

Sandra Musser and her daughter, Caroline, tie small ribbons, noting their prayer intentions to the community Lenten Prayer Cross at United Methodist Church in Great Falls.

Great Falls CONNECTION

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Sandra Musser and her daughter, Caroline, tie small ribbons, noting their prayer intentions to the community Lenten Prayer Cross at United Methodist Church in Great Falls.

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Breathing Life into a Community of Faith

A Prayer Cross welcomes all.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Leaders at Great Falls United Methodist Church invite parishioners and visitors now through Easter Sunday, April 4, to share in their Community Lenten Prayer Cross at 10100 Georgetown Pike. Installed outdoors and backing to the sanctuary, the rough-hewn wood cross and a container of multi-colored ribbons are visible from the roadway. "You can select ribbons representing each of your prayers and tie them to the wire on the cross as you offer your personal prayers," said church member Jesslyn Lumb.

Parishioners erected the cross in preparation for Ash Wednesday, which in 2021 was Feb. 17. Ash Wednesday marked the start of the 46-day Lenten journey leading to Easter Sunday, a moveable feast based on the moon's cycles. Some Christian faiths, such as Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Eastern Ortho-

dox, Lutherans, and Methodists observe Lent. Others do not.

That morning a small group gathered and prepared to tie their petition ribbons on the cross. Native Great Falls resident Sandra Musser brought one of her four children, daughter Caroline. "At a time when we cannot join in prayer inside our church sanctuary, the Prayer Cross is a welcome alternative way to bring concerns to the Lord," she said. Musser added that as people stopped by to participate, they would breathe life into the community of faith.

"Lent has begun, and I believe this will be the most meaningful season as we journey toward Easter," said Reverend Livingstone S. Dore, Pastor of Great Falls United Methodist Church, in his newsletter. He also announced that the Church would resume in-person worship services on March 21, nearly a year since they were last together in-sanctuary worship. According to Dore, there would be a limit of 50 persons. A summary of the guidelines, along with a registration form, would be posted on the Great Falls UMC website.

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FY 2022 Budget Summary	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net County revenues increase totals \$42.23 million, with \$13.07 million transferred to support Schools Operating and Debt Service requirements, a net \$11.70 million to support County priorities, and \$20 million held in balance for the Board for Economic Recovery efforts Schools support and County requirements, excluding reserves, are both increased 0.55% over FY 2022 Schools are 52.8% of General Fund Disbursements in FY 2022 County's reserves remain budgeted at target of 10% of General Fund disbursements 	
Adjustments included in FY 2022 General Fund Budget (Amounts shown are in millions, net change over FY 2021 Adopted Budget Plan)	
Available Revenue Increase	
Revenue Increase at Current Real Estate Tax Rate	\$69.37
Real Estate Tax Rate Decrease of One Cent to \$1.14 per \$100 of Assessed Value	(\$27.14)
Net Impact of Transfers in	\$0.29
Total Available	\$42.52
FY 2022 Requirements	
	County Schools Total
County Compensation	(\$1.97) -- (\$1.97)
County Debt Service	\$0.28 -- \$0.28
Lifelong Education and Learning	(\$0.01) \$13.07 \$13.06
Safety and Security	\$11.91 -- \$11.91
Health and Environment	\$9.12 -- \$9.12
Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability	\$2.92 -- \$2.92
Effective and Efficient Government	\$2.49 -- \$2.49
Cultural and Recreational Opportunities	\$2.18 -- \$2.18
Housing and Neighborhood Livability	\$0.47 -- \$0.47
Economic Opportunity	\$0.22 -- \$0.22
Mobility and Transportation	-- -- --
Agency Reductions and Savings	(\$15.91) -- (\$15.91)
Subtotal	\$11.70 \$13.07 \$24.77
Reserve Adjustments	-- -- (\$2.25)
Total Uses	\$22.52
Available Balance to be set aside in Economic Recovery Reserve	\$20.00

Slides displayed during the County Executive's Presentation on the Budget and Countywide Strategic Plan, Advertised Budget Plan, February 23, 2021

How to Provide Input on the FY 2022 Budget

ADVERTISED BUDGET PLAN

- To learn more about participating in the budget public hearings, call the Clerk to the Board's Office at (703) 324-3151 (TTY 711) or to access the form at:
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form
- The public can send written testimony or communicate with the Clerk's Office by email at: clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov.
- Residents can also provide testimony by phone or submit video testimony. In-person testimony will not be allowed if the Board meetings are held virtually.
- The entire FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan and the FY 2022-FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program are available online at:
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget

How to Provide Input on the FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan

County's Budget Plan Faces 'Robust Conversations'

Focuses resources in targeted areas.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

“What a difference a year makes,” said Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill.

