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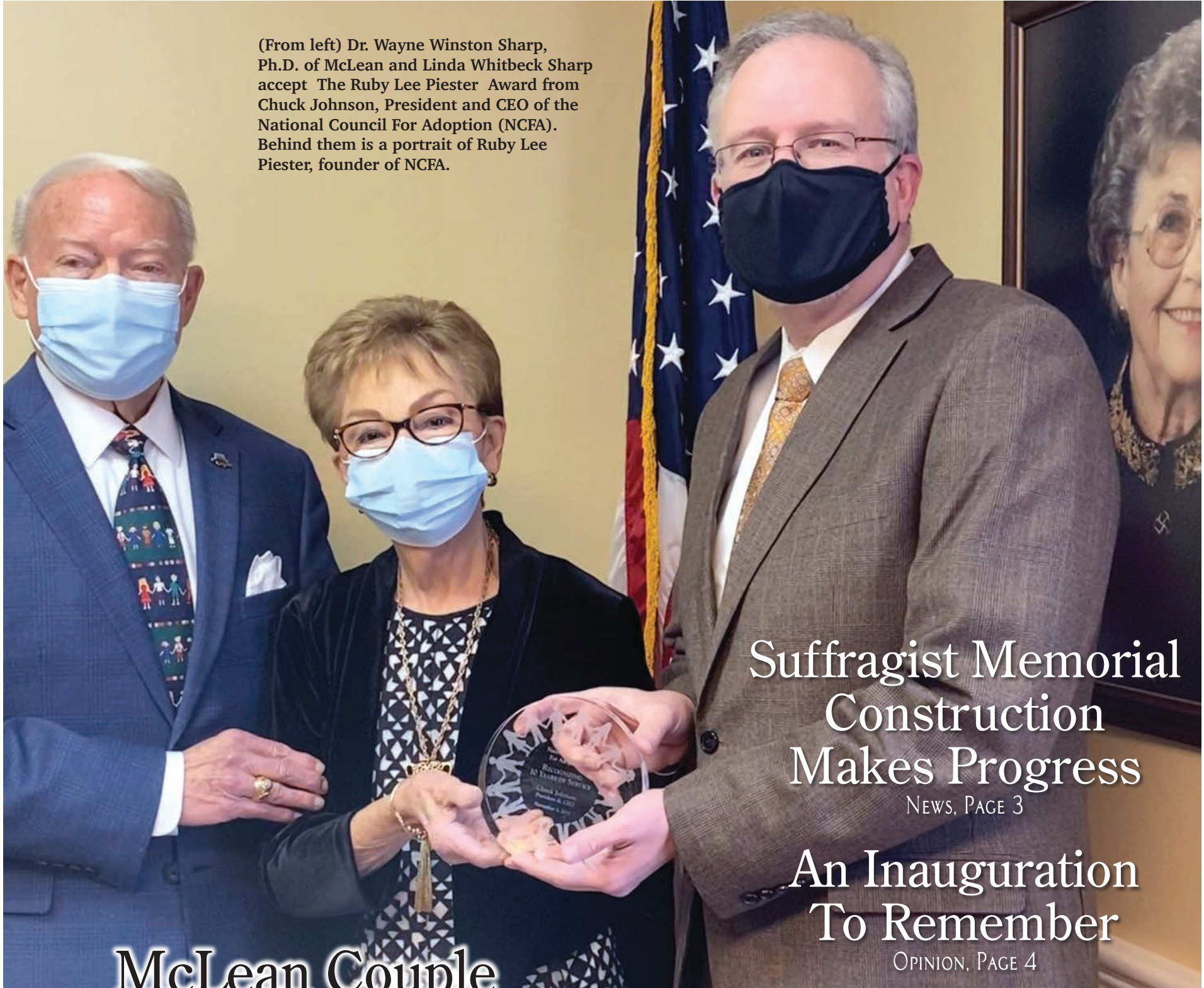
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# CONNECTION McLean ♦ Vienna and Oakton

(From left) Dr. Wayne Winston Sharp, Ph.D. of McLean and Linda Whitbeck Sharp accept The Ruby Lee Piester Award from Chuck Johnson, President and CEO of the National Council For Adoption (NCFCA). Behind them is a portrait of Ruby Lee Piester, founder of NCFCA.



