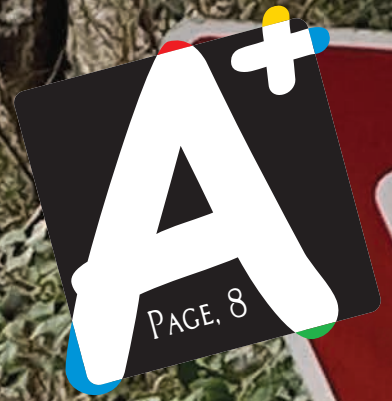


Great Falls CONNECTION



Controversial Solutions At Play for Springvale Road Bridge

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Jennifer Falcone and John Halacy, members of the Springvale Road Working Group of the Great Falls Citizens Association, stand with their backs to the single-lane Springvale Road Bridge, leading to a sharp left turn.

Doctor Pleads Guilty to Not Paying Employment Taxes

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Sealing the Record

House and Senate Democrats disagree on how old convictions should be expunged.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

For people haunted by a conviction for felony drug possession or misdemeanor or disorderly conduct, a debate now happening in the Virginia General Assembly is one that could have dramatic consequences for finding a place to live or landing a job. Lawmakers are considering legislation that would allow those people to seal their criminal record, expunging old convictions and helping them wipe the slate clean.

But Democrats are bitterly divided over how to accomplish that goal.

House Democrats are pressing for an automatic model for sealing the record on many crimes, allowing people to wipe the slate clean without needing to hire a lawyer or missing a day of work. Senate Democrats are rejecting that approach, holding out for a petition-based process where judges would review individual cases to determine whether they deserve to have convictions or charges sealed. Neither side appears to be willing to back down as the legislation heads toward a closed-door conference committee, where lawmakers will either cut a deal or end the session without taking action.

"It's time to act during this session to have the robust debate about how to best conduct the process of expunging people's records," said Gov. Ralph Northam in his State of the Commonwealth address. "This will make our system more just and equal — and it needs action this session."

Although the governor told lawmakers he wants them to find a resolution before they end the session, he pointedly declined to take a position. The lack of leadership from the governor has intensified the struggle between Senate Democrats and House Democrats as the General Assembly session reaches its halfway mark this week. At this point, the most likely scenario is that each side would insist on its version, sending the legislation into a conference committee where lawmakers might end up adopting some kind of hybrid approach, expunging some crimes automatically while requiring a petition to seal others.

"For the relatively low-level, minor offenses I think there ought to be some sort of automatic mechanism where those records are at least sealed," said Attorney General Mark Herring. "We should give a clean slate and a second chance to more Virginians who have earned it."

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER Charniele Herring of Alexandria says many misde-



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

House Majority Leader Charniele Herring of Alexandria, shown here on the House floor last year, is leading the fight to automatically expunge criminal records, sealing records of old cases ranging from felony drug possession to misdemeanors like larceny to disorderly conduct.

"Keeping people branded with a scarlet letter for misdemeanor offenses is disgraceful."

— House Majority Leader Charniele Herring

meanors and even some felonies should be automatically expunged from the record after eight years. The bill that she introduced in the House has automatic expungement sealing the record for many low-level misdemeanors like petty larceny and trespassing, although it does not apply to sex crimes or violent crimes. Her bill also includes automatic expungement for felony drug possession. If expungement for those crimes requires a petition, she says, only a privileged few would benefit while most people would suffer.

"Who benefits from petitions for misdemeanors? Attorneys," said Herring, who is the chairwoman of the House Courts of Justice. "Keeping people branded with a scarlet letter for misdemeanor offenses is disgraceful."

Opponents of automatic expungement say it's a mistake to automate any court proceeding, because it excludes the role of judges to make individual determinations about defendants and their circumstances. Lawmakers are considering a separate bill that would eliminate many mandatory minimums, and advocates for petition-based expungement compare automatic expunge-

ment to the problems associated with mandatory minimums. That's an approach supporters of the House bill reject.

"When expungement is not free or automatic, very few people avail themselves of it," said Ashna Khanna, legislative director at the ACLU of Virginia. "We need a system that will not create more inequities when it comes to race and socioeconomic status."

SENATE DEMOCRATS are taking a much more conservative approach. Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36) has a bill that would allow automatic expungement for some minor offenses, like speeding or shopping cart theft. Felony drug possession and jailable misdemeanor like larceny or trespassing would require a judge to review an individual's case and get a sense of who the defendants are and what happened in their lives that resulted in the criminal record. That way judges can identify significant drug problems or mental health problems.

"What somebody is convicted of is often a legal fiction to achieve a compromise in a criminal proceeding," said Surovell. "And from my perspective the circumstances of the crime that led to the compromise are partly what need to be considered before a charge is expunged."

Although Herring's bill has automatic expungement for a narrow set of offenses, Surovell's bill has a petition-based process for a much larger list of crimes. Currently, Virgin-

ia law offers no way for people to seal old convictions, and the Senate bill would create a new process for expunging the record for hundreds of crimes. Surovell's bill also includes a provision to provide legal services to some people who can't afford lawyers and penalties for private companies that sell expunged criminal records online, a gift that's often used to extract money out of people who are trying to clear their names on the internet.

"The more expungement available the better," Andrew Elders, policy director for Justice Forward Virginia. "I keep wanting to take the best parts of these bills and smash them together until we get the most expansive reform possible."

THE CONTOURS of a final bill might end up taking bits and pieces from two approaches, and advocates have a wide range of opinions about what should happen. Alexandria Commonwealth's Attorney Bryan Porter says he supports automatic expungement for any charges that have been dismissed or where the defendant has been found not guilty. He also supports an automatic process for sealing all

misdemeanor convictions, including convictions for larceny or trespassing. But, he says, he would like to see a petition-based process for felony drug convictions.