On Feb. 23, Hill presented his FY2022 Budget Plan to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. The fiscal year will run from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

The FY2022 Advertised Budget is not a done deal; it is the county executive's recommendation. The final FY2022 Adopted Budget will happen May 4 after what Chairman Jeff McKay called “robust conversations with the community in order to prioritize funding.”

Hill's proposed plan builds on the County's success to utilize federal stimulus funds, most notably the \$200.2 million CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund.

“I THINK IT'S CLEAR that we won't be able to do everything we want to, just like our residents and businesses can't in these unprecedented times,” said Chairman McKay. “And obviously, we wish that we had better certainty about what the year ahead is going to look like, but clearly, nobody does... It's prudent for us to plan for this year to continue to be spry and to be able to pivot and respond to what's happening just as we have done through this last year in a really successful way.”

Hill's recommendation includes reducing the Real Estate Tax rate by one cent, bringing the rate from \$1.15 to \$1.14 per \$100 of assessed value. In Hill's Message to the Chairman and Board, he said, “I recognize that many of our homeowners may be struggling. ... Fairfax County's unemployment rate stands at 4.4 percent – far greater than the 1.9 percent we saw one year ago.”

According to Hill, with the proposed re-



Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeffrey McKay (D)

duction in the Real Estate Tax rate, additional revenue available to the County for FY 2022 is \$42.23 million – an increase of only 1.51 percent over the current FY 2021 estimate.

Highlighting other Advertised Budget areas, it recommends a \$20 million unappropriated reserve for economic recovery.

It includes an overall increase for County and Schools of only 0.55 percent, excluding reserves.

The plan provides a \$14.13 million increase over FY2021 for School Operating, far short of the School Board's approved request on Feb. 18 of \$104.40 million additional.

No funding is allocated for employee pay increases in FY22.

While the Budget does not make broad investments in pre-COVID goals proposed last year, resources are recommended to focus on more targeted areas. According to Hill, they are “modest investments” in Board and community priorities, such as expanding funding for criminal justice programs and mental health and addiction treatment. Examples are public safety staffing, Diversion First, opioid use prevention efforts, and environmental Initiatives. Previously approved initiatives, such as body-worn cameras and health department positions funded initially with stimulus funds, are proposed to include



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY
Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill

“I recognize that many of our homeowners may be struggling. ... Fairfax County's unemployment rate stands at 4.4 percent – far greater than the 1.9 percent we saw one year ago.”

— County Executive Bryan Hill

million to the General Fund. He said that while appreciative of prior stimulus money and hoped additional stimulus money was on its way to the County, “hope is not really what you base a budget on; it's reality.”

Vice Chairman Penny Gross (D-Mason District) discussed nonresidential real estate. The amount of empty office space increased to 18.5 million square feet out of 119.2 million square feet.

“It does tell me that we need to go gangbusters on our repurposing of vacant buildings,” Gross said.

Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D-Brad-dock) said that Fairfax County is one of the thousands of jurisdictions across the country that Congress members watch, which

is why he appreciated the prudent proposal Hill released. “I think if we had a budget proposal that showed us with a lot of new spending initiatives or dramatic pay increases, it would have made our job more difficult as we're making the necessary case for additional federal support for state and local governments at this point.”

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) said he hoped to see a “flat tax bill,” especially given the pandemic. “I expect things, especially in the commercial real estate world, will probably get a lot worse next year. But this Budget still represents a 3.4 percent tax increase on our residents ... I believe we have a lot of work to do.”

LOOKING AHEAD, the Board will advertise a tax rate at its March 9 meeting. Various district meetings will occur in February and March, and the Board will hold public hearings from April 13-15.