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# McLean Couple Honored for Leadership in Adoption

Alexandria-based nonprofit recognizes a lifetime of service to children, birth parents, and adoptive families.

MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

The National Council for Adoption (NCFCA) in Alexandria, a leading voice among national adoption and child welfare organizations, announced Dr. Wayne Winston Sharp, Ph.D. of McLean and his wife Linda Whitbeck Sharp the recipients of NCFCA's The Ruby Lee Piester Adoption Award.

Named in honor of its founder, the award "recognizes a lifetime of service to children, birth parents, and adoptive families." "It is reserved only for those whose exceptional and extraordinary lifetime achievement has changed the practice of adoption for the better," according to the nonprofit's website.

"Wayne's leadership helped us stay hopeful...Even now, as we just celebrated our 40th anniversary, Wayne's already, talking about the 50th anniversary," said Chuck Johnson, President and CEO of NCFCA. Johnson said that although plans were in place in April of 2020 to celebrate NCFCA's 40th anniversary and recognize the Sharps, COVID-19 canceled the event.

"When we are able to be together, we expect, as Wayne would want to hope and expect, to do it sooner than later," said Johnson. "We are working in that direction but until then, we wanted to go ahead in this way, and acknowledge publicly," he said.

According to Johnson, Wayne, who was adopted at birth by "two loving and inspirational parents," Bob Henry and Mayana Yates Sharp, was raised on the family ranch in Dallas, Texas, near San Angelo. In 1984 Wayne contacted NCFCA when he sought information about his and his adopted sister's legal inheritance rights.

WAYNE and NCFCA's co-founder, Dr. William L. Pierce, developed a close friendship that led years later to Wayne serving as an NCFCA

volunteer consultant. Wayne used his skills as a United States diplomat to help NCFCA negotiate adoption issues the organization encountered at the Hague Convention, which established rules and regulations for intercountry adoptions. "As a stakeholder organization, we were very involved in that. Wayne helped us understand some of the diplomatic issues and some of the chains of command we needed to go through to influence policy and its implementation," said Johnson.

In 2007, Wayne was elected to NCFCA's board, bringing his Certified Financial Planner skills to his tenure. Johnson said, "The end of 2008 and 2009 were just hard years for us, a lot of groups, particularly nonprofits, because the economy tanked... Most of us were trying to make payroll and pay bills... He helped the organization not just get through the financial crisis of 2007-2009 but survive and thrive through today...This is not something he did half-heartedly. It was a lot of time... We've been able to pay our bills, build up a small reserve, and we're working on building up a larger reserve." His work to ensure a sustainable level of support for future generations continues in Wayne's current role as Immediate Past Board Chairman.

Johnson said that as Wayne transitioned into the elected position of Board Chairman, he looked for ways to engage board members, find their talents and interests, and best use them. Johnson and Wayne contin-



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

(From left) Chuck Johnson, President and CEO of the National Council for Adoption (NCFCA) hands The Ruby Lee Piester Award to Linda Whitbeck Sharp of McLean and her husband, Dr. Wayne Winston Sharp, Ph.D. The award is named after Ruby Lee Piester, founder of NCFCA.

ued to work closely together, staying "very optimistic and did not allow circumstances to define or be a self-fulfilling prophecy," according to Johnson.

Of course, Wayne couldn't have done any of this without Linda's support and encouragement. "Linda is a great communicator," Johnson said, "A lot of times, he'd come back and say, 'You know, Linda convinced me that this is better. You're right, Chuck. Linda agrees with you. Let's, do it y'all's way.'"

"We're honored.. NCFCA and adoption have greatly affected our lives," wrote Wayne in an email.

ON JAN. Jan. 14, 2021, the threesome, Dr. Wayne Winston Sharp, Ph.D. Immediate Past Chairman of the Board, Chairman, Investment Task Force of National Council For Adoption and his wife Linda Whitbeck Sharp, recipients of The Ruby Lee Piester Adoption Award (2021), joined Chuck Johnson, NCFCA President and CEO at the office of NCFCA, 225 N. Washington Street in Alexandria. There, they recounted stories about their shared experiences and marked the informal recognition with photos.

Afterward, Linda agreed with Johnson's assessment. "I am a sounding board," she said. Asked how much time Wayne spends on NCFCA duties and advocacy, she said, "Every day, all day."

