

The Arlington Connection

No sled? As the first snowstorm of the season hit Arlington over the weekend, children headed outside for the more traditional snowball fights, angels in the snow and the less traditional snow frisbee competition.

WELLBEING

PAGE 6

Diary of Vaccine Mayhem

NEWS, PAGE 3

Happy Beginnings for Sage

AR PETS, PAGE 2

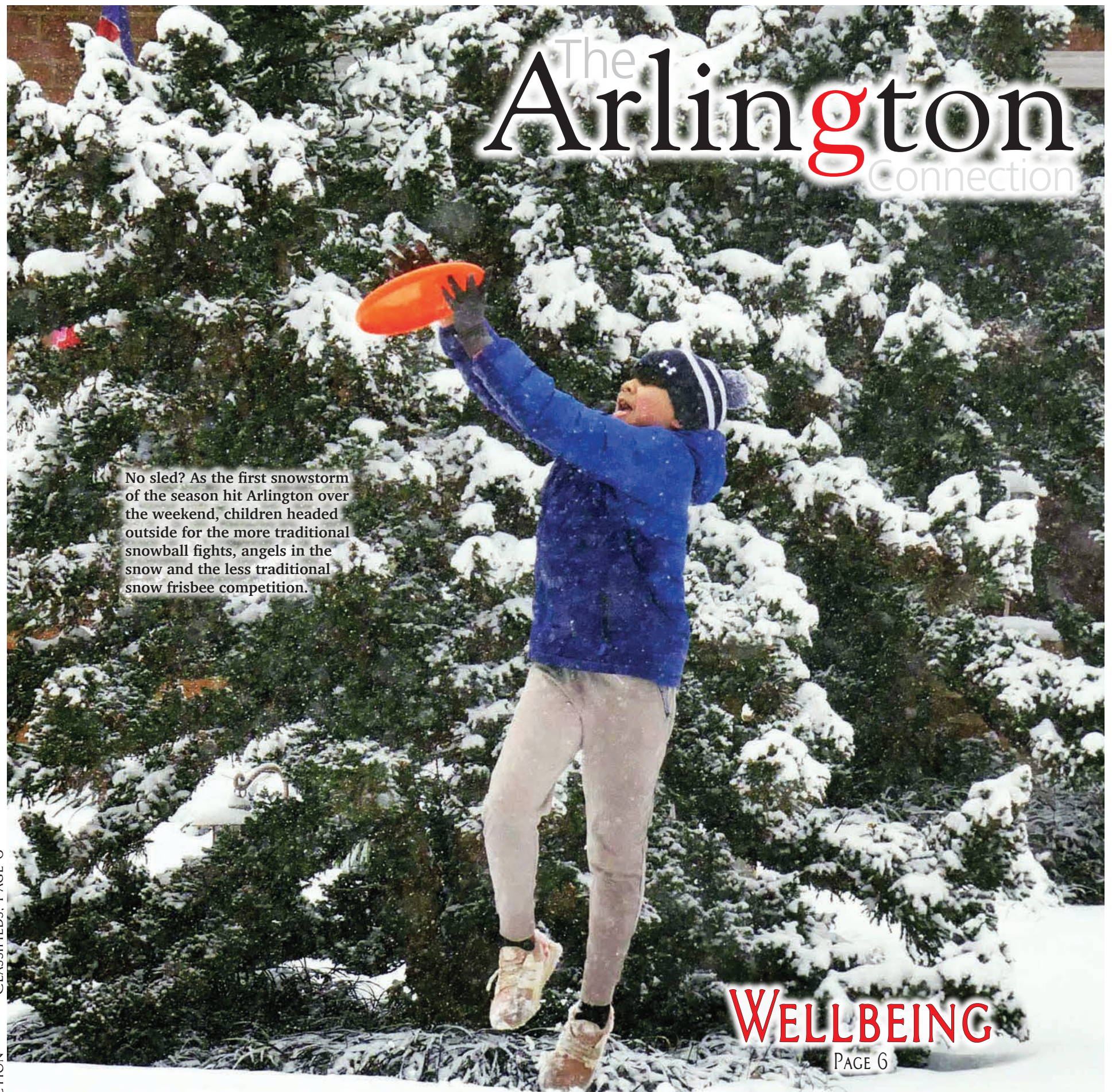
Legal Market for Marijuana Advances

PAGE, PAGE 5

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ARPEETS UPDATE:



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Apart from her nightly treat of an "everything bagel", Sage is making great progress on her diet.