McKay said that for FY20 - 22, the County expected revenue loss to approach \$300

A Progressive State if We Can Keep It

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



COMMENTARY

To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin who when asked at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia what kind of government had been formed replied, "a republic if we can keep it!" As the General Assembly concluded the work of its annual session this past weekend the same kind of question could be posed as the changes in the Commonwealth's laws and governance have been so profound. The answer I believe is a progressive state measured not by southern standards but by comparison to all the other states. At the ballot box the state over the last several years has gone from red to purple to blue. All statewide elected officials are Democrats, and both houses of the General Assembly have been controlled by Democrats since the elections in 2019. Far more meaningful than the partisan labels of elected officials are the changes that have taken place in the laws of the Commonwealth.

In the regular and a special session of the General Assembly last year, historic legislation

was passed including ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and lifting of barriers to abortion. Jim Crow era laws were repealed, and the Virginia Values Act prohibiting discrimination in housing and employment was passed. Bills to reduce gun violence were passed as were bills to reduce the school to prison pipeline. Criminal justice and policing reform bills were passed. And more.

In the session that just ended, criminal justice reform continued. The death penalty was abolished, and criminal defendants and civil litigants were granted an automatic right to appeal that exists in every other state. My bill that ended excessive fines and prison time for petit larceny passed. Criminal records for many non-violent offenses will be expunged under a new law. And more. Details for both sessions are at <https://lis.virginia.gov>.

All of these changes along with record levels of funding for COVID-19 relief and pay raises for teachers, police and other essential workers have led to references about Virginia

being the leader among states in progressive legislation. The first ever woman Speaker of the House of Delegates Eileen Filler-Corn said that the House Democratic majority elected in 2019 "has kept its promise to protect families, keep Virginia healthy and rebuild our economy stronger."

As one who served during years when the news coming from Richmond was not so good, I am aware that these reforms passed with barely a majority of Democratic legislator votes and a rare and scant few of Republican legislator votes. Attention is already shifting to the fall when the governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general will be elected along with all 100 members of the House of Delegates. The progressive reforms will be on the ballot: do we build on them in the future or do we turn back the clock? Already a former governor, two Black women, and a self-avowed socialist are running for the Democratic nomination for governor and a self-proclaimed "Trump in high heels" and a staunch opponent of abortion rights are among those seeking the Republican nomination. There is likely to be a record number of candidates running for the House of Delegates. The voters in November will ultimately decide if we keep our progressive state!

Brain Injury Awareness: A Personal Story

BY KATY SCHNITGER



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

In 2007, my kids and I were at a fireworks show in Vienna that was so grand we were in awe of each burst. But then there was a misfire and a three-inch mortar shot through the crowd and exploded on us.

The force of the explosion turned buttons from my shorts into projectiles that were surgically removed from my left thigh.

I spent 12 days in the burn unit at Washington Hospital Center. I was released from the hospital to recover at home with a nurse. I cried a lot and didn't want to get out of bed, but my kids needed me.

I focused on taking care of my family. It soon became apparent that my own mental health and cognitive capabilities were suffering. I struggled to do things I used to do so easily as a stay at home mom. I could not manage our family's schedule, grocery shopping was impossible, and I could no longer do simple math. I was diagnosed with depression, but I knew I was struggling with more.

In December 2008, I met Dr. Gregory J. O'Shanick, President & Medical Director at the Center for Neurorehabilitation Services, PC in Richmond. After a 3-hour evaluation, he recognized that I had a blast Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). My feelings were validated that my symptoms were beyond depression. But what did having a TBI mean going forward?

I met with Dr. O'Shanick's team for physical and occupational therapy. I also discovered Brain Injury Services (BIS), a nonprofit based in Northern Virginia that serves adults and children with TBIs. BIS empowered me to feel whole again. I joined a monthly support group and did not feel so alone. I began public speaking with their Speakers Bureau. That gave me purpose, confidence and independence that opened the door to employment.

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month. I share my story to help others who have experienced trauma to the brain to help them and their caregivers recognize some of the signs of a TBI. According to Dr. O'Shanick, common indications of a TBI are loss of balance, inability to track with the eyes, sensitivity to sound, and difficulty with executive functions. All of these challenges can lead to frustration, anxiety, and isolation. But know you are not alone. There is a community at BIS who see you and support your transition to live your best life.

Katy Schnitger is the Office Manager and Outreach Specialist at Brain Injury Services. Katy has been involved with BIS since 2010 as a client and as a volunteer with the Speaker's Bureau. She has been employed at Brain Injury Services since 2015. She has lived in Vienna, Virginia for over fifteen years.