According to Wayne, while he continues to work and serve on the board to fulfill the organization's mission, he is aware of the need to look more closely at foster children in the U.S., especially placement for siblings, special needs children, and youth ages 14 years or older. One of

the challenges facing older youth in foster care is the young people age-out at age 18 in many states.

Wayne said he is proud of his efforts and those of others who worked to extend the Foster Care Assistance Program beyond age 18 to 21 in more than half of the states in the U.S., "We still have lots of work to be done...I just can't stop until I know every child has a permanent family and a home," he said.

## McLean Community Center Seeks Candidates for Governing Board

The McLean Community Center (MCC), an agency of Fairfax County Government, is seeking residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville to run for seats on its 11-member volunteer board. The board provides oversight and guidance for MCC programs and facilities, including the Robert Ames Alden Theatre ("The Alden") and The Old Firehouse Center. MCC is located at 1234 Ingleside Ave.

To run for a seat on the volunteer board, a candidate must reside in the Center's tax district (Small District 1A-Dranesville). Three adult positions and two youth positions are open this year. To have their names placed on election ballots, candidates are required to

obtain the signatures of 10 tax district residents in their respective categories (either adult or youth). Candidate petition packets will be available at MCC starting at 9 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 21. Residents who would prefer to not enter the center can call 703-744-9348, to arrange for an MCC staff member to deliver a candidate packet to them in the MCC parking lot.

The three adult candidates who receive the three highest vote counts will serve three-year terms. Youth members will serve one-year terms. Adult candidates must be at least 18 years of age as of Saturday, May 15, the date of the center's annual McLean Day festival, where the election is usually held. Youth candidates must be 15-17 years of age

on McLean Day (born May 16, 2003 to May 16, 2006). One youth member will be elected to represent McLean High School boundary area and one will be elected to represent Langley High School boundary area. Youth candidates are not required to attend either school (private school or home-schooled students are eligible), but they must indicate where they reside in terms of the areas served by the respective high schools, as defined by Fairfax County Public Schools.

Key Election Dates:

Thursday, Jan 21: Candidate Petition Packets are available at MCC.

Friday, March 12: Completed Petition Packets are due to MCC by 5 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17: Open Voting be-

gins at the MCC. Residents may vote in-person or by mail and may phone, send an email, or fill out an online form to request ballots for their households. The requested ballots will be mailed to their homes.

Saturday, March 13: Candidates' Orientation (via Zoom).

Wednesday, March 17: Open Voting begins at the MCC.

Saturday, May 15: Open Voting ends at 5 p.m.

For more information on the MCC Governing Board Elections, logon to the Governing Board Candidates' webpage <https://bit.ly/2MYdJJN> or contact Executive Assistant Holly Novak at 703-744-9348 or [holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov).



## Suffragist Memorial Construction Makes Progress

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Those visiting Occoquan Regional Park, Lorton, can see progress toward completion of the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial. Replica White House gates, statuary, pavement and the main sign marker are now visible upon reaching the area opposite the park's main event building. When completed, tentatively this Spring, the memorial, with statuary and garden, will honor suffragists and their success in gaining women's right to vote in 1917.

The peaceful actions of those women stand in stark contrast to the unsuccessful violent actions of those who sought to disrupt the certification of votes of the Electoral College at the Capital last week. Says Patricia Wirth, Executive Di-

rector/CEO of the Turning Point Memorial Association, "Suffragists engaged in peaceful demonstrations, and never perpetrated violence, although they did have violence perpetrated against them." They were often referred to as "silent sentinels" for their peaceful, quiet demonstrations in the capital city. The Memorial site stands near where several suffragists were jailed and force fed after their arrest for holding banners containing messages promoting voting rights on the sidewalk outside the White House.

Citizens reacted negatively after hearing of the poor treatment of suffragists in the Lorton jail, a reaction which helped the suffragist cause.

For donations, and more memorial and historical information, readers are directed to [www.suffragistmemorial.org](http://www.suffragistmemorial.org).



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Replicas of the White House gates and fence form the entrance to the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.



Site of the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial under construction with expected completion in Spring 2021.