Sage Has Found Her Forever Home!

BY JOAN BRADY
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Have you ever heard of a situation where the family dog conveyed with a home sale? Yeah. Me either. But that's exactly what Sage's owners did when they sold their house in Philadelphia and left their four-legged family member behind for the surprised new homeowners to find.

When they dropped Sage at a local shelter, she was terribly overweight, sad and completely freaked out. It's impossible to know what her life was like in that house, but based on the little we know, it's probably a fair guess that it was not awesome.

And that being the case, Sage couldn't possibly have anticipated the joy and love that would greet her in Virginia.

Rescued by Arlington-based Lost Dog and Cat Rescue Foundation (LDCRF), she was placed in a temporary foster home and quickly settled in with the mom, two teenagers and three four-legged foster siblings. That's where Sage was when I first told her story in hopes of helping to identify an adoptive

family for her. There was a fair amount of interest from Arlington Connection readers and the LDCRF promotion efforts, but sadly, no perfect match.

Sage was ok with that though. She loved her foster family. And the feeling was mutual. Unfortunately, when foster mom Claudia Salem needed to provide additional care for her mother, Salem knew she couldn't continue to give Sage the time and attention the canine needed. Heartbroken, Salem was determined to transition Sage to a great new foster family.

Enter foster family number two. They had fostered several dogs before Sage and were looking forward to fostering again. They heard about the abandonment and knew that Sage was "a big lady working on getting in shape." And that was apparently all they needed to know. They knew the foster pet parent drill; provide a safe and loving home until the perfect adoptive family was identified.

Losing the Salems was very hard on Sage. "[It was] seeing how much Sage missed her old family during her first few days here

SEE ARPETS, PAGE 4

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Desire for Vaccines Outpaces Supply

How do you divide 2,750 vaccines among 50,000 residents?

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Arlingtonians are angry, frustrated and frightened about Covid. The cancellation of some appointments for those 75 years-old and older, the uncertainty of the vaccine supply and the Governor's evolving decisions about eligibility, distribution metrics and priorities have led to mass uncertainty about who is in charge and what to do.

The bottom line is there simply aren't enough vaccines to go around.

On Dec. 12, Virginia Hospital Center received Pfizer vaccines and began vaccinating medical workers who are included in tier 1(a). When Moderna vaccine came in Dec. 28, VHC repeated the process. They are currently administering second doses. VHC next partnered with Arlington County to operate a clinic for residents over the age of 75 as the County moved into phase 1(b) of the Virginia Department of Health vaccine distribution plan.

Jan. 9, VHC physicians sent out an email about vaccine availability inviting individuals who are part of phase 1(a) and 1(b) to schedule vaccine appointments. Phase 1 (a) included health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities with phase 1(b) including persons 75 and older and frontline essential workers including police, fire and Hazmat, postal workers, childcare/K12 teachers and staff, public transit workers as well as grocery store workers and a few others.

Arlington residents over 75 were required to schedule an appointment, and vaccination began Jan. 13. Each person upon leaving was given a card with an appointment time for his or her second vaccination. Moving into phase 1(b) means that approximately 50 percent of Virginia's population is now eligible for COVID vaccines.

Despite difficulty of scheduling appointments in an overworked system, many people secured appointments for the weeks ahead. Then Jan. 15, Northam announced he was including people 65 years and older, people with underlying medical conditions, as well as teachers in the 1(b) category, thus making them eligible for vaccination. The race for appointments began again overloading the system's ability to respond. Many people reported hours of waiting,

Vaccines Being Scheduled	In Pre-registration	Not Yet Eligible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Healthcare Workers -Long-term Care Residents -People 75+ -Police, Fire, Hazmat* -Corrections Facilities* -Homeless Shelters* -Childcare Employees* -PreK-12 Employees* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -People 65+ -People 18-64 w/ Medical Conditions & Disabilities -Food & Ag Workers (including Veterinarians)* -Manufacturing* -Grocery Store Employees* -Public Transit Personnel* -Mail Carriers* -Continuity of Government* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Other Workers* (including Food Service, Public Works, Construction, Higher Education, Waste Removal, Office Workers, etc.) -General Public
*Preregister via your employer	*Preregister via your employer	*Employers can preregister

CONTRIBUTED BY ARLINGTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Vaccination metrics.

getting kicked off the VHC system, and having available time slots disappear before their eyes. The expansion of eligibility had led to more demand than vaccine available.