"There currently is no process by which you could ever have those convictions sealed, and I'm supportive of allowing people a process by which they can have those convictions sealed," said Porter, who is part of a group known as the Progressive Prosecutors for Justice. "But I do think it's reasonable in those circumstances where someone has actually been convicted of a criminal offense that there be a petition-based system."

The ongoing impasse between the House and Senate on this issue has been going on for more than a year. House and Senate Democrats were unable to come to a resolution on their differences last March, and the session concluded without a bill. Then the Crime Commission released a report supporting the automatic process, and people were hopeful that a special session on criminal justice reform might have been an opportunity for compromise. But once again the House and Senate were not able to reach an agreement and the special session ended without a deal.

Now lawmakers are back at it again for a third time, and each side seems to be digging in its heels and refusing to back down.

"The problem they have is the votes don't exist in our body to do what they want," said Surovell. "And if they tell me the votes don't exist to do what I want in their body I guess we won't have a bill again."

Virginia's Budget Focuses on Recovery

BY SEN. ADAM EBBIN



Last year was my first on the influential Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, where I was glad to gain direct experience in the allocation of funds and the tweaking of expenses which together create our state budget. At the time, the economic outlook was strong, and we reported an incredibly bold, progressive budget. Within a month of its adoption it was clear many of our lofty funding goals would need to be put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Comparably, Virginia has weathered the economic storm well, and we were able to restore some of these funding priorities this year, as well as take important new steps to begin the process of rebuilding our economy.

Last week the Senate and House reported our respective amendments to the second-year appropriations of Virginia's biennial budget. The differences between these versions will be reconciled in the coming weeks by the joint budget conferees. The Senate budget prioritizes repairing the damage COVID has done to our students' ability to learn, bolsters our education system, protects small businesses, expands access to broadband, increases affordable housing

opportunities, and funds growing vaccination efforts as well as directing aid to at-risk medical patients.

In healthcare, we made prudent decisions to increase federal matching dollars for children's healthcare and foster care, and secured a large amount of federal funding to support a statewide vaccination program. Since my last column, Virginia has become

one of the most successful states in vaccine distribution, and this funding will help us further advance that mission while saving nearly \$100 million for other priorities. We also appropriated dollars to add slots for Developmental Disability Waivers to support those vulnerable residents most impacted by COVID-19.

Virginia's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which funds short and long term projects to reduce barriers to ownership and renting of affordable housing, as well as projects reducing homelessness, has been funded at or around \$5 million a year since its inception. That was simply not enough, and I am glad the Senate budget takes the issue seriously by allocating \$110 million to the Trust over the biennium. We also allocated significant federal relief dollars for rent and mortgage relief. As this year has proved, access to the Internet is not a com-

modity, but rather a necessity. To address this reality the Senate included nearly \$50 million for broadband infrastructure grants. We also included expansive tax breaks and small business loans to protect and bring back small businesses and jobs in the coming year -- a major priority for members of the Senate Finance Committee.

Everyone has suffered during this pandemic, but especially of concern are Virginia's children, who have been uniquely affected during their formative years. The Senate budget moves to address those concerns in order to get kids back into even better schools than the ones they left, with more support and a higher chance at life-long success. We increased salaries for hard-working educators, and also allocated significant dollars in order to add three additional support staff (including mental health counselors and nurses) per 1,000 students statewide. We also increased per-pupil funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative to level the playing field, so that disadvantaged early learners have a better shot at success.

Despite economic struggles, I am glad that the Senate did not adhere to austerity economics as was done during the 2008 financial crisis. This legislative session has been one to address needs, not wants, and I am glad to support a budget that addressed those needs aggressively and responsibly. With the funds allocated in this year's budget, Virginia will recover.

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is!

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



COMMENTARY

I have never known a politician who has not promised better schools, quality of life and safety. Although these standards are defined differently by the persuasion of the persons making them, the promises share one thing in common: to be realized fully will cost money. The true measure of an officeholder comes not in the promises made but whether that person is willing to put their money where their mouth is. I could not be prouder as a member of the House of Delegates and the Appropriations Committee of the budget passed in the House of Delegates last week. The Senate passed a very similar budget with the differences between the two to be resolved in a conference committee over the next couple of weeks.

While debate over the budget is most often about spending, discussions need also to take into account revenues and investments. There had been dire predictions about state revenues heading into

up for lost revenue. The Governor's proposed budget already had more than a billion dollars in reserve, and the House added \$150 million to that amount to soften the impact of a decline of revenue next year without the same level of federal relief.

Both the House and the Senate funded the biggest investment in preschool education ever made. I term it an investment for much research shows that investing in early childhood education pays off many fold in later learning success, civic engagement, and quality of life. The House budget includes the state share of a five percent pay increase for teachers whose average pay has continued to lag behind the national average and who have had to do double duty this year with virtual learning. Funding is provided for another step to a

1:325 school counselor-to-student ratio moving towards the ideal of 1:250. Federal relief of \$1.3 billion is provided for schools along with \$51.1 million to address COVID-19 learning loss. An amount of \$84 million is provided in the budget to maintain affordable access to Virginia colleges and universities and \$8.5 million to increase Tuition Assistance Grant awards and include online education.

COVID-19 concerns drove many budget decisions. In addition to getting the schools open when safe and to make up for lost learning, the budget provides paid sick leave for essential workers, increased funding for nursing homes, and

worker compensation for health care workers and first responders.

The budget makes investments in the future of the economy and our environment. Funding is provided to expand broadband access throughout the state. A one-time five million dollar capitalization fund is established for rebates on the purchase of electric vehicles for persons whose income qualifies them. The largest ever amount is provided for agricultural best-management practices to meet Chesapeake Bay clean-up benchmarks.

The best compliment that I and my colleagues could receive is that we put the public's money where we have been told that it should be!