## 27 Companies Hiring at Jan. 28 Cyber & Cloud Virtual Career Fair

Amazon Web Services, Microsoft and Hewlett Packard Enterprise are among 27 companies in Northern Virginia seeking to hire for thousands of open positions in the IT, cyber and cloud industries during a virtual career fair on Jan. 28. Hosted by the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA), this event is one of many in an ongoing series of virtual career fairs the FCEDA is sponsoring or leading in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Registration details can be found here. [https://app.brazenconnect.com/events/A3N3j?utm\\_medium=talent+site&utm\\_source=talent+site](https://app.brazenconnect.com/events/A3N3j?utm_medium=talent+site&utm_source=talent+site)

Participation in the FCEDA Cyber & Cloud Virtual Career Fair is free of charge and open to technology professionals of all experience levels looking to connect with top tech companies in Northern Virginia. Job seekers with security clearances are in demand and encouraged to attend, though it is not a required qualification.

**PARTICIPATING EMPLOYEES** range from small firms to Fortune 500 giants, including minority-owned, women-owned and veteran-owned companies. In addition to Amazon Web Services, Microsoft and Hewlett Packard Enterprise, participants include ActioNet, Altamira, Appian, BAE Systems, CALIBRE, CirrusLabs, Constellation West, DocuSign, Easy Dynamics, FireEye, Hexaware, Human-Touch, ICF, ID.me, Kreative Technologies, Lei-

dos, ManTech, NetApp, NTT DATA, Nutanix, Randstad, Ridgeline International, Splunk and Triumph Enterprises. What this diverse array of companies has in common is their commitment to innovation: they are creating unique tech solutions for the tech challenges of tomorrow, all while ensuring the best work environments for the tech workers of today – benefits range from unlimited PTO and stock option plans to tuition reimbursement and professional development.

During the event, participants will be able to browse companies in a virtual lobby, enter companies' booths, view open positions, engage in video conferencing and chat with HR representatives in real-time – all from the comfort of their homes. Candidates need not be currently located in Northern Virginia, and some companies are open to remote work options.

"Our region is a top cyber and cloud hub and there has never been a better time to land a job in this industry because of the thousands of open jobs here," said Victor Hoskins, president and CEO of the FCEDA. "We are proud to be working with such a diverse group of companies that are letting us help them cast a wide net to find the right talent to fill these jobs and keep our networks, businesses, agencies and people secure."

Fairfax County has 8,900 technology establishments and more than 50 Cybersecurity 500 firms.

"Cloud and cyber companies are an important and growing facet of the Fairfax County tech economy," said Jeffrey C. McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. "I am delighted to see the talent initiative that the Board of Supervisors funded helping residents find jobs and emphasizing the importance of these sectors to Fairfax."

**THE VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR** series is the latest FCEDA response to the COVID-19 crisis to connect job seekers with companies that are hiring now. The first three virtual career fairs collectively attracted over 2,100 attendees and resulted in 3,100 completed conversations between job seekers and hiring reps from a wide range of employers, from small firms to Fortune 500 companies. The virtual career fair is part of an FCEDA talent initiative funded by Fairfax County to attract, retain, grow and retrain workers. More information can be found at [www.workinnorthernvirginia.com/virtual-career-fairs/](http://www.workinnorthernvirginia.com/virtual-career-fairs/).

These virtual career fairs are just one way that the FCEDA is aggressively marketing the region's companies to top talent locally and across the nation. If you are an employer that would like to promote your job openings, visit the Employer Resources page for more information or contact Mike Batt, the FCEDA director of talent initiative programs at [mbatt@fceda.org](mailto:mbatt@fceda.org).

## Volunteer Fire And Rescue Departments Hosting Blood Drives

It's National Blood Donor Month! Several Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Volunteer Fire Departments are partnering with Inova Blood Donor Services to hold blood drives in their fire station parking lots.

Inova Blood Donor Services is taking all precautions as it relates to COVID-19. There will be plenty of space to spread out and use appropriate social distancing. To help protect our firefighters and paramedics, access to the fire station is prohibited.

List of days, times and location are below. To register to donate, please go to the Inova Blood Donor Services web site.

Monday, Jan. 25, 12:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. at Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department/ Fairfax County Fire Station 22. 7011 Backlick Rd., Springfield, VA 22150. Sign up [HERE](#).

Saturday Jan. 30, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at Vienna Volunteer Fire Department/ Fairfax County Fire Station 2. 400 Center Street South Vienna, VA 22180. Sign up [HERE](#).