On Jan. 15, Culpepper Garden low-income senior residence vaccinated 189 residents and 36 staff during the first of three clinics. They held a follow-up clinic for assisted living residents, vaccinating an additional 97 people on Jan. 27. The third clinic is scheduled for Feb. 2 where they will administer the second dose of the vaccine as well as inoculate those who may have missed the first clinic.

On Jan. 16 and 18, the Arlington Department of Public Health set up clinics for vaccinating childcare/K-12 staff. They were able to vaccinate 1,800 staff in those two days, and additional clinics have been scheduled. According to Frank Bellavia, Arlington Public School (APS) Media spokesman, about 82 percent of the staff said they want the vaccine. He said, "APS has a significant portion of positions that interface with students from food service to bus drivers to assistants to teachers. All employees are afforded the same priority since the majority of our employees are school based and work directly with students."

In the Jan. 22 vaccine update provided by Dr. Danny Avula, the Governor's vaccination coordinator, he said Virginia had changed the approach of allocating doses to any place that requested it to a geographically population-based distribution. Doses are given to local health departments. "The health department works with their local partners, their health systems and other pharmacies to determine where do we want the



Culpepper Garden resident in assisted living celebrates the receiving coronavirus vaccine on Jan. 27.

vaccine to go. Where should it be prioritized this week?"

Avula explained as health districts moved to phase 1(b) of vaccinations with expanded eligibility; it led to more requests for appointments than doses. "Up until last week, we were able to ... allocate vaccine to everybody who wanted it. But last week we had over almost 300,000 dose requests and only 105,000 doses to allocate." Avula said it could take two to three months to work through the people in-group 1(b) waiting for vaccinations. He said the state has a goal of providing 50,000 doses a day and has the capacity to administer that many; it just doesn't have the vaccines.

On the same day, Jan. 22, those who had an appointment but had not yet been vaccinated received a text message from VHC saying, "The Virginia Department of Health announced that going forward, disbursements of vaccines would only go to health districts.

Hospitals in Virginia will no longer receive vaccines from VDH. As a result of this change VHC Physician group must cancel all future dose appointments at our vaccine clinic, beginning with appointments that were scheduled for Jan. 26, 2021 or thereafter. Your appointment at VHC Physicians Group vaccine clinic has been cancelled."

On Jan. 26 those with cancelled appointments got a "Dear Arlington Resident" letter stating "we will be scheduling you for a new date and time as soon as vaccine supplies are available. Our goal is to reschedule the canceled appointments in the order of VHC appointment schedules." Arlington County Board chair Matt de Ferrante in a Covid update on Jan. 28 said Arlington would be reaching out in the next few days to the 3,000 people 75 and older whose appointments had been cancelled.

One 80-year-old resident who had spent 12 hours getting her appointment said it had been sched-

uled for Jan. 27. Then they cut off appointments Jan. 26. "They said they would call me when they could reschedule. I know I will be on the alert to pick up when I see a 703-228 phone number." On Jan. 29 she reported she had just been able to reschedule for Feb. 2, the day of the expected snowstorm.

One 74-year-old who had scored an appointment that was cancelled said, "My understanding is that they are going to just reschedule for 75 and older and essential workers. I guess I'm just out of luck."

Residents have also been concerned about their second dose as they watch some other localities make the decision to expand the number of people who can receive a first dose by delaying the second dose until they have a larger supply of vaccine.

Adrian Stanton, Vice President of the Health System at VHC, says they have guaranteed the second dose to everyone who has had the first one. "I don't believe others in the state are doing that. He indicates it's difficult to anticipate what will happen with the supply available. "We weren't going to go cold turkey. As things got a little shaky, we wanted to be sure we got the last batch in time to cover everyone. We have some doses in the freezer."

In an Arlington vaccine town hall Jan. 27 Reuben Varghese, Arlington County Public Health Director in a response to a question from State Senator Adam Ebbin indicated Arlington is vaccinating essential workers who work in Arlington but live outside the County.