Descano to Address AAUW Mclean Branch

The McLean Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) will host a presentation by Steve T. Descano on Law Enforcement Reform and Equity in Virginia on Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Descano, Commonwealth's Attorney for Fairfax City and Fairfax County, is a veteran former federal prosecutor. He served as a federal prosecutor under the Obama Administration for six years specializing in complex financial crimes of both national and international scopes.

A West Point graduate, Descano was a helicopter pilot and U.S. Army Officer before putting himself through law school and becoming a federal prosecutor. After his work in the Justice Department, he went on to serve his community as a board member for NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia as well as the Fairfax County NAACP's first nominee to the County's Police Civilian Review Panel.

Since taking office in 2020, Descano has embarked on a groundbreaking reform agenda. He has implemented policies that make our community safer while addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities in our criminal justice system, stemming the tide of mass incarceration, and elevating a holistic, values-based approach to prosecution over a reflexively punitive one.

To join the program, visit <http://mc-lean-vaaauw.net> and send in a request for the link to the meeting, under Programs.

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SUNDAY/MARCH 7

Pre-Passover Virtual Shoppportunity. 5-6 p.m. At Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland Street, Falls Church. Join in the launch of Treasures Judaica Gift Shop, the year-round online store offering a large selection of items for all occasions. Register to win door prizes. Visit <https://templerodefshalom.zoom.us/join/register/tJckde6uqzkgdIS-Lt9285dSgZf7bwlFZyt0>

MONDAY/MARCH 8

Volunteer for the Environment. 5-6:30 p.m. Online. Join the Sierra Club Great Falls Group for a free online event to learn and share ideas to protect the environment. Activists will hold short presentations about the threat of gold mining and pipelines in Virginia, then they will share information about the Student Environmental Action Showcase (SEAS) in NoVa and the work to ban polluting gas-powered leaf blowers. Visit the website: <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013q000001kxptAAA>

THURSDAY/MARCH 11

Shape of the Region Conference. 12:30-2 p.m. Virtual. The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia is hosting its 2021 Shape of the Region Conference. The theme this year is: Co-Creating a New Northern Virginia: An Emerging Vision of a More Inclusive, Sustainable, and Equitable Region. This event will explore the collective efforts of Government, social, philanthropy, and private sector actors to bring more inclusivity, sustainability, and equity across our region. The event will feature brief stories and a panel discussion to highlight recent cross sector collaborations that have helped promote a more equitable and inclusive region. To register for this event, visit www.cfnova.org/shape-region.

YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Virginia State Parks is seeking qualified candidates

to fill Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) summer residential service opportunities across the state. Two three-week programs will be offered this summer. YCC crews will assist Virginia State Parks staff with a range of operational projects including trail maintenance, habitat improvement, and campground construction and restoration. Room and board is provided to all YCC crew serving at Virginia State Parks. Those interested can visit <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/youth-conservation-corps> to learn more and apply.

GIANT FOOD ADMINISTERS COVID-19 VACCINES

In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) and the District of Columbia, Giant Food Pharmacies in D.C. have been selected to receive an initial supply of the COVID-19 vaccine (Moderna) to be administered to healthcare employees who work in senior group home settings covered under Phase 1a. The D.C. Department of Health will be determining eligibility and scheduling appointments for those healthcare workers at one of the new immunization clinics set up at Giant Pharmacies.

AAAS STEM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The AAAS STEM Volunteers Program, stemvolunteers.org, needs scientists, engineers and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in school districts in the D.C. metro area during the 2020-21 school year. Due to the pandemic, it is anticipated that instruction will be virtual. We will work with our school district partners and volunteers to determine the best ways to support STEM teachers in a virtual environment. If you care about K-12 STEM education and have time to share your knowledge with students and teachers, send a note to donaldrea@aol.com with your home address.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10

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Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance
Prince William Chamber of Commerce
Northern Virginia Building Industry Association
Apartment and Office Building Association
Virginia Self Storage Association
Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association
And many more...



RockStar among Therapeutic Riding Horses

‘Rocky’ - of Lift Me Up! in Great Falls - named Therapy Horse of the Year.

BY ABIGAIL DAWSON

A therapeutic riding horse has a unique talent for taking care of their rider's wellbeing while building their confidence, trust and independence. Lift Me Up! Therapeutic Riding in Great Falls is home to many of these hardworking therapy horses, including a very special horse named RockStar (a.k.a. “Rocky”), who was named the 2020 Therapy Horse of the Year by the Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia (TRAV).

