by phone 571-236-9664

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NEWS

Planting for the Future

GFCA works with Fairfax County Park Authority for new trees.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The new maple and white oak are not the same. They will never replace the bold, imposing white oaks that recently toppled at the Old Forestville Schoolhouse located on Fairfax County property adjacent to the Great Falls Grange. But members of the Great Falls Citizens Association wanted to make a difference for future generations. Now the new maple graces the area in front of the Schoolhouse. The white oak is planted at the Grange Park playground, waiting to shade Great Falls children not yet born.

On Wednesday, Nov. 18, employees at Rossen Landscape planted the two trees on the property. Bill Canis who is President of the Great Falls Citizens Association said, "Great Falls Citizens Association has an ongoing partnership with Fairfax County Park Authority to provide new trees in local parks." According to Canis, the Associ-

ation worked with the Park Authority to identify the need for the trees, find the right locations, call 811 to mark underground utilities, receive permission and then the Association purchased the trees.

It was a little over two weeks after remnants of Hurricane Zeta brought heavy rains and strong winds to the region on Friday, Oct. 29, leaving the soil saturated. The first tree toppled early that morning. The second tree without warning crashed two days later on Monday, Nov. 2. It's massive trunk and branches blocked Innsbruck Avenue. Later, it was determined to be over 200 years old, according to Canis. There was no visible inner damage to its trunk or base. Saturated soil may have contributed to either or both trees falling, but at this time, the Association is still checking into the matter.

The Association also worked and funded expenses for a third tree, a white oak to be planted on Fairfax County property at Turner Farm House, home to resident curator Sarah Kirk and her family.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

After an ancient white oak tree crashed to the ground during and after remnants of Hurricane Zeta pelted the area with high winds and drenching rains, employees at Rossen Landscape in Great Falls plant a maple tree at the Old Forestville Schoolhouse.



Wood chips indicate approximately where the two white oaks previously stood.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

One of the two white oaks that crashed following heavy rains in early November remains partially cut and left beside Innsbruck Avenue as of Saturday, Nov. 21.

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SENIOR LIVING

Seniors and the Flu

Getting vaccinated can reduce hospital visits and admissions during anticipated shortage due to COVID-19.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

While shopping for dinner on a recent Wednesday afternoon, Roger Whitehead spotted a sign near the pharmacy of a grocery store near his home in Alexandria.

"It was easy. Once I'd picked up my groceries, I stopped by the pharmacy before I got in the check-out line," said Whitehead, 65. "I filled out some paperwork and rolled up my sleeve. It took about 30 seconds."

To stave off an onslaught of emergency room visits as a result of both the flu and COVID-19 cases, particularly for the elderly, local health officials, are underscoring the importance of the flu vaccination. While it differs from year-to-year, flu season is typically at its peak from December through February. Getting a flu shot can reduce the risk of being hospitalized.

"Older people with certain health conditions, in particular, are at high risk of serious flu complications," said Kurt Larrick, Assistant Director, Arlington County Department of Human Services. "The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated."

It's not too late to receive a vaccine and an option for seniors is Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent, licensed only for those over the age of 65. "It is es-



CONNECTION FILE PHOTO

pecially important this year," said Dr. Travis Gayles, Montgomery County health officer. "[It] can also save health care resources for the care of patients with COVID-19."

Those over 65 are especially likely to get dangerously ill from catching the flu. "The flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 are both spreading disease this flu season," said Shauna Severo, Director of Fairfax County Health Services. "As the incidence of COVID-19 increases the healthcare system could be overwhelmed treating both patients with the flu and patients with COVID-19."

Local jurisdictions launched campaigns to facilitate access to the flu vaccine and to increase awareness among those who have not yet received it. "Arlington has partnered with other Northern Virginia jurisdictions on the Stay Well Nova Campaign, which is providing education, outreach, and resources around flu vaccine," said Larrick.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that everyone 6 months and older get vaccinated against the flu every year, especially people who are at high risk.

FOR MORE FLU INFORMATION

- ◆ Fairfax County: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/flu>
- ◆ Alexandria: [alexandriava.gov/Health](https://www.alexandriava.gov/Health)
- ◆ Arlington: Stay Well Northern Virginia Campaign <https://www.staywellnova.com>
- ◆ Inova Flu Services <https://www.inova.org/our-services/inova-well/medical-wellness/immunizations>
- ◆ Montgomery County, Md.: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/resident/flu.html>
- ◆ CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

Holiday Celebrations COVID Style

Dealing with separation from family and friends.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The decision to spend holidays away from loved ones can be a necessity during the coronavirus pandemic. For those who're accustomed to celebrating the season with large family gatherings, the solitude that comes with COVID-19 can be a difficult adjustment.

"First, acknowledge that this is going to be a different kind of holiday," said licensed psychologist Denise T. Dewhurst, Ph.D., Professor of psychology at Montgomery College. "Reach out to someone else you know who is also alone. Even a brief phone call benefit both of you."