Rick Hale, a 74-year-old Arlington resident who has had his appointment cancelled wrote his local representatives, "Some, potentially a considerable amount, of the COVID vaccine that Arlington receives from the State is being used to vaccinate teachers and other essential workers who work in Arlington, but are not Arlington residents. Since Arlington is receiving a very limited supply of vaccine from the State, which is distributed according to a county's population, this policy reduces the number of vaccine doses that go into the arms of Arlington residents."

Stanton, Vice President of the Health System at VHC says people have anecdotal stories about unexpected vaccinations. "I don't

SEE DESIRE FOR, PAGE 4

Join AFAC Empty Bowls Virtual Event



FILE PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

AFAC Empty Bowls fundraising event at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in February 2020.

Grab a chef's recipe and make your own soup this year at Arlington Food Assistance Center's (AFAC) virtual Empty Bowls Event on Sunday, Feb. 7 at 11:30 a.m.

Empty Bowls is an international project to fight hunger and supports food-related charities around the world. Each community's events are independent and are personalized by artists and art organizations at a local level.

Traditionally each year AFAC has held their Empty Bowls event on Super Bowl Sunday where they have offered a choice of soup prepared by local restaurants and served in bowls produced by local potters. This year the event will be held virtually and will premier a special video, as well as remarks by Executive Director and CEO Charles Meng and highlights of previous events. You can also pick up some of those recipes for soups you've been tasting all these years.

AFAC is devoted solely to providing dignified access to nutritious, supplemental groceries, free of charge to Arlingtonians. The need continues to grow during the pandemic as more families seek assistance.

RSVP to <https://afac.org/tag/empty-bowls-event/>

Desire for Vaccines Outpaces Supply

FROM PAGE 3

know why but people cancel. But you have the vaccine and once it is pulled and prepped, you're locked in. You can't put it back in the freezer. If people don't show, it's wasted." So you hear about someone suddenly getting a vaccine in a grocery store or a call from a healthcare provider. "I recently heard about vaccinations in a snowstorm to be sure the shots weren't wasted."

On Jan. 28, de Ferranti issued a

coronavirus update with the latest information on vaccine availability. "We expect 2,750 doses per week but have the staff to do 14,000 per week." He added on Jan. 27 the Governor announced that Virginia would receive a 16 percent increase in Covid-19 vaccines immediately from the Federal government. This will allow planning vaccine distribution for months ahead instead of week to week.

He said Arlington County expects to receive more doses grad-

ually. De Ferranti added that in Virginia, there are 110,000 doses per week to reach 8 million residents across the state. In Arlington 50,000 residents have preregistered for the vaccine. He has indicated because there is not enough vaccine supply, the County is starting with residents 75 and older and a few categories of essential workers including police, fire, EMTs, homeless shelter workers and pre-K-to-12 staff.

Carnegie Mellon's University

Delphi Lab statistics indicate 92 percent of people in Arlington would accept a vaccine. Arlington's numbers stand at 11,487 Covid cases (with 73 new today), 723 hospitalizations, 199 deaths (two today.)

In Arlington County 11,996 doses of vaccine have been administered with 1,236 fully vaccinated.

De Ferranti says, "Vaccinating Arlingtonians remains County Government's most urgent priority."

Sage Has Found Her Forever Home!

FROM PAGE 2

made us want to make sure she never went through a tough transition like that ever again," her new pet mom said, explaining why she and her husband decided to go from fosters to pet-parents. And that decision has been a great one, "We're so happy to have her in the family."

"When I saw the email, 'Adopting Sage' flash on my cell," says Salem, happily remembering that moment, "It was such wonder-

ful news that I still get emotional when I think of it." Salem couldn't be more delighted that Sage has finally found her perfect family. "It wasn't the way anybody planned it or expected it. It just happened."

And that's truly the best.