# An Inauguration to Remember

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



COMMENTARY

Like most people, I will not be attending any inaugural events this year because of the pandemic restrictions and threats of civil disturbances. The event today does bring back wonderful memories of the first and only inauguration I ever attended. It was on January 20, 1961. In 1960 I had graduated from high school and had not gone to college because of doubts as to whether I could be successful. Instead, I was attending a short-term vocational program in Washington, D.C. and living in a single room in a boarding house just a half dozen blocks from the White House. Even then I had an intense interest in politics and followed the Kennedy-Nixon campaigns and debates intensely. I loved the candidate and then President-elect John F. Kennedy as did millions of others. I was not about to miss the opportunity to go to his inauguration when I was living so close by.

On the day before the inauguration, temperatures dropped to 20 degrees and eight inches of snow fell. I got up early Inauguration Day and literally put on all the clothing I owned and started a trek to the US Capitol on foot. Workers directed by the Army Corp of Engineers had been working throughout the night to haul away as much of the snow as possible from Capitol grounds and Pennsylvania Avenue. The military had brought in flame throwers to melt some of the snow and ice. More than a thousand cars that had been stranded in the area had to be removed.

At the Capitol I was able to position myself on the edge of a wall that allowed me to see the inauguration over those who had tickets and were seated at the Capitol. My plan to film the event with my brother's 8 mm camera did not happen because the cold kept the camera from running a few minutes after I brought it

out from under my coat. Certainly there was security, but nothing like we are seeing leading up to this inauguration. I felt free to move about except for the area that had been blocked off for special invited guests.

The speech given by our new president still brings tears to my eyes. His words, "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country," inspired me to public service.

We have been through four years that have been tragic for our democracy. I believe we are all better informed about threats to our system of government. The Biden-Harris team is well suited to restore hope and confidence in our government. Honesty and decency will become a new norm for the executive branch. Attention to the COVID-19 crisis will be focused, coordinated and intense. Respect for others will dominate our society except for a small minority that will slink away into the background. Equity will be the new standard by which we measure our economy. All this can happen if we truly believe it and dedicate ourselves to making it happen. We can have another inauguration to remember!



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY.GOV

Community service projects honor the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during Reston Community Center's 2021 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration held Jan. 16-18.

## Reston Celebrates Dr. King's Day

In cooperation with supporters, Reston Community Center (RCC) pivoted amidst the coronavirus pandemic to present for the 36th year, the Reston Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration. The three-day event held Jan. 16-18, honored, celebrated and continued the legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. On Saturday, individuals gathered for small, socially distanced community service projects. They sorted items from The Closet, made bag lunches for the Embry Rucker

Community Shelter, and cleaned litter from paths around RCC Hunters Woods. Events continued with Saturday's special online performance by the Reston Community Orchestra, Sunday's live performance at CentreStage with an audience capacity of 30 percent featuring Akua Allrich and the Tribe, and additional community service projects on Monday.

— MERCIA HOBSON



# Route 123 South Shifts to New Alignment Over I-66

Route 123 (Chain Bridge Road) South will be shifted temporarily to the new bridge over I-66 during daytime hours on or about Thursday, Jan. 21. The Route 123 bridges are being replaced as part of the Transform 66 Outside the Beltway Project. Access to and from I-66 at Route 123 will remain in its current configuration.

Following this traffic pattern change, the current Route 123 South bridge over I-66 will be demolished to allow for construction of new ramps to I-66 general purpose and Express Lanes and shared-use path.

Demolition of the old northbound Route 123 bridge began earlier this month. Most of the demolition will need to occur during overnight hours, when multiple lanes can be closed on I-66 to safely accommodate this work. Demolition activities will occur during daytime hours when possible, to minimize impacts to nearby communities. Additional information and updates about demolition work and traffic closures will be provided on the project website. All work is weather dependent and schedules may shift if inclement conditions occur.

## Phase 2: All Route 123 Traffic Shifted to New Bridge



Beginning on or about Jan. 21, the travel lanes of southbound Route 123 over I-66 will be shifted on to the new Route 123 Bridge. Access to/from I-66 East and West will remain the same.