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Doctor Pleads Guilty to Not Paying Employment Taxes

Arshad Pervez Cheema, formerly of Great Falls, did not pay more than \$2 million in employment and corporate taxes.

A doctor, formerly of Great Falls, pleaded guilty on Feb. 12 to willful failure to pay employment taxes, announced Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart M. Goldberg of the Justice Department's Tax Division and Acting United States Attorney Raj Parekh for the Eastern District of Virginia.

According to court documents, from 2011 through 2018, Arshad Pervez Cheema owned and operated Walk-In Medical Center, PC, a medical practice located in Falls Church and Herndon. Cheema was responsible for collecting and paying to the IRS payroll taxes, which consisted of Social Security, Medicare, and income taxes that had been withheld from his employees' wages, as well as an employer portion. Over a four-year period from 2012 to 2016, Cheema willfully did not pay more than \$500,000 in payroll taxes. Instead, he used some of the withheld funds for other busi-

ness ventures, including to open and run a restaurant in Washington, D.C. In addition, Cheema did not pay corporate taxes for Walk-In Medical Center, PC, nor did he pay employment taxes for another doctor's office, Falls Church Family Care PC, which he operated. In total, Cheema did not pay more than \$2 million in employment and corporate taxes.

U.S. District Judge Anthony J. Trenga scheduled sentencing for June 23, 2021. At sentencing, Cheema faces a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment. Cheema also faces a period of supervised release, restitution, and a fine.

Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Goldberg and Acting U.S. Attorney Parekh commended special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation, who conducted the investigation, and Trial Attorney Casey S. Smith and Assistant U.S. Attorney Russell L. Carlberg, who are prosecuting the case.

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A selection of attendees at the Feb. 9 meeting of the Great Falls Citizens Association Springvale Road Working Group.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

It's a sharp turn to the left after driving over the Springvale Road Bridge, where individuals at the wheel must yield before driving over the bridge.

Controversial Solutions At Play for Springvale Road Bridge

Great Falls Citizens Association invites VDOT to Feb. 25 Town Hall.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Policies passed down to state levels encouraging single-lane deteriorating bridges to be replaced with two-lane bridges because of purported safety concerns are once again at the forefront for discussion between the Great Falls Citizens Association, community members, Fairfax County Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville District), and the Virginia Department of Transportation. At issue is the 22 feet long, 19 feet wide, single-lane Springvale Road Bridge built in 1932. To some, it contains cultural value, community heritage, and other more tangible attributes. To others, it is an obsolete structure that needs to be replaced with a two-lane bridge. The dichotomy sets up a complicated situation.

The Springvale Road Working Group of the Great Falls Citizens Association met on Feb. 9. Their purpose was to prepare for the upcoming Feb. 25 Town Hall on the Springvale Road Bridge Replacement by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) requested that GFCA provide him feedback on the community's position to replace the current deteriorating bridge with a larger two-lane structure.

The Town Hall is an opportunity for the Great Falls community to speak to preserve the one-lane bridge design or build it out with a two-lane structure, according to Jennifer Falcone, the meeting moderator.

It also provides GFCA members with a chance to describe what they see as drawbacks to VDOT's proposal, identify the impact of what they consider will be more traffic in the village, and the effect on Georgetown Pike. Falcone said that the town hall's format

would differ from other slide-heavy VDOT presentations.

"Instead, we will provide attendees with key points of view on both sides of the issue. We will also set aside time for the attendees who have pre-registered to speak on the subject, and we will respond to written questions submitted during the meeting," Falcone said. Comments are limited to three minutes. John Halacy, the Springvale Road Bridge Working Group coordinator, will line up positions and the critical points of the group's efforts, followed by the principal representative of VDOT, offering VDOT's rationale. Supervisor Foust will also speak during the meeting.

Henry Lippincott brought forward his findings. Unable to identify similarly contested one-lane vs. two-lane bridge issues in Virginia, he turned to national data. In Ohio, a replaced two-lane bridge resulted in "worrisome traffic speed," a similar concern for the GFCA working group. Another trend Lippincott found interesting in conversations he had with the Department of Transportation was "disingenuous statements" such as "a two-lane bridge will increase safety."

Lippincott said the responsibility should be on VDOT to prove a two-lane bridge won't increase traffic, safety hazards, and speeding "because it defies logic."

John Halacy questioned if a two-lane Springvale Road Bridge would instead just



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Jennifer Falcone and John Halacy, members of the Springvale Road Working Group of the Great Falls Citizens Association, stand with their backs to the single-lane Springvale Road Bridge, leading to a sharp left turn.

be "moving a bottle-neck at the one-lane bridge and dumping it on Georgetown Pike and are we enticing people to go to Georgetown Pike."

Bill Canis considered the "tenor" of the meeting. He cautioned word choices would influence the meeting's tone.

Dennis Huber said another question to consider would be accident rates as they



Candice Burt at the Feb. 9 meeting of the Great Falls Citizens Association Springvale Road Working Group.

move from a one-lane bridge to a two-lane bridge. "If you've got good data, that would be great to bring to the front."

Halacy said they had accident data VDOT gave them on bridge-related data spanning the past 19 years.

Candice Burt reminded the working group of the 2013 single-lane rustic replacement bridge over Nichols Run on Beach Mill Road. It demanded that she question VDOT's number of cars per minute and the number of accidents on the bridge. She got the police report for accidents. "It never was on the bridge," she said. Burt spoke of her advocacy that the original bridge's single-lane configuration be retained to slow down and discourage cut-through traffic along Beach Mill Road.

"It wasn't easy, and I was panicked that it was going to be something else. But you know we stuck our ground, and in the end, VDOT was so pleased because our design bridge was

one of the first in the area...We wanted a wooden deck... We wanted to keep it in the character of Great Falls."