A little forethought into how one's time will be spent will offer structure and can help manage feelings of loneliness, advises Dewhurst. "For some, this may be watching television, or reading. For others, it might be a hobby or craft."

"Work on creating something, maybe baking, art projects, family genealogy project, a journal about your life," added therapist Carol Barnaby, LCSW.

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"Take a virtual tour of somewhere you would like to visit."

Practice gratitude, suggests Dewhurst. "Remind yourself of things you do have to be thankful for," she said. Connect with family members virtually. Talking to one person or one group at a time might allow for better conversations, she said.

Video conferencing with family and friends, particularly during a meal, can allow one to simulate being together in person. "Talking and seeing others' faces is second best to being there and definitely will feel more like you're part of things than not," said psychiatrist Gail Saltz, MD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the NY Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine. "Make a dish that matches the dish of where you would normally be going. Eating the same food, while having conversation increases the enjoyment and sense of being together."

Put on a mask and take a socially distanced walk or other outdoor activity, says Saltz. "It may not be the sit-down meal, but a safe masked, distant outside walk can provide some time together," she said.

Reminisce about past holidays and envision those that lie ahead. "Spend a part of the day looking at photos privately of those you love and remembering fun and close times you have had together," said Saltz. "Keep in mind that when this is over, you'll resume making more memories together."

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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.

SATURDAY/NOV. 28

PlayaBowls Reston Opening. 12-8 p.m. At Reston Town Center, 1820 Discovery Street. Reston, next to PR Barbers. The first 50 people who order will get their bowls on us! So make sure to line up early. Visit the website: playabowls.com

SUNDAY/NOV. 29

Home for Holidays. 2-5 p.m. Online sponsored by Unity of Fairfax. This year's holiday season is going to be different. How do we create a holiday season that's meaningful and joyful...even if we spend it alone? In this 3-hour retreat, they explore this together. Cost: \$45 (or sliding scale). Visit the website: <https://home-for-the-holidays-2020-11-29.eventbrite.com/?aff=cnnews>

NOV. 29 TO DEC. 3

Virtual Chanukah Bazaar. 8 to 10 p.m. Treasures Judaica Gift Shop is offering a virtual catalog of Chanukah products. Extending through the end of Chanukah, this site will capture your contact information and order. Pay by credit card directly through the website safely. Contactless pick-up will be by appointment in the Temple parking lot. Visit the website: <https://sisterhood-treasures-judaica-shop.shoplightspeed.com>

NOW THRU DEC. 15

BUMC Holiday Marketplace. Burke United Methodist Church is hosting an online Holiday Marketplace. Proceeds will benefit our Cambodia ministry and the preschool. Includes links to many local crafters. Visit www.burkeumc.org

MONDAY/NOV. 30

UFC 4 Challenge. 3:30-6:30 p.m. At the Old Firehouse, McLean. In the octagon, there can only be one winner. The UFC is hosting a UFC 4 challenge and McLean's best fighter will win a UFC-themed prize! Show us your MMA skills and may the best fighter win. To register, call MCC at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711 or visit: www.mcleancenter.org.

DEC. 4 AND DEC. 11

Centrestage Spotlight. 6-8 p.m. Virtual Event. Centrestage Spotlight is a virtual show that will feature songs, monologues and scenes performed by Theatre Centreville students. Audience members will receive a link so the show can be enjoyed virtually. The first show can be viewed between Dec 4th and Dec 7th. The second show can be enjoyed Dec 11th through Dec 14th. To purchase tickets, go to <https://www.theatrecentreville.com/wpa/>

VIEWPOINTS



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Gratefulness through the lens of 2020 reveals cloudiness and uncertainty. Immediately, I think of resilience and the power of love that causes us to overcome. I also remember those who have loved me well and who make this difficult journey worthwhile, and of course, the wise words of my mother who believed simply waking up “in her right mind,” was praiseworthy enough.- Karen Keys-Gamarra, Fairfax County School Board Member-at-Large

I am thankful for our FCPS principals and admin staff. They are providing incredible leadership in their schools. They are working on issues including COVID mitigation measures, staffing in-person and virtual classrooms, and staff and student mental health. They are solution-oriented and are working around the clock to bring the best education possible to our students and families in 2020. -- Elaine Tholen, Fairfax County School Board Member Dranesville District



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

FRIDAY/DEC. 4

Holiday Drive-In Movie. At Tysons Corner Center. Friday, December 4 – Elf from 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. Each night, the fun will kick-off at 5 p.m. (movie starts at 7:30 p.m.) and will last until the movie has concluded with food available from participating eateries as well as some live entertainment, trivia, and music prior to the show. Tickets for Elf will be released the week of November 23rd. Reservation required, with a donation of \$10 or more to Food for Others, a local nonprofit providing food to neighbors in need.

DEC. 4-6

Capital Craft Fair. 12 to 5 p.m. At Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. A Showcase of Artistry and Craftsmanship - The Capital Craft Fair will feature works of art and fine crafts presented by more than 100 juried artists. Artists will offer a wide variety of handmade art in several mediums. Cost: \$10 Adults (in advance) \$12 (at the door). Visit the website: <https://hubs.la/H0y-gJs0>

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. 3 p.m. At Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, CenterStage, Reston. Cost is \$5 Reston/\$10 Non-Reston. Mark Brutsché brings his unique spin on this childhood favorite that will be fun for the whole family. Visit the website www.restoncommunitycenter.com/ptas.