Rocky, a beautiful bay Thoroughbred-Clydesdale cross, is a horse whose journey from the hunt field to the therapeutic riding arena is truly inspiring. Rocky's story begins with his bond with his owner Paula Michaels, who chose him to be her partner in the hunt field after seeing his calm and easy-going demeanor and his ability to size up any situation before him. In the hunt field, where other horses said “I don't think so,” Rocky would say, “Let's check it out!” and with each challenging obstacle they faced Paula's trust in her horse grew stronger.

RockStar won countless prestigious hunt paces, including being a finalist in the North American Field Hunter Championship and winner of the North American Point-to-Point Race on the Flat. “That is a funny story,” Paula remembers. “It was drizzling. I was wearing a borrowed helmet that kept dropping over my eyes. Neither one of us knew what we were doing. We started out at a trot. The other horses got way ahead of us at the get-go, but we picked up speed. From the first turn to the next, we were still behind, but at the final turn, I yelled at him ‘What do you want? To live forever!’ This was always his cue at paces that he could go as fast as he wanted. This fabulous horse found a sixth gear. I could feel the ground under my feet as he stretched out at the gallop to win the race.”

Beyond being brave and smart, Rocky has always had a kind soul. Even after a hard day out on the hunt field, he was never too

tired to give rides to young children. That's how Paula knew that Rocky could make a good therapy horse. After winning several major events, Paula realized that Rocky was starting to slow down. She knew that if they kept racing, her big hearted, brave boy could get injured. Paula decided to retire him, but Rocky had other plans, repeatedly jumping out of his paddock to visit the neighboring horses and get a change of scenery. It was clear to Paula that Rocky was not quite ready to be done with riding, and at that time she decided to bring him to Lift Me Up! to be a therapeutic riding horse.

During one of his first riding lessons at LMU!, Paula watched as Rocky's usual huge, bouncy stride transformed into the smallest trot steps he could manage as he and his young rider, Jake, went around the ring for the first time. It was clear Rocky was taking care of him. The pair went on to win the Division Grand Champion at the TRAV show, and later starred together in the 2017 documentary Life in Strides, in which they competed in Jake's first non-therapeutic riding competition.

To this day, Rocky has given many Lift Me Up! riders the gift of his bravery, kind-heartedness, and sweet personality. He is the official greeter as you enter the barn and connects with so many people, from the smallest toddler to first responders and veterans. Rocky truly lives up to his name; he is in every way a Rock Star!

Abigail Dawson is the Director of Communications at Lift Me Up! in Great Falls.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

RockStar and volunteer Pierce Bates pose with the “Therapy Horse of the Year” prize blanket.



RockStar and his rider at the Lift Me Up! horse show (left to right: Justin and Carin Lomax).



RockStar and his rider McKenna Loftus having a lesson.



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(From left) Herndon High School freshman William McClough, senior Cooper Hill, junior Justin Tyrell (alternate), freshman Rian Graham, and sophomore Noah Dyer

Record-Setting Day at States for HHS Boys Swim Team

Hornets place as two champions.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Members of the Herndon High School Boys Swim Team won two champion places and ranked eighth overall, with only four swimmers, at the Virginia High School League (VHSL) Class 6 State Championship at the Jeff Rouse Swim and Sport Center in Stafford, Va., on Thursday, Feb. 25. Even with the season's disrupted training and the meet postponed twice due to inclement weather, the team arrived strong and ready to win.

Swimmers Noah Dyer (senior), Cooper Hill (senior), Will McClough (freshman), and Rian Graham (freshman) placed 1st in the 400 Free Relay becoming State Champions. Their time was an All American Consideration and just missed the Herndon High School record. Nonetheless, Dyer posted the top leadoff time of 45.50, which helped them win 1st place.

Dyer captured the top spot in the 200 Free and was the only swimmer to crack 1:40, posting a time of 1:38.82. In the process, Dyer became State Champion, set a new Herndon High School record and All Amer-

ican Consideration. In the 100 Free, Dyer placed 2nd, setting another new Herndon High School record. He battled Aiken Do from Woodson to the finish, touching behind in 45.61 to 45.57. Dyer's 200 Free and 100 Free were personal best times.

Graham placed 3rd in the 100 Fly, swimming a personal best time of 50.66.