The Great Falls Citizens Association Town Hall-Springvale Road Bridge Replacement is Feb. 25, 2021, at 7 p.m. Registration to attend with the indication of whether the registrant wishes to speak is available at the Great Falls Citizens Association website.

Return to School Begins This Week

School Board member Elaine Tholen, Dranesville District, has shared the following return to school update with the community:

The Fairfax County School Board gave unanimous support for an updated timeline at the 2/2 Work Session that will offer all students the opportunity to return to school buildings two days a week beginning Feb. 16 through March 16. The 2/2 Return to Work Session recording can be viewed here. The next Return to School update will be 3/16.

Under the updated timeline presented by Dr. Brabrand, the first students, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners and younger students, will begin returning to in-person learning on Feb. 16. Learn more about the in-person return to school timeline here.

In preparation for students' return, schools have created staffing plans based on the number of students who selected in-person instruction earlier this school year. Students who have already selected to return to in-person instruction will be able to do so two days a week. Due to social distancing requirements, schools may not be able to accommodate additional students who wish to change their selection from virtual to in-person instruction.

For parents requesting changes from full-time virtual to in-person instruction, principals will do their best to accommodate the requests, however, it may not be possible to accommodate changes if classes are at capacity.



PHOTO BY FCPS

Elaine Tholen

The School Board has given its support, and FCPS' health and safety plans are tested and in place for students to return to the classroom. Watch the Ready to Return video on the Return to School website. FCPS has implemented Safety Teams that are monitoring FCPS' adherence to five health and safety mitigation strategies that the CDC says will help to keep school transmission rates low. FCPS schools currently rate "low" in terms of infection risk.

In addition, vaccinations of FCPS staff began Jan. 16 and are continuing. Ninety percent of FCPS staff have requested or scheduled appointments to receive the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The Fairfax County Health Department is also working closely with Inova Health System and FCPS to ensure that staff will have access to their second dose in the course of the next few weeks.

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Leveling the Playing Field in School

Advocating for children with special needs or learning disabilities.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

When Lisa Lightner's son Kevin was two-years-old, she discovered that he would need special learning support in school. She has spent more than 12 years working to make sure he received the necessary assistance in the classroom. Now she is helping other parents avoid the frustrating and difficult process that she endured. Lightner is now a special education advocate, blogger and host of the podcast "Don't IEP Alone," a title that references an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). She uses her platforms to raise awareness and share information and resources to help other parents navigate the complicated and overwhelming path to securing the best education for special needs

"Working to get help for Kevin was a challenge. It's really an overwhelming process," said Lightner, whose son is now 14. "I'm college educated and I had so much trouble figuring it out." changes that remove barriers and provide your child with equal access to learning.

Recognizing that a child has and a learning disability, such as dyslexia or Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and determining the type of accommodations and adjustments in school to ensure that they have equal access to learning, is an arduous process. Though the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) gives children the right to have IEP that includes a learning plan tailored fit their learning differences, they don't always receive it.

"The special education climate has really changed in recent years," said Lightner. "Schools are doing more with less. Teachers have larger class sizes, fewer resources. It's very easy for a child to fall through the cracks if you don't stay on top of their progress."

Learning disabilities can often go unnoticed, but red flags that a child might have a learning disability include low grades and difficulty keeping up with their peers academically. "Parents are often the first to recognize that their child may be struggling with certain learning endeavors, for example reading, math, or writing," said Clara Hauth, PhD Associate Professor, Special Education Marymount University. "The terms for these learning disabilities are dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia."

"A more obvious telltale is when the child shares with you an ongoing pattern of frustration about schoolwork or shows a lack of engagement in school," added Kelley Regan, Ph.D. Professor and academic program coordinator for special education at George Mason University. "Also, if work completion is taking an unusual amount of time or the child shows little independence or a lack of understanding of assignment or there is an avoidance of schoolwork; these could be signs that the child's needs may or may not be met."

The current virtual learning environment and the resulting restructuring of the way that accommodations or IEPs are being administered might make no-



PHOTO BY LISA LIGHTNER

Through her work advocating for her son Kevin, now 14, Lisa Lightner helps other parents advocate for their children with learning disabilities or special needs.

ting whether a child's academic needs are being met more challenging. "We also have seen firsthand over the last year how unprecedented circumstances like a pandemic have impacted delivery of instruction for students with disabilities," said Regan. "The delivery of services for students with disabilities had to be revamped by school districts across the nation and now we are seeing the impact of school closures on student achievement and social-emotional learning."

A diagnostic test will help identify and confirm a learning disability. "Parents who feel that their student may have a disability should contact both their family doctor and the school to request initial meetings to discuss their concerns," said Hauth.

Such tests could provide information to guide the creation of an IEP that outlines the accommodations that will meet a child's learning needs. Examples of these accommodations include additional time to take tests and complete homework and assignments or having tests administered on a one-on-one basis.

Even with an IEP in place though, some children might not get the resources they need. "Research tells us that many novice special education teachers and even veteran teachers feel overwhelmed by their workloads and managing these workloads can be challenging," said Regan. "To meet the needs of students, teachers need adequate resources and materials, and they need devoted time to collaboratively design meaningful instruction for students. Limited resources and time may be one explanation as to why children with learning disabilities may not be receiving what they need."

In an ideal learning environment, a general education teacher collaborates with a special education teacher and they design specialized instruction that allows the student to succeed with the general education curriculum. "If ... the needs outlined on the child's IEP are not being met for the child, a parent should advocate."

Almost everything is more challenging within a virtual learning environment, monitoring a child's academic performance is still essential, says Lightner. "Engage in the IEP process, all of it, all year round," she said. "You have to stay engaged and in contact with your team and your child's progress. Understanding the evaluations and progress made is essential."