If you are interested in adding a cat, dog or small animal pet to your household, here are a few local rescue organizations who might be able to help you find your perfect match:

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria

Animal Welfare League of Arlington

Homeward Trails

Lost Dog and Cat Rescue Foundation

PetConnect Rescue Wolf Trap Animal Rescue

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

The
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Fully Baked

Arlington senator leads effort to legalize marijuana in Virginia.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The so-called “war on drugs” was a failure, locking up generations of Black men and tearing Black families apart. Now lawmakers in Richmond are finally coming around to realizing the damage that the prohibition against marijuana caused in minority communities. Last year members of the General Assembly approved legislation decriminalizing marijuana. This year, they may be on the verge of legalizing recreational use of marijuana — ending the failed war on drugs and adopting new equity measures to address some of the damage it caused.

“The prohibition on marijuana has failed both in this commonwealth and in this country,” said Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30), who introduced the bill now being considered in the Senate. “The question is what is the role of government in telling people what they can and can’t use.”

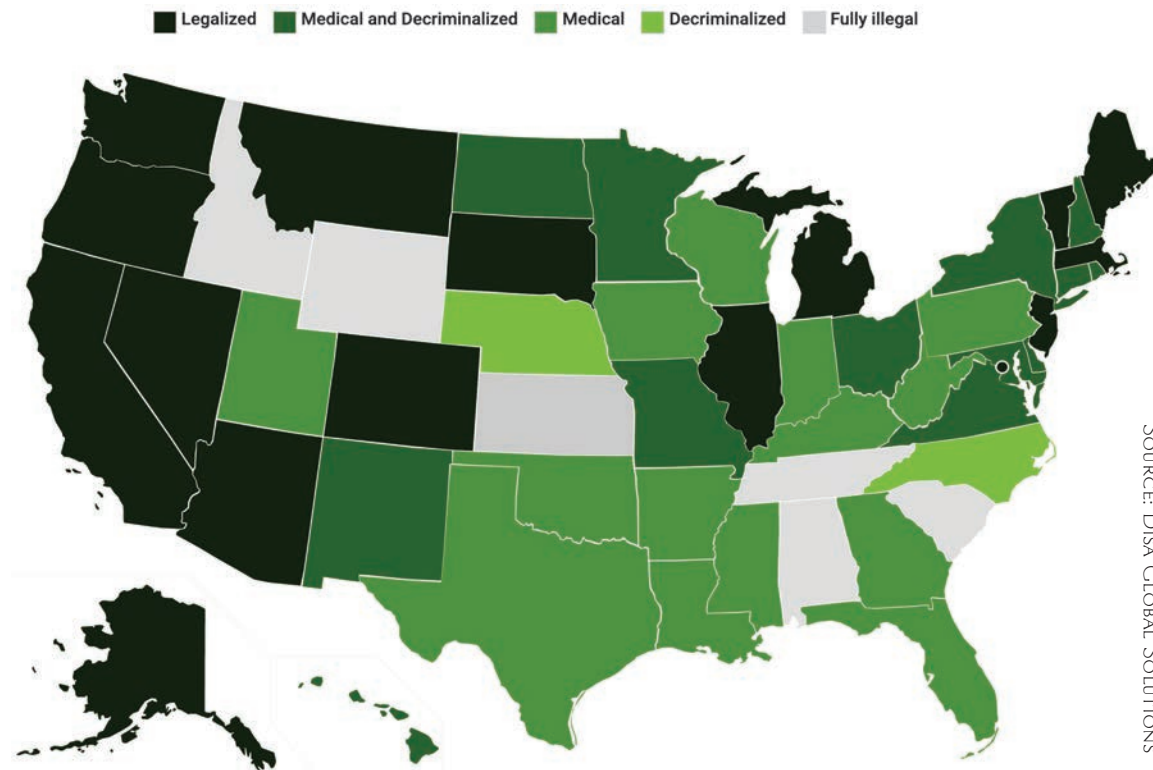
Lawmakers are working their way through a number of issues, a measure of complexity reflected in the size of the mammoth 500-page bill. The legislation touches on everything from which government agency will regulate marijuana to how the tax revenue is spent and under what circumstances local governments can opt out of legalization. In his State of the Commonwealth Address, Gov. Ralph Northam explained the effort to legalize marijuana was an effort to combat systemic racism in Virginia.

“One of the early leaders of the federal Drug Enforcement Agency was clear that marijuana laws should be written explicitly to target people of color. And so they were, and they’ve been targeting people for years,” said Northam. “It’s time to join 16 other states and make marijuana legal, and end the current system rooted in inequity.”

