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

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Unified organization announced at December 19 virtual ribbon-cutting.

Bridges to Independence, a Northern Virginia provider of housing and vital services for at-risk families and individuals, today announced the finalization of its merger with the Bonder and Amanda Johnson Community Development Corporation (BAJCDC), a community-based non-profit with a mission to address the health, education, financial empowerment and social service needs of people living in Arlington’s Green Valley neighborhood.

“We are excited about moving forward with a strong, unified organization that will ensure people in Green Valley and throughout Northern Virginia receive the support and services they need,” said Bridges’ board president Patrick King. “As our communities and families continue to struggle with the impact of COVID-19, the work of Bridges to Independence and BAJCDC is more important than ever.”

The two organizations will unify under Bridges to Independence to provide youth education, social service referrals, health and wellness guidance, and financial education – adding to Bridges’ current housing, employment and youth development portfolio. Bridges will also maintain operations at BAJCDC’s Green Valley location on South Shirlington Road, remaining it to the Bonder & Amanda Johnson Community Services Center. Former BAJCDC Executive Director, Cecily Whitfield also serves as Bridges’ Chief Program Officer while maintaining her position on the Executive Committee of the Green Valley Civic Association Board.

Whitfield says, “This merger will bring opportunities to truly support the Green Valley community through programs and resources that can act as a change agent and provide impactful service delivery to the community.”

Bridges to Independence provides housing and other services in Northern Virginia for homeless women/families and those at risk. The organization offers a continuum of aid and support for all family members, helping them attain stability and move forward into self-sufficiency, breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. As a 501c3 nonprofit organization, Bridges has been working with and for homeless families since 1985, formerly as the Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless.

Established in 1999, the mission of the Bonder and Amanda Johnson Community Development Corporation is to enhance the economic and social development of its community. It is the BAJCDC vision to achieve this through providing opportunities to address community needs through education, healthy living, financial empowerment and community involvement.

Arlington Police Implement Body Worn Camera Program

Beginning last Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2020, Arlington County Police Officers assigned to the Operations Division will begin wearing body worn cameras. The plan is to record all dispatched calls for service, enforcement contacts and investigative contacts. The deployment of cameras includes officers assigned to Patrol, Special Operations, Community Outreach, K-9 and the Emergency Response Team (commonly referred to as SWAT).

This technology complements the existing in-car camera system and interview room cameras used to document digital and audio video recordings of law enforcement activity and interactions. “The Arlington County Police Department welcomes the use of body worn camera technology as an additional tool in our commitment to providing professional law enforcement services to the Arlington community,” said Acting Chief Andy Penn. “We recognize our community’s trust is earned each day with every interaction. I am confident these cameras will build upon our longstanding history of community policing by highlighting the professionalism of the agency while instilling greater public confidence as we continue to hold ourselves accountable to the highest professional standards.”

Program Funding

In June, County Manager Mark Schwartz announced funding for a Body Worn Camera program for the Police Department, Sheriff’s Office, and Fire Marshal’s Office as part of his proposed FY 2021 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). In July, the County Board approved the CIP and funding for the program. Specifically, the CIP provided $268,000 for body worn camera hardware; $244,000 for upgrades to four County courtrooms to support the technology; $536,000 for data storage, software, and maintenance; and $755,000 for replacing existing in-car camera systems to one compatible with body worn cameras. In July, Arlington decided to Fund Body-Worn Camera Program for Police and the Sheriff’s Office.

Community Engagement

In November, the Police Department, Sheriff’s Office and Fire Marshals’ Office sought the public’s input and feedback on draft Digital Evidence Management System policies, regulating digital audio and video recordings captured by body worn cameras, in-car cameras, and interview room cameras. The goal of this engagement was to create model policies utilizing established best practices and to continue to strengthen community relations and professional standards within the departments by enhancing transparency, accountability and training.

All comments were reviewed and evaluated for incorporation into the policies. MORE: Read the Police Department’s Final Digital Evidence Management System Policy.
COVID-19
As a drop of red pigment
Turns a bucket of water into a red river
A single case of COVID-19
Turns the whole world upside down
Like a bird trapped in a cage
Like a hamster running on a wheel
We feel hopeless and lonely
We talk to ourselves in the mirror
We wear mask to hide our fears
We scream silently for help
But
There is a light at the end of the tunnel
Peace and calm are waiting for us
Let’s pray and hope
Changing tears into laughters
No matter what happens
We will find our way
We will survive

Ina Chung, 17, is a junior at Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington. Ina is a resident of McLean. Her English teacher is Mr. Prince.