Sometimes, the needs of the child with learning disabilities changes. In such cases advocacy is necessary, advises Regan. "When the individualized program is not providing the supports that previously sufficed, a parent may need to and should advocate," she said. "For example, a parent may observe that his or her child appears very disorganized with his or her school materials, is turning in assignments late or not at all and needs an effective strategy in place for an observed problem. Likewise, there may be a need for adjusting the intensity or frequency of instruction. Instruction should be appropriate for the child."

Shepherd's Center Expands to Serve Northern Virginia

The Shepherd's Center serving Oakton, Vienna, Reston and Herndon and the Shepherd's Center of Great Falls join forces to better serve area seniors.

The Shepherd's Center serving Oakton, Vienna, Reston and Herndon and the Shepherd's Center of Great Falls are joining forces to continue assisting area seniors, supporting aging in place and creating a world without loneliness. The newly formed Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia (SCNOVA) will continue its partnerships and outreach with the region's faith-based organizations, associations, and local governments to provide free transportation services, companionship, learning opportunities, and caregiver support across expanded service area.

"As an affiliate of the Shepherd's Centers of America, our mission, in part, is to support our sister organizations in the area," said W. Scott Schroth, chairman of the board of directors for the Shepherd's Center serving Oakton, Vienna, Reston and Herndon. "We're excited to welcome Great Falls' vibrant programs and dedicated volunteers to our Oakton, Vienna, Reston and Herndon Shepherd's Center. Our combined strengths as the Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia will allow us to continue to serve and help sustain our older neighbors more efficiently."

"The merger is expected to be completed in February," said Philip Pifer, president of the Shepherd's Center of Great Falls. During this time, the centers will continue to provide transportation services to seniors as the work of merging our clients, volunteers and organizations is completed. Free ride services for seniors in Great Falls will continue uninterrupted af-

ter the merger. In addition, Great Falls volunteers and clients will be transferred into SCNOVA at the time of the merger, allowing for a seamless transition.

"We at SCGF are delighted with the potential of this partnership, and with SCOVH as our partner," Pifer said. "We evaluated a number of organizations who expressed interest in joining forces, and SCOVH was both the best fit and, in our opinion, offers the best potential. Working together, we hope to provide even better and more impactful services to seniors in Northern Virginia."

"Working together, we hope to provide even better and more impactful services to seniors in Northern Virginia."

— Philip Pifer, president of the Shepherd's Center of Great Falls

Since 1998, Shepherd's Center Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon, a 501 (C)(3) non-profit organization, has been dedicated to improving the quality of life as we age, through supportive programs and services, personal enrichment and volunteer engagement that enable senior neighbors to live full and productive lives while aging in place. Ihr Center's more than 260 trained and

vettted volunteers are medical and companion transportation drivers, friendly callers and visitors, food delivery drivers, handy helpers, health care advocates, and lifelong learning and cultural enrichment enthusiasts. This volunteer engagement network offers stability, encouragement and hope for connected and healthy lives.

Established in 2018, the Shepherd's Center of Great Falls, a 501(c)3 charity, has provided free transportation for non-driving seniors in Great Falls, as well as other services supporting seniors wishing to age in place in their homes.

Inspiring Young People in Creative Learning Activities

Fairfax Symphony named a Dominion ArtStar.

By DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

With more than five decades as an honored symphony, Fairfax Symphony Orchestra (FSO) adds 2021 Dominion Energy ArtStar to its accolades. FSO received the ArtStar award for its innovative music-learning program, “Link Up,” in partnership with Carnegie Hall. The award was received at the Virginia Commission for the Arts “Art Works for VA” virtual conference.

FSO was one of five organizations from Virginia that received the ArtStars award for inspiring people in creative endeavors. The organizations represent Virginia organizations with annual operating budgets under \$1 million. Each received a \$10,000 grant to support their winning arts or cultural education program.

“These organizations show ways the creative spirit continues to thrive – whether through outdoor, virtual or digital programming,” said Hunter A. Applewhite, president of the Dominion Energy Char-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Students in Fairfax Symphony Orchestra “Link Up” 2019 music program

Where and When

To learn more about the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra partnership with the Carnegie Hall “Link Up” program and other Fairfax Symphony education programs, visit www.fairfaxsymphony.org. Additional support for the Fairfax Symphony “Link Up” program provided by ArtsFairfax, The Rea Charitable Trust, and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

itable Foundation. “Virginia is very fortunate to have these talented organizations.”

“The Virginia Commission for the Arts (VCA) congratulates all the ArtStars Award recipients,

including the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra,” said Janet Starke, Executive Director, VCA. “This award affirms the good work being done by the FSO, and their peers from across the state.”



Fairfax Symphony Orchestra Bassist Aaron Clay

Developed by the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall, FSO’s “Link Up” program provides a unique opportunity for students in Grades 3-5 to come together for a shared cultural experience.

“We are thrilled and honored to be a Dominion ArtStar in recognition of our work to serve teachers and students by implementing our much-needed “Link Up” educa-

tion program virtually this year,” said Jonathan Kerr, Executive Director. FSO. “Our commitment to our community is stronger than ever, only strengthened by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. By sharing our concerts and education programs virtually, we are filling a critical need for quality arts programs to entertain, educate, inspire, sustain, and unite the communities we serve. This prestigious award furthers our work to provide unique, innovative, and uplifting arts experiences for thousands in Fairfax County and across our region.”

For Aaron Clay, “as a bassist, who performs both classical music and jazz, I’m particularly excited to be part of the FSO “Link Up” program. It’s wonderful to see students exploring what happens when jazz and classical music come together. Studying composers including Florence Price, Duke Ellington, Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, and Courtney Bryan, students are learning concepts of rhythm, form, improvisation, and communication and how they contribute to that magical moment in the orchestra when jazz and classical music comes together to really “swing!”