As construction continues through 2022 on the Route 123 and I-66 interchange, drivers should be alert for changing traffic patterns. Drivers are reminded to slow down and pay attention to lane markings and roadway signs at all times.

When complete, the reconstructed Route 123/I-66 Interchange will provide direct access to and from the new Express Lanes for

both eastbound and westbound travelers. A new shared-use path through the interchange will provide connection between the new 66 Parallel Trail and planned trails in the City of Fairfax.

Weekly updates will be available at [Transform66.org](http://Transform66.org) and on Twitter @VaDOTNOVA. To receive updates automatically by email, sign up here.

## Public Notice

Burke & Herbert Bank, headquartered at 100 South Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia, has submitted an application with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for approval to relocate its branch from its current location of 302 Maple Avenue West, Vienna, Virginia to 332 Maple Avenue East, Vienna, Virginia.

Any person wishing to comment on this application may file his or her comments in writing with the Regional Director of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Atlanta Regional Office, 10 10th Street NE, Suite 800, Atlanta, GA 30309-3849, not later than 15 days after the date of this publication. The non-confidential portions of the application are on file at the appropriate FDIC office and are available for public inspection during regular business hours. Photocopies of the non-confidential portion of the application file will be made available upon request.

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New mural at Loyal Companion on Maple Avenue.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

# Pandemic Layoff Spurs Artist to Paint Window Mural

After the pandemic forced Pet Valu to close in Alexandria this month, the employees looked elsewhere for a job, but the Pet Valu manager was hired by Loyal Companion pet supply store in Vienna. They needed a mural for their plate glass window, so the new manager sought out her former employee Cynthia Salmon, another displaced employee from the Alexandria shop who is also an art student at VCU. Cynthia brought in some paints and an idea, and now the Loyal Companion has a new look to greet the shoppers on Maple Avenue.

— MIKE SALMON

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**-Werner Heisenberg**



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## Canada Geese Over the Area

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Canada geese form an iconic V flight over Huntsman Lake in Springfield.

### CALENDAR

#### NOW TO FEB. 7

"Winter's Tales." Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, 2905 District Avenue, #105, Fairfax. Winter can be many things---quiet, simple, elegant, cold, dark and hopeful. Winter's shadows are long and its daylight is precious. It is a season of white and blue, of cold and fire, of hibernation and regeneration. In "Winter's Tales" at the The Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, the gallery's artists demonstrate in a variety of mediums how they respond to the coldest and darkest time of the year. The exhibit features beautiful paintings, fine art photography, ceramics, exquisite jewelry and fabric art.

#### FRIDAY/JAN. 22

Family Outdoor Exploration. 1-2 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Get your family into the great outdoors with a personalized program led by a naturalist or historian at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. The "Family Outdoor Exploration" program lets you choose your own exploration. Investigate topics, such as Stream Life, Pond Life, Historic Ice Cream and much more. Once you register, the park will reach out to you to plan your personalized family outing. The cost is \$40 per family for a group of up to nine people age 4 to adult. Call 703-631-0013.

#### FRIDAY/JAN. 22

McLean Art Society Meeting. 10 a.m. Vladislav Yeleseyev, a noted watercolorist, will be the demonstrating artist at the Meeting of the McLean Art Society. The business meeting will begin at 10 a.m. to be followed at 11 a.m.-noon by the art presentation. It will all be conducted on Zoom and is open to the public. Those interested in being included need to contact Ray Goodrow, M.A.S. President at raymgoodrow@aol.com. Mr. Yeleseyev is a Masters level graduate of the Moscow Institute of Architecture. He has paintings listed in the Portfolio of Plein Air Magazine and his award winning paintings feature warm light and a warm color palette. His work includes cityscapes and landscapes in impressionistic style.

#### SUNDAY/JAN. 24

Amazing Max Family Show. 4 p.m. At McLean Community Center, McLean. Max has stepped onto a virtual stage to perform perhaps his most incredible feat ever: Getting kids truly excited about learning something and—in the process—showing them how to believe in themselves. Max has an incredible ability to connect with both children and adults alike and even in a virtual stage, he is still somehow just as captivating as he is on The Alden's stage. \$15/\$10 MCC district residents (this fee is per device)

#### SUNDAY/JAN. 24

Journey with Pianos. 7 p.m. Online. Hear piano traditions from around the world performed by Jacqueline Schwab (Ken Burns' "Civil War"). Hoyle Osborne plays everything from ragtime to South American folk music. Online. Register at fsgw.org (The Folklore Society of Greater Washington).