When the Winter Is Over
By Seonghui Ju
Out of breath and in constant pain
Alone in the room, wallowing in fear
Tears shed, making up a stream of despair
While racial injustice is raging again
An empty feeling roams the world
People fear not everything will be repaired
Jobs are gone and shops are closed; it’s too hard to bear
But even rainy days pass, and bright ones appear
The right and fair will show its presence
These are the times when we have to be willing
To see the world in brighter ways, to gaze upon what’s not so appealing
To search not for the cause, but rather the effect
Because after winter, a blossom will pop
More and more will follow, as the bundle dyes our future in vivid colors

By Seonghui Ju
11 years old
Falls Church, VA
6th grader at Haycock Elementary in Falls Church
Homeroom teacher, Mrs. Kelly Arditti
English teacher, Mrs. Jill Shull.
Merry Christmas

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

The pages of the Connection (including the Alexandria Gazette Packet, the Mount Vernon Gazette, the Potomac Almanac and the Centre View) are usually full of holiday spirit, beginning before Thanksgiving. While in this, the year 2020, a year like no other, the holidays have been muted in so many ways, so we have celebrated help for the needy whose numbers have expanded with the pandemic; collecting toys and warm coats for children who might not otherwise receive them; holiday celebrations, concerts and performances via Zoom; socially distanced Santa, tree lightings; stories of giving; the Virtual Nutcracker; and more.

And still, Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption. In this holiday of 2020, like no other, the promise of redemption. In this holiday of 2020, like no other, the promise of redemption. In this holiday of 2020, like no other, the promise of redemption.

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Matthew 7:12: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.”

Matthew 25:35-40: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

SO SHARE the verse relating the birth of Jesus from the Bible, Luke 2: 4-19:

Whether you embrace the Christmas story literally or in spirit, it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.

The camel. Learn about camels and George Washington’s interest in exotic animals during Camel Talks, offered Friday through Sunday beginning on November 27. Special events give guests a deeper look into the holidays at Mount Vernon. During the tour “Mrs. Washington’s Mount Vernon,” hear Martha Washington discuss the day-to-day planning needed for a busy holiday season. The “Holiday Dinner for the Washingtons” tour shares how food was grown, preserved and served during the holidays. Mount Vernon is open 365 days a year, including on Christmas Day. Admission: $23 for adults; $12 for youth (ages 6-11); free for children 5 and below; extra cost for some activities. Visit mountvernon.org/christmas

NOW THRU DEC. 31 Small Works Show. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Art on the Avenue, 2100 Crystal Drive, Arlington. “Small Works, Great Joy” is an all-member, all-media show of compelling small-scale works by our artists, priced affordably for holiday shopping. Visit the website: https://artontheavenue.org/

NOW THRU DEC. 31 Winter Solstice Revels. 7-9 p.m. Online. Kindly how to dress the season and comfort of “hearth and home” with Washington Revels and the virtual 2020 Winter Solstice Revels. This live participatory holiday entertainment is fun for all ages, with carol singalongs, virtual performances, and more. Cost is $30. Visit the website: https://bit.ly/solstice-revels

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-Werner Heisenberg

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It’ll be an Ollie Jolly Christmas
For this Arlington Family

By Joan Brady
Arlington Connection

It started as a totally normal day with Oliver the cat venturing out for her daily adventure. But hours later, Oliver or Ollie, as she is fondly called, had not returned.

Ollie and her brother Dodger enjoy exploring their Arlington neighborhood, but generally don’t go out of earshot. So when Ollie didn’t come when called on Saturday, December 12th, Emily Carmichael was worried. Oliver and Dodger are very close and as the hours passed, he seemed worried too.

If an outdoor cat doesn’t come home, that generally means something has disrupted their normal routine. Carmichael feared that Ollie might have gotten accidentally trapped in someone’s garage. Or, as Ollie doesn’t like to wear a collar, perhaps some well-meaning stranger had noticed her and thought she was homeless. “She absolutely loves people, loves attention, and is so trusting she will approach strangers on the street,” says Carmichael.

Hoping to find her beloved ginger feline, Carmichael sprang into action; posting on Nextdoor, in multiple Facebook groups, on Craigslist and several lost and found pet networks. In addition, she posted flyers around her neighborhood. At the time, “[her] sincere hope is that all of our neighbors will carefully check their garages, sheds, or any other enclosed spaces where a cat might be hiding. Doing so might save her life and my little family’s Christmas.”

On Dec. 17, six long days later and eight hours after putting a big sign across her fence, there was a knock at Carmichael’s door. A family had apparently found Ollie in the street and didn’t realize she had a family until they saw Carmichael’s fence sign.

Carmichael says from now on, Ollie must learn to tolerate a collar. And she hopes that

Getting the word out.

This week’s fun fact: Did you know that 80% of ginger cats are male?
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