County Department of Public Works, Environmental Services Wins Eight Awards

By MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The Noman M. Cole Jr. Pollution Control wastewater treatment plant was recently recognized for their “Tertiary Filters Rehabilitation Project,” and “Rehabilitation of Three Equalization Basin and Ancillary Facilities,” by the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) in its annual Mid-Atlantic Region awards.

The Noman M. Cole Jr. plant was among eight Fairfax County’s Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) facilities awarded by the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the APWA in its annual Mid-Atlantic Region awards. Five of the awards were for Project of the Year and three honorable mentions.

“Having Mid-Atlantic APWA recognize the work of DPWES and our partners with these awards acknowledges the excellence in the building and



Fairfax County Wastewater Management

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

One scene from the county wastewater video was filmed on the banks of Gunston Cove where the clean water is successfully put back into the ecosystem.

enhancement of the county’s infrastructure,” said DPWES Assistant Director Juan Reyes.

Reyes was featured in the county video documentary that focuses on the water cycle, and the activities at the Noman M. Cole Jr. Pollution Control wastewater treatment plant. They discuss the process and focus on the clean water going back into the waters of Gunston Cove “clean enough to sustain

life,” one of the officials said. Maureen Gable, the science department chair at Lake Braddock Secondary School, uses examples from the plant to teach students in her AP Environmental Science class.

Noman M. Cole Jr might be best known for his efforts to improve the water quality in the Potomac River. He was principal author of the 1971 Occoquan Watershed Policy, which prompted establishment

of the Upper Occoquan Sewage Authority and the creation of one of the world’s most advanced sewage treatment plants. Cole died in 1997 at age 63.

The following projects were selected for 2021 awards. Each winning project was completed by either the Wastewater Design and Construction Division, the Building Design and Construction Division or the Utilities Design and Construction Division. All three divisions are in the DPWES Capital Facilities business area.

Winner - Backlick Run Gravity Sewer Emergency Abandonment Project - Project of the Year Award for the category of Disaster or Emergency Construction/Repair Less than \$5 million

Winner - Tertiary Filters Rehabilitation Project at the Noman M Cole Pollution Control Plant - Project of the Year Award for the category of Environment \$5 - \$25 million

Winner - Reston Community Center Aquatics Facility Renovations - Project of the Year Award for the category of Structures \$5 - \$25 million

Winner - Scotts Run Trail Project - Project of the Year Award for the category of Transportation Less than \$5 million

Winner - Innovation Center Station Parking Garage Project - Project of the Year Award for the category of Structures \$25 - \$75 million

Honorable Mention for the Rehabilitation of Three Equalization Basin and Ancillary Facilities - Project of the Year Award for the category of Environment \$5 - \$25 million

Honorable Mention for the Department of Vehicle Services West Ox Facility Renovation - Project of the Year Award for the category of Structures \$5 - \$25 million

Honorable Mention for the Mclean Metro Gravity Sewer Capacity Improvements Project - Project of the Year Award for the category of Environment Less than \$5 million

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the awards will be announced during a virtual ceremony. The date is pending.

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

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

Obituary

Obituary

In Loving Memory of Bobbie Jo Vest Falk August 8, 1940-January 23, 2021



On Saturday, January 23, 2021, Bobbie Jo Vest Falk, the loving wife, devoted mother and grandmother, passed peacefully, surrounded by family.

Bobbie Jo was born to Bessie Taylor Vest and Robert McAdoo Vest in Tucson, Arizona, and spent her early years in Arizona. A member of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, she was a member and past worthy advisor of the Templar No. 27 of the Order of the Rainbow Girls. She attended University Heights Elementary School, Roskrige Junior High School and graduated from Tucson High School where she was a Songleader. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona where she was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and a Rotary Scholarship winner. In 1960, she married James H. Falk her high school love and they had three children, Jim, John and Kathryn.

She later moved with her family to the McLean, and then Great Falls, Virginia where she spent most of her life. She worked on the staff of Congressman John J. Rhodes, of Arizona, then Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives and later former Congressman William Minshall of Ohio. Bobbie Jo helped establish and operate the Falk Law Firm in Washington, D.C. for more than two decades that included her husband and sons as well as others. She enjoyed 40 years at her family farm in Cornwell Farm in Great Falls, Virginia where she enjoyed her flower gardens and helping to manage a successful family thoroughbred breeding and horse racing operation.

Bobbie Jo very proudly celebrated her 60th wedding anniversary and her 50th year as a member of the Junior League of Washington last year. Bobbie Jo was a pillar of the community, deeply committed to her faith with an enormous desire to help others. Bobbie Jo will be remembered by countless people across her native Arizona and Virginia for her smiling eyes, her generosity of spirit, her kindness and her grace.

She is survived by her husband, James H. Falk, Sr., her son John M. Falk and her daughter Kathryn Falk Brandus, along with her grandchildren whom she deeply cherished, Jack M. Falk of San Francisco, CA, Olivia G. Falk of Baton Rouge, LA, Grayson T. Falk of Vero Beach, FL, and Julia T. Brandus, of Reston, VA along with her son-in-law Paul Brandus and a sister Mary Bowen in Trinity Center, California, and her family. Her eldest son James H. Falk, Jr. preceded her in passing.