THE MOVE FROM controlled illegal substance to regulated agricultural product will require a government agency to issue licenses and oversee a newly created industry. The governor initially wanted that job to be assigned to the Virginia Alco-

“The prohibition on marijuana has failed both in this commonwealth and in this country.”

— Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30)



SOURCE: DISA GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

holic Beverage Control Authority, an organization created when the failed prohibition against alcohol ended a century ago. Northam argued that using an existing agency would take less time and cost less money than standing up a new agency.

“ABC is the only state agency in the commonwealth that has the experience of regulating a product that is as controlled and also a product that was formerly totally prohibited,” said Brad Copenhagen, deputy secretary for the Department of Agriculture and Forestry. “So we know that we can gain a lot of efficiencies and a lot of knowledge working with ABC.”

When Ebbin’s bill was considered by the Senate Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee, senators took issue with the governor’s approach. Several senators pointed out that the main goal for ABC is enforcing the state’s monopoly on liquor, and that law-enforcement experience wouldn’t translate well to helping a new industry regulate and market an agricultural crop. The agency’s lack of diversity was also a problem for a legislative effort guided by equity.

“I think this is too much for ABC to handle,” said Sen. Lionell Spruill (D-5). “We need another agency that has the time and the know-

how to put all the staff together to make this thing work for us.”

THE EXPERIENCE legalizing alcohol is informing how marijuana will be legalized when the governor signs the legislation. Local governments that want to prohibit the sale of marijuana at the local level would need to go through some difficult and expensive steps in order to opt out of legalization. They would not be able to do it with a vote of a city council or board of supervisors. Instead, they would need to conduct a referendum and have a majority of voters approve a new local prohibition against retail locations.

“It will be legal in jurisdictions for a period of time before a referendum could even be held by the locality to determine whether they want to opt out,” said Sen. Ryan McDougle (R-4). “I have some concerns about whether a jurisdiction can take away that right without it being a taking once it’s vested and someone has established a shop.”

Supporters of the legislation point out that local governments must conduct a referendum to implement a local prohibition against commercial sale of alcohol. One of the principles guiding the discussion is that the marijuana le-

galization effort should mirror the alcohol legalization effort a century ago, although nobody is making the case that the newly created Virginia Cannabis Control Authority should hold a monopoly on the product the way ABC controls the liquor market.

“Choosing an opt-out process is just about shifting the process burden to make the default, yes, you can have a business here,” said Ngiste Abebe, a member of the governor’s task force on legalization. “There will be time before the retail shops are allowed to open, so communities that are passionate about not having retail cannabis locations can organize and conduct a referendum before the retail shops open.”

LICENSES FOR SELLING marijuana will be extremely valuable, and lawmakers are keenly aware of the danger posed by creating an industry where Richmond-based Altria would be able to corner the market and exclude Black communities that were devastated by the war on drugs. That’s why the bill includes language created social-equity licenses, making sure the gold rush for Virginia kush won’t go to fat-cat corporate titans who make millions selling cigarettes to teen-

“It’s time to join 16 other states and make marijuana legal, and end the current system rooted in inequity.”

— Gov. Ralph Northam

agers.

“I grew up in an area where we have a lot of minority farmers, and quite frankly they’re pretty good at growing pot,” said Sen. Richard Stuart (R-28). “Do those folks have the opportunity to get into this? Or is this just a corporate giveaway?”

This is the part of the legislative debate that’s causing the most concern for lawmakers and advocates. The bill now under consideration attempts to thread the needle between providing a business carve-out for communities that were the target of the failed war on drugs while also creating a market that allows capitalism to thrive and tax revenue to flow. People who follow the industry expect Altria to be waiting for federal legalization, so Virginia could have an opportunity to help small and minority businesses to establish themselves before they face that corporate competition.

“Not only do we have Altria in our backyard, but we have the burgeoning cannabis industry that will be knocking at Virginia’s doors,” said Jenn Michelle Pedini, executive director of Virginia NORML.

RETAIL SALES won’t be the only way people can get marijuana. People will be able to grow plants at home. The current bill allows a total of four plants per household, two mature plants and two immature plants. Republicans tried to strip this provision from the bill last week, but that effort failed as Democrats passed the bill out of the Senate Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee.