Swimmers Dyer, McClough, Hill, and Graham placed 5th in the 200 Freestyle Relay. Dyer anchored and set another new Herndon High School record in the 50 Free in 21.31. His strong showing and racing skills broke one of the longest-standing records on the Herndon High School record board, one that Reinaldo Faberlle set and held since 1995.

"What a way to end the season," said Kathy McLaughlin, Coach HHS Head Boys/Girls Swim and Dive team.

According to Jamie Graham, mother of Rian Graham, the boys were dedicated and trained hard. "We are thankful for the coaches and older swimmers, like Noah, who have taken Rian under the wings. We are excited about what this team can do in a 'normal' season next year," she said.

The results of the 2021 VHSL Class 6 Meet 2/9/2021-2/25/2021 are available online.



Coach of the Herndon High Boys/Girls Swim and Dive Team Amy Keffer, senior Cooper Hill, freshman Rian Graham, freshman William McClough, sophomore Noah Dyer, and Coach of the Herndon High Boys/Girls Swim and Dive Team Kathy McLaughlin

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Fairfax County Readies for Public Employee Collective Bargaining

Holds collaborative meetings with union reps to write rules.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**
THE CONNECTION

Most Fairfax County public employees who provide vital services in education, safety, healthcare, and sanitation like others in counties, cities, and towns across the Commonwealth will gain a new right on May 1, 2021. It is the right to engage in collective bargaining. Passage of Virginia HB 582, introduced by House Delegate Elizabeth Guzmán (D-31), who represents parts of Fauquier and Prince William counties, opened the door to legislative action leading to the bill's approval on April 22, 2020. The bill authorized collective bargaining with labor unions on behalf of public officers and employees. Governor Northam postponed the date on which HB 582 would become effective until May 2021 due to concerns over COVID-19.

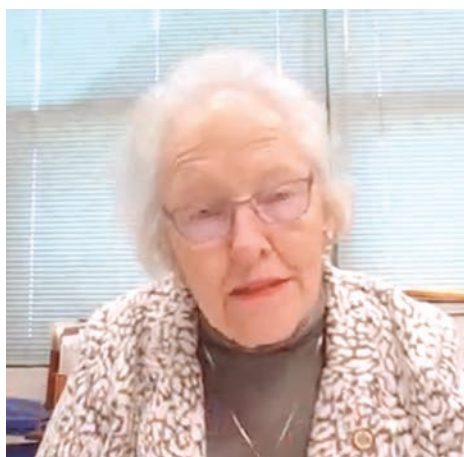
Before the approval of HB 582, Virginia Code said no state, County, or municipality had the authority to recognize or collectively bargain with any public employees' labor unions.

HB582 did not define, though, how public employees engage in collective bargaining. The state left that up to individual jurisdictions to write their own rules.

ON FEB. 25, Fairfax County Supervisor and Vice Chairman Penny Gross (D-Mason District), Chair of the Fairfax County Collective Bargaining Workgroup, opened the second meeting between Fairfax County leaders and union representatives. The meeting was meant to solicit input toward the writing of collaborative labor-management policies. School Board Chair Dr. Ricardy Anderson (Mason District), School Board Member Karen Corbett Sanders (Mount Vernon), and other County leaders attended the meeting.

"This is our day to hear from our employee groups as to what you think the key discussion points need to be," Gross said. She asked one representative from each employee organization to share its perspective on four suggested decision points - the scope of collective bargaining, the number and definition of the bargaining unit(s), the process for employees to select exclusive bargaining representatives, and the employee/labor administrative official/body to administer collective bargaining.

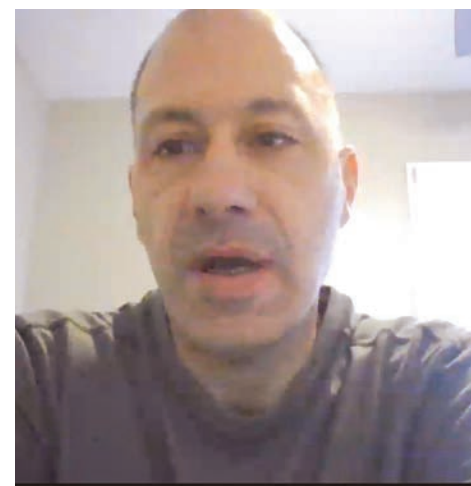
Dr. Anderson said she looked forward to hearing ideas and questions. "We probably will not have answers to these questions today, but it will help to determine how we



Fairfax County Supervisor and Vice Chairman Penny Gross (D-Mason District), Co-Chair of the Fairfax County Collective Bargaining Workgroup



Fairfax County Professional Firefighters & Paramedics - Local 2608 President Ron Kuley



Brad Caruthers, Fairfax County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 77



The Fairfax County Collective Bargaining Workgroup Session #2 in action.

move forward in this process that we're developing together," she said. Each group kept comments to three to five minutes.

Brad Caruthers, Fairfax County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 77, maintained that the process should be slow. "We need to do it right; obviously, other jurisdictions are embarking in the same discussions; some too rapidly," he said. The scope certainly needed to cover pay benefits and the grievance process. For the police department, what will the bargaining units look like for rank and file - one for supervisors and then a separate unit for command.

Becca Ferrick, of Association of Fairfax Professional Educators, said that the process must also be taken "logically." It should allow direct input from many different perspectives in terms of the bargaining scope. "We prefer more limited scope, benefits and pay, perhaps safety and health," she said. Ferrick added that the Association would like the lowest number of bargaining units and allow specific definitions either by wage labels or levels and types or by purpose and intent. Like many others, Ferrick urged that the process for employees to se-

lect exclusive bargaining should be done by secret ballot, and the administration should be an independent, non-political counsel.

Fairfax County Professional Firefighters & Paramedics - Local 2608, President Ron Kuley echoed his "sisters and brothers" in labor. He stressed clarity on a couple of items in collective bargaining, saying it would enhance every family's safety in the County, providing firefighters a real collective voice...for training professionals on the best way to meet the needs of residents in an emergency. Kuley reiterated that the law said they could negotiate on anything related to our employment.

"We don't want or need proposals that are so narrow and restrictive to the process of collaborative problem-solving. They would just be counterproductive," Kuley said.

Tammi Wondong-Ware, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 512, urged that Fairfax County adopts a collective bargaining ordinance that provides bargaining over wages, benefits, and working conditions, especially in light of COVID-19. She said that workers are concerned about workplace health and safety, workloads, career

advancement, and equity.

"We need a real voice and a seat at the table," she said.

Regarding the number of bargaining units, Wondong-Ware said one for general county employees, one for uniform Fire and Rescue employees, and one for police officers. She said they believed a separate ordinance would cover school board employees.

Wondong-Wares noted that a limited number of bargain units would create a more manageable union election and collective bargaining process. She urged that the bargaining unit include workers who may be more senior but do not have hiring and firing authority.

Wondong-Wares maintained that the County should adopt mail ballots, and once the bargaining representative is certified, the representative should have access to county employees for representation purposes.

WHEN COMMENTS CONCLUDED, Gross clarified that the law said they could not do anything until May 1. "But that doesn't mean we have to have an ordinance in place by May 1," she said.

Dr. Anderson said she saw a lot of common ground regarding the scope of bargaining and heartened by the consensus to take time, do this correctly rather than rushing, which may have negative consequences.

School Board member Karen Corbett Sanders said the natural resources of Fairfax County are its people. "We have gems everywhere we look because of the experience people bring to the table...It takes all of us to collectively develop and flesh out the way we are going to do this but also educate our colleagues."

Gross said they would be in touch if a third meeting were deemed necessary, and she felt that a third meeting would be beneficial.

A Schedule Can Anchor Your Day

How creating a daily routine can ease anxiety during times of uncertainty.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOLLY PLATT

Creating a daily routine which includes walking her dog Leo has given Holly Platt a sense of order and peace.

Her days were overwhelmingly stressful. Holly Platt, a Bethesda mother of two, was preparing to sell her home and searching for a new one, homeschooling all while running her full time math tutoring business. She often ran late to appointments or missed them entirely. A friend suggested that she create a daily routine for herself that included blocking off specific time each day to complete tasks.

"Even morning, I pull up my daily calendar and enter yoga for 30 minutes, making and eating breakfast, and walking my dog Leo," she said. "Covid has been hard for everyone, but I hear a lot of people saying now that they are scheduling a specific time for daily activities to force them into a routine."

Platt is not alone in her strategy. Creating a routine – even for those who consider themselves to be whimsical and balk at the idea of strict scheduling -- can benefit from setting aside a specific time to complete at least one or