A private family service was held to honor her and she was laid to rest at Trinity Episcopal Church in Upperville, Virginia. In lieu of Flowers, Donations may be sent in her honor and memory to Trinity Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 127, Upperville, Virginia 20184 and <https://trinityuppsville.org/give>

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LOVE VIENNA! RESTAURANT WEEK

The Town of Vienna Economic Development is launching Love Vienna! Restaurant Week on Feb. 14-21 to tie in the love theme for the month but with a twist to encourage residents and visitors to support and love the Town's local eateries and restaurants. Businesses ranging from restaurants, wine shops, coffee shops, other eateries will offer socially distant dine-in and take out specials throughout the week. On Valentine's Day, several notable businesses such as Clarity, Maple Ave Restaurant, and Blend 111 will offer pre-fixed offerings. During the week, the Town of Vienna also encourages diners to flash a heart sign with their hands in front of their favorite spot(s) and post on social using the hashtag #LoveVienna for a chance to win a prize pack filled with prizes and gift cards from the local town businesses. While in the Town of Vienna, folks can stop by the Valentine's themed LOVE letters located at the W&OD Trail Entrance near Northside Park (Address for GPS: 429 Center Street).

FEB. 19 TO NOV. 19 (FRIDAYS)

Virtual Great Decisions Discussion Group, 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. A Program of the Shepherd's Center serving Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon. Great Decisions is America's largest discussion program on world affairs. Cost: \$32 per person (includes briefing book) which must be ordered from the Foreign Policy Association. Contact SC Coordinator, Mike Mulreany, at mulreany@verizon.net to register and get the information to order the books. Participants who have pre-ordered their books will have the books delivered to them in mid-January. Class meets the third Friday of the month.

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD EVENTS

The Church of the Good Shepherd, a United Methodist church in Vienna, will have its 22nd annual Devotions for Lent publication online and in print as of Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17. The church invites all to join its online Ash Wednesday service at 7:30 p.m. that night. Good Shepherd will hold an Ash Wednesday service online at 7:30 p.m. via a Zoom link and its Facebook page, thus no imposition of ashes. The church also welcomes all to its online worship services, including Palm Sunday (March 28), Good Friday (April 2) and Easter (April 4).

The 22nd annual Devotions for Lent and information for the Zoom link to church services will be available on the church's website at www.GoodShepherdVA.com. The church also will post each day's devotion on its Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/goodshepherdvienna. Additionally, the church will hold various weekly online Zoom gatherings to discuss the devotionals. For more information, call the church office at 703-281-3987 or visit the church website at www.GoodShepherdVA.com or its Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/goodshepherdvienna.

FEB. 2-26

The Learning Connection. At The Old Firehouse, McLean. The Old Firehouse Learning Connection is a supervised e-learning program supervised by staff, for students in the 5th-10th grades. The program will provide a supervised environment for students to complete their school-led virtual instruction. Staff will provide limited socially distant recreation opportunities for students during their breaks. Program waivers, participant contracts and additional information will be sent to all registered participants prior to the start of the program. Cost is \$300. To register, visit: www.oldfirehouse.org or call 703-448-8336, TTY: 711.

FRIDAY/FEB. 19

Virtual Family Bingo Night. 7-9 p.m. Virtual event sponsored by the Old Firehouse, McLean. Cost is \$5 per family (per Zoom invite). Join in a virtual evening of fun and prizes with your family. Winners will take their pick of prizes. Preregistration is recommended. Register online at www.oldfirehouse.org or call OFC at 703-448-TEEN (8336).

FEB. 21 AND FEB. 22

Doktor Kaboom! "Look Out! Science is Coming!" Sunday, Feb 21, and Monday, Feb. 22, 4 p.m. Sponsored by the Alden, McLean. "Look Out! Science is Coming!" Even if it is in your kitchen! Doktor Kaboom! is known around the world for taking his audience on an educational tour of the modern scientific method, using humor and comedy while demonstrating spectacular applications of the physical sciences. "Better than Bill Nye" — DC Theatre Scene. \$15/\$10 MCC tax district residents (this fee is per device). To purchase tickets or for more information, visit www.aldentheatre.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 21

Sing the Bay Fantastic. 7-8:40 p.m. Online. Hilarious and poignant songs about the people who live on America's waterways featuring Janie Meneely (Chesapeake Bay), Lee Murdock (the Great Lakes), and George Ward (the Erie Canal and upstate New York). Visit the website: <https://fsgw.org/event-4147590>. Concert is also a stealth publication party for Janie's new book, "Sing the Bay Fantastic", which highlights the music, history, and culture of America's waterways.

TUESDAY/FEB. 23

Search for Winter Waterfowl. 10-11 a.m. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Burke Lake Park is teeming with wildlife, even in the coldest months of winter. See what birds are calling the lake home this season with the park's "Waterfowl" program. During the program, you will walk the shores of Burke Lake in search of winter waterfowl. Be on the lookout for birds, such as loons, lesser scaups and ring-necked ducks. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather. This program is designed for participants age 12 to adult. Cost is \$8 per person. Call 703-323-6600.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 24

Unruly Theatre Project Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. Virtual at The Alden Theatre, McLean. Join the Unruly Theatre Project's virtual fall improv shows from the comfort of your couch! Register online and a Zoom link and password for the show will be emailed to you. Participants must register two hours in advance of showtime. Register online at www.aldentheatre.org.

THURSDAY/FEB. 25

Voices of Woodlawn: A Reckoning by 4 Poets of America's Slave-Holding Past. 12-1 p.m. Virtual event. Hosted by the Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, Alexandria. In Voices of Woodlawn, four poets give voice to the erased lives of the enslaved at Woodlawn, a Fairfax, Virginia former plantation that is now a historic site. Maryland Poets Diane Wilbon Parks, Patrick Washington, Sylvia Dianne "Ladi Di" Beverly and Hiram Larew confront the sadness, anger, injustice, and confusion of such a past and its haunting legacy. They are joined by poet and harmonica player, Cliff Bernier,

in a powerful program of witness. Visit the website: <http://www.woodlawnpopeleighey.org/voices-of-woodlawn>

FRIDAY/FEB. 26

Color Utilization. 10 a.m. to noon. Via Zoom. Walt Bartman, the founder and director of Yellow Barn Studio and Gallery, will be giving a demonstration on color utilization at the Friday, February 26 Meeting of the McLean Art Society. Mr. Bartman emphasizes personal interpretation in rendering landscapes, still life and figure painting. He received his M.F.A. from American University and studied in Belgium and Holland on a Fulbright Fellowship. Guests are welcome; contact M.A.S. President Ray Goodrow at raymgoodrow@aol.com.