#### MONDAY/JAN. 25

Unmeltable Snowman Workshop. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. It's always sad to watch a snowman melt away, so discover how you can create a four-season snowman that will still be with you when summer arrives. Sully Historic Site is hosting a series of "Unmeltable Snowman" workshops for families on three Mondays in January – Jan. 4, Jan. 11 and Jan. 25, 2021. At the workshop, you will learn to use a felting process to make an unmeltable snowperson and decorate it with style. Keep your creation through winter, spring, summer and fall. This program is suitable for participants age 5 to adult and is being offered on the hour from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The workshop is designed for a family of up to four people, and the cost is \$20 per family. Call 703-437-1794.

#### FRIDAY/JAN. 29

Family Fun Trivia Night. 7-9 p.m. Virtual. At the Old Firehouse, McLean. Gather the whole family around the computer or tablet and get ready for some socially distant trivia. Prizes for winning teams. To register for Old Firehouse events, visit: www.oldfirehouse.org or call 703-448-8336, TTY: 711.

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## Cancer and Covid ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... don't exactly go together like milk and cookies. Rather they go together like snow and ice. One or the other is bad enough, but together they become even worse. And unfortunately I have one, and am constantly worried/mindful of the other. Moreover, since covid is kind of a pulmonary issue, those of us who have cancer in the lungs, where we're already compromised, need to contract a virus like this like Washington, DC needs a "wintry mix" in the forecast.

In the course of my ongoing papillary thyroid cancer protocol, recently I spoke with an oncology pharmacist (who knew?). When he asked me, during our regular monthly phone call if I was experiencing any new symptoms, I was honest and said "Yes, shortness of breath." He noted my response and subsequently completed our call, as per usual. Not 10 minutes later, he called back. He had just spoken with my oncologist who he advised said that I should go to Urgent Care immediately. "Excuse me? What do I tell the doctor? Will my oncologist have spoken to them/expressed his concern/coordinated my care?" "No," I was told. "Just tell them your symptoms." Having had a negative covid test the week before Christmas, and have pretty much been at home ever since, I didn't believe I had the virus. But considering how little I know about such matters, I went with the medical flow and made an Urgent Care appointment for 2 pm that same day.

What I learned later that day after three hours in Urgent Care after an examination, lab work and chest X-Ray was the true reason why my oncologist wanted me not to wait for care: bloods clots which could lead to a pulmonary embolism (clots moving through the bloodstream and ending up in the lungs) where they could burst, so to speak, and cause a sudden death. So the concern wasn't covid, it was more sinister: immediate death if left unresolved. Little did I know, thankfully. Otherwise, I might have been a bit more anxious.

Luckily, my lab work was normal, my chest X-Ray was clear, and I had no corroborating symptoms: my legs weren't swollen and I had no chest pain. Nothing was mentioned about covid. Even though that was my presumption for the urgency, apparently, that was not my oncologist's concern. By 5 pm, with no new symptoms to report, I was released on my own recognizance. If I experienced any shortness of breath, I was encouraged to call. I was prescribed an inhaler - like those used by asthmatics, with the proper medicine and advised not to hesitate using it should the need arise. I was given approximately 30 doses, I was told.

I then went to the pharmacy to pick up my parting gift. After a 30 minute or so wait, my name was called and I went up the window to collect my goodies. Now I was free to go. Within 45 minutes I was home. No fuss, no muss, as it turned out. My follow up appointment with my oncologist is next Tuesday (as I write this on Sunday) which also happens is my next scheduled video visit, previously scheduled to discuss the results of the previous week's CT Scan and brain/abdomen MRI which amazingly, miraculously continue to show shrinkage of the thyroid tumors located in my lungs (you know, my pre-existing comorbidity). And of course this comorbidity is the reason I'm extremely cautious and occasionally even proactive because to not would be incredibly stupid and irresponsible.

Now, if I could only figure out how to lock and load this inhaler, I might actually be able reduce the stress and discomfort when I become short of breath. But knowing now that my symptoms were not covid-related, nor as I learned later that day, blood-clot-oriented, I can breathe easier before, during and after I'm short of breath, if you know what I mean?

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





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