“This should be viewed the same as alcohol in terms of you can home-brew alcohol like my grandfather did back in Franklin County,” said Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36). “There’s consequences for selling alcohol if you make it at home and don’t tax it, and I view it akin to that.”

One of the potential pitfalls with the four-plant limit is that it would apply to a household, not an individual. So if two or more roommates want to grow marijuana plants, they would need to figure out a way to distribute the household limit among themselves. Critics say the limitations create the possibility for a new war on plants.

“The whole four plan thing is a bit far-fetched for home growing,” said Mike Thomas of Grow Your Own RVA. “Cannabis is a medicine, and a lot of clients or patients have more than one medicine, so they would need a plant for pain, a plant for sleep, maybe a plant for appetite.”

Announcements

Announcements



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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

WELLBEING

When a Loved One Is Hospitalized with Covid-19

Coping with separation and uncertainty.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

For years, being able to talk with his mother, Carole Isaacs, nearly every day was a gift that Marc Stern treasured, so when he was unable to reach her for several days, he became concerned. After contacting the assisted living facility in which she resided, he learned that she had been found unconscious in her room and suffering from a high fever. Rushed to the emergency room, Isaacs tested positive COVID-19 and placed in the intensive care unit. While her life remained in limbo, Stern and the rest of his family could not see or visit her due to hospital safety policy. He was overcome with anguish and anger as he realized that he might never see her again. Having someone listen as he discussed those feelings provided relief in his period of helplessness. Now he is offering that service to others.

"The pandemic is still new, still



After testing positive for COVID-19, Carole Isaacs was hospitalized and isolated from loved ones.

raging, still scary," said Marc Stern, who is a self-described professional listener and runs Need to be Heard, a service in which others - by telephone or video conferencing - can express their feelings freely as another person listens

empathetically and without judgment. "Fear stalks us wherever we are. Compounding that with the potential of losing someone you love is enough to rock the foundation of your center and provoke extreme anxiety and sadness. The main coping strategy comes down to two simple yet powerful words: loving and listening."

When a loved one is hospitalized with COVID-19, the agony of being separated from them while they are battling a life-threatening and unpredictable illness can feel overwhelming. Often occurring without warning or time to prepare, the sudden life change can lead to a tidal wave of emotions.

Those feelings vary from person to person and are affected by the resources available to them, says Lisa Jackson-Cherry, Ph.D., Professor of Counseling at Marymount University's College of Health and Education. "Normal reactions for the majority of [people] may in-

SEE COPING, PAGE 7

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WELLBEING

Coping with Separation And Uncertainty

FROM PAGE 6

clude feelings of anxiety, depression, helplessness, hopelessness ... and thoughts of abandoning their loved one," she said. "This may be exacerbated if the caretaker also has health issues, lack of support or a clinical mental health diagnosis or history."

A lack of control can exacerbate those feelings. "Gaining any control over the situation — even when limited — is helpful," said Jackson-Cherry. "This could mean gaining as much information as possible about the medical situation in order to make decisions [and] trying to build in some normalcy in the abnormality of the situation."

Drawing up one's support systems and creating a collection of soothing or supportive remedies or a 'mental health tool box', such as taking a walk with a friend or meditating, are useful when dealing with the stress and anxiety, advises Dr. Anton C. Bizzell, MD. "This is the time to shore up all the support you have," he said. "For some people, this could mean contacting close friends and family, clergy, or neighbors to ask for emotional support. Ask for help with child care, household tasks, or other needs that could be alleviated to allow you to focus on your loved one."

It is important not to be in solitude, added Jackson-Cherry. "Isolation is not helpful and can be harmful."

As she began to heal, Stern was able to have telephone conversations with his mother. "Use technology as possible," he said. "If they are able to converse, technology is your friend," Stern said.

There are cases, says Bizzell, when one needs more support and guidance than self-help strategies can provide. "For many others, this is a time to call a counselor or family physician for help with adding extra support services and care," he said. "This is a traumatic situation, no matter the outcome, and it's not only okay to ask for help, it's essential. There is no one right way to do this. Find what works for you."

For those might have a friend whose loved one is battling Covid-19, there are uncomplicated ways to offer comfort. "We can support friends and loved ones by expressing interest and concern," added Jerome Short, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology, George Mason University.