FRIDAY/FEB. 26

Virtual 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.

FRIDAY/FEB. 26

A Taste of California - Virtual Wine Tasting event with host, Vienna Vintner - 6:30-7:45 p.m. via Zoom. A benefit for Shepherd's Center serving Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon. During the tasting, Vienna Vintner's owner, Victor Mendes, will be presenting a selection of 3 fine wines from his own winery in California's Paso Robles region. He will be showcasing wines from his VIX selection. To participate in this private tasting experience, contact Vienna Vintner by Feb. 25 at 703-242-9463, or viennavintner@gmail.com, or stop by Vienna Vintner, 320 Maple Ave E, Vienna, VA 22180 to register and purchase your wine. Visit www.scov.org/announcements

SATURDAY/FEB. 27

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 4 p.m. Via Zoom. The speaker will be Christine West, with a talk called "The Mayflower and Early New England Immigration." They will go beyond local history this month to recognize the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's landing in November 1620. (OK, a few months late, but what's a few months versus 400 years?) The presentation, originally developed by the New England Genealogical Society, will summarize some of the major events leading up to—and following—the Mayflower voyage. Visit burkehistoricalsociety.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 27

Geocaching Workshop. 2-4 p.m. At Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Channel your inner pirate and go on a modern-day treasure hunt using a handheld Global Positioning System, better known as GPS. Discover how you can use GPS units to locate hidden treasure caches within the park. After learning how to enter latitude and longitude coordinates into a GPS, participants will follow the coordinates to find a hidden object, container or unique geological feature. Bring your own GPS; a limited number are available to borrow from the instructor at class. The cost is \$22 per person. Call 703-471-5414.

SUNDAY/FEB. 28

Protection & Inspection. 2-3:30 p.m. Virtual at Cold War Museum, Vint Hill, VA. The Cold War ICBM force commander who also led our arms control site inspections in the USSR describes what he saw and did. Cost is \$20. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/protection-and-inspection-us-missile-forces-site-inspection-in-the-ussr-tickets-127063146291>

MARCH 1-13

The Show Must Go On. The McLean Art Society in collaboration with The McLean Project For The Arts is presenting a juried painting exhibition in the Atrium Gallery at The McLean Community Center. (1234 Ingleside Avenue in McLean, 703-790-0123). Original art work in a wide variety of subject matter and painting styles will be available for viewing and purchase.

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If Michael Corleone Had Lung Cancer



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

"Just when I thought I was out ... they pull me back in." And just when I thought I had a month off from cancer-related appointments, infusions, scans and lab work, et cetera, I experienced a new symptom the other day which warranted an unexpected brain MRI. Though I delayed a few days in sharing my new symptom, on Thursday I emailed my oncologist. Within the day (not nearly soon enough for my wife, Dina), I received a call from my doctor. After a brief conversation during which I described my symptoms in more detail, a diagnostic scan was scheduled for the next day (fortunately an appointment opened up while we were talking. Otherwise, it might not have occurred so soon). According to my oncologist, what I was experiencing is called "disequilibrium." I couldn't walk a straight line. Had a police officer been present, I would have been cited for walking while intoxicated.

Amazingly I received the results from the MRI within a few hours of my appointment. The report from the radiologist was extremely thorough since I had been given "contrast," an infusion which provides better detail for the radiologist. (Given my pre-existing kidney issue, there are certain products which I cannot tolerate, ones which are filtered through the kidney, specifically "contrast.") But this time, my oncologist wanted the clearest picture/assessment possible. (Infusing "contrast" results in a kind of clarity, like the difference between viewing color and black and white.) So receiving an "unremarkable" (no metastasis, "no infarct, no hemorrhage, no intracranial abnormality," no anything) report was particularly encouraging. Now I can breathe again, except for another side effect caused by the lenvima (my thyroid cancer medicine), but that symptom is more par for the course I've been on for the last four months or so. "Disequilibrium" not so much.

Going forward, I am experiencing less balance/dizziness issues. But I'm also no longer - for the moment, taking my thyroid medicine, which I can't imagine is a good thing. However, I'm not going to worry about that in the short term. In the long term, not taking the best possible prescribed treatment for the treatment of papillary thyroid cancer is hardly reassuring to my presumptive life expectancy. Nevertheless, if I've learned anything in my nearly 12 years as a cancer patient, it is that nothing (drugs, side effects, miscellaneous treatment/protocols) lasts forever. Heck, sometimes treatment and all doesn't even last a month. It's best to sit tight and try to be patient. Getting ahead of one's immediate circumstances is unhelpful and could be much ado about nothing (at least that's been my modus).

That being clear to me, anytime I can get a month where I have no scheduled lab work, infusion, injection, diagnostic scan or appointments is to be acknowledged and celebrated almost. Presently, I am, or rather was in the middle of just such an interval until this "disequilibrium" manifested. It's sort of like being called in to work on your off day. Mentally, it really upsets the apple cart, and more specifically your peace of mind. And any time a cancer patient can get some piece of mind, it's extremely valuable. It's mind over something that's the matter.

With a month off from cancer-related activities, one can almost ('almost,' not quite though) live a cancer-free, normal-type life. It's not as if you forget your circumstances however, but it allows a certain mental break which believe me, all us cancer patients need. Without all the constant reminders, one can almost back-burner the whole cancer existence. Unfortunately, this kind of existence is also characteristic of the ups and downs and all-arounds that cancer patients experience. Granted, it's not ideal, but it's still a living, thank God!

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



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