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

Cookie Cutter Creation - 3D Printing Workshop. 10-11:30 a.m. Online. Get into the

holiday STEM spirit and explore the world of 3D design to create your very own cookie cutter. In this virtual workshop, the STEM educators will take you through the process of designing a 3D cookie cutter on TinkerCad. Cookie cutters will be printed on the Children's Science Center 3D printer and available for pick up on Friday, December 18 from 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturday, December 19 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost is \$25. Visit the website: <https://www.childsci.org/events/diy-workshop-cookie-cutter-creation>

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

Pancake Breakfast. 9:30-11:30 a.m. At Turner Farm, 10609 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Turner Farmhouse Foundation invites the community to come to its Pancake Breakfast and Fundraiser. Come tour the grounds, visit the milk house and enjoy pancakes, coffee, tea and hot chocolate. They are raising funds to work on the Retreat House, and will start construction once the Special Exception application is approved. Contact Sarah Kirk, skirkbtr@gmail.com, 703-403-3072.

DEC. 5 AND 6

Festival of Nativities. 5-8 p.m. At Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6219 Villa Street, Franconia. Celebrate Christmas at an open house event to view nativities from around the world. This will be a wonderful way to focus on the true meaning of Christmas as the holiday season begins. To promote the health and safety of volunteers and guests, they ask that you sign up for a window of time to attend. Details and the registration link can be found at: www.festivalofnativities.com

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A Question of Time



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Let us presume, for the sake of this column, that I only have papillary thyroid cancer stage IV, and that my years as a non small cell lung cancer patient, also stage IV, are over. If true, it begs the question, which I have been asked twice since this recategorization has become - in my circle anyway, public knowledge: how does it make me feel (to no longer be one scan result away from having months to live to now having years to live)? As obvious an answer as it should be: I can't exactly get my mind around it. I keep hearing that "If it's too good to be true, it isn't" advisory in my head. I realize medicine is different, and that's what scares me.

Well, I can't really say I feel as if I have my life back because I never really lived like it was gone. I pretty much - treatments and side effects notwithstanding - tried to maintain my normal life and to continue my routine as well. I didn't stray too far from my well-established dos and don'ts. I didn't write down a bucket list and therefore spent no time pursuing long-standing goals. I just did what I have always done. I didn't want to be controlled by my cancer; doing things, taking trips, etc. just because I had a "terminal" diagnosis. To my way of thinking, that would have been akin to reinforcing a negative: a cancer that was likely to kill me sooner rather than later so I better do such and such or else. Instead, I just lived my regular life and felt no pressure to cross off items on a bucket list before I died. In spite of living life not as if I was dying, but as if I was going to be living, (unlike the country music song that expresses a different sentiment) I survived beyond my wildest timeline: so far, 11 years and nine months after initially being given a "13 months to two years" prognosis.

Fast forward to the most recent - and amazing news: I hadn't miraculously survived non small cell lung cancer after all, I had merely survived a very survivable and slow moving thyroid cancer (that has - or had previously, metastasized to the lung). Though my oncologist still thinks I have two types of cancer, my endocrinologist thinks I only have - and have had, one type, thyroid cancer. The Lombardi Cancer Center head and neck cancer specialist also feels like I have one cancer: thyroid. Her reasoning, after reviewing my medical records was a bit more direct: "if you had lung cancer diagnosed 12 or so years ago, we wouldn't be here having this discussion. You wouldn't be alive." So being alive is proof, a type of proof I suppose, that I've had thyroid cancer all along and never had lung cancer.

Not that I want to be thick-headed but after nearly 12 years of being told that I had lung cancer and living scan to scan every two to three months and anxiously waiting as well for my lab results every three weeks

I find myself unable to let go of the worst case scenario that has been my life since Feb., 2009, and embrace this amended diagnosis. I can't seem to turn off my internal anxiety/fear clock. In fact, it's still stuck in its original position. I'm like an ocean liner headed out to sea. It can hardly turn on a dime and neither can I. Certainly I want to believe it and I don't really doubt the thyroid cancer opinions I've received, but it just seems that having your wildest dreams come true after almost 12 years of trying to accept the reality of your cancer situation/early death is too much good fortune for anyone to imagine/realize. It's the opposite of normal. As much as one might want it to happen, it's just not the way it generally works. I don't suppose doctors hand out terminal diagnosis before giving it extra ample thought. And yet, I'm about to be living proof.

Nevertheless, every day, the shock of it begins to wear off and I can contemplate my future once again. No more will I count the days between scans. No longer will I dread reading my lab work and wondering what it all means. Oddly enough, what it all means is that I'll probably continue/resume my previous life, boring and mundane as it was because, well, it worked for me then so I imagine it will work for me now.

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



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