Reaching out to a friend and offering non-judgmental presence cannot be underesti-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARC STERN

As his mother remained hospitalized in the intensive care unit, Marc Stern was overcome with sadness as he realized that he might never see her again.

mated. "Seems simple, but ... be there," said Jackson-Cherry. "Listen to their feelings and thoughts. If needed, assist in advocating for information. Offer to step in for day-to-day errands, meals and making sure they are taking care of themselves."

Understand that anger, anxiety and stress are a normal response to an abnormal situation, Bizzell says, "Don't try to tell them how to feel or think, instead, listen and support. ... Rather than waiting for them to tell you what they need, offer a list of things you could help with: for example, mow their lawn, send a grocery delivery, set up a meal train, help them with technology for video visits, or offer to give their child a ride home from school." Though it might be awkward or fraught with discomfort, take care to observe when a friend might need professional mental healthcare, cautions, Jackson-Cherry. "Look for signs of increased daily living disruptions such as not withdrawing, isolating or sleeping or eating, that are beyond what is normal in these situations," she said. "Listen for signs of increased hopelessness and statements of despair, especially with those who may have a history of suicidal ideation or behaviors."

Recognize that these are unprecedented times, advises Bizzell. "We are now nearly a year into a crisis of unimaginable proportions," he said. "People are suffering. We have never needed our support community more. You don't have to have all the answers; you just need to be there."

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Progress, I Guess?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I received in the mail today what in the sales/marketing world, we'd call a "pre-approach" letter. It was a letter confirming that my health care provider is aware of me and my covid needs. Moreover, it offered up the tantalizing notion that one day (although they didn't specify) when it is my turn, I will indeed get contacted/scheduled for my inoculation. Unfortunately, they couldn't be any more specific because their allotment of vaccines barely scratches the surface of the actual need. Nevertheless, both my wife and I have been assured that we are on a list. I suppose that's something. As "Forrest, Forrest Gump" would say: "One less thing."

Not that I'm paranoid about catching the virus or ever do I throw caution to the wind by actually integrating into the outside/formerly normal world, especially considering the comorbidity I represent: cancer, but all things being equal, I'd sure like to receive my inoculation. I'd just as soon die of old age. And my wife is doing everything she can to make that happen. She has me on a very short leash. I'm barely able to heel. A pandemic will do that.

As we begin our second year of living dangerously, the vaccines certainly offer hope. Hope can't iron out the logistics, however. Apparently, at least according to the daily news coverage, inoculating so many people in so many places with or without the proper refrigeration is a nearly overwhelming task. Then add in the necessary ingredients: ppe, masks, syringes, swabs, trained inoculators, et cetera, and you've got a hurdle Edwin Moses couldn't overcome. To see that this virus has killed more Americans than died in World War II is a stunning reality to behold. Seeing the death tally rise every day is a jaw-dropping/head-shaking moment. Progress, so far, has been hard to come by. Though there are some alternative theories and explanations about the actual numbers, I tend to believe what the news organizations are telling us. I really don't see the motivation to do otherwise.

Ultimately, we're all responsible for our own actions - and inactions, and the consequences that follow (I only heard that a million times from my father while growing up). If I was to contract covid, I'd have no one to blame but myself. My wife might blame others as she's very impatient/indignant of people who are not adhering to public health advisories and who don't abide by the Vulcan philosophy, especially during a worldwide pandemic: "The good of the many outweigh the good of the few." And it doesn't seem a stretch to ask/expect that your fellow man - and woman, should respect the constriction of some of our freedoms as together, hopefully, we work to overcome this once-in-a-century health crisis. In an odd kind of karma, what goes around does indeed come around. And to prevent this virus from continually coming around, we must be mindful of the scientific facts as more and more is known about this virus.

Still for those of us who have survived this worst pandemic since the Spanish Flu, it's one year and counting. I don't view it as much of an accomplishment, more a series of random strokes that add up to luck. However, since luck doesn't last forever, and can't exactly be counted on, I was happy to receive today's letter acknowledging that the health care powers that be know who I am and where to find me and that I need a vaccination. Presuming otherwise, in the midst of an organizational challenge the likes of which haven't ever been experienced by the current generation in charge, or previous generations for that matter, would be illogical. Here's hoping we all "live long and prosper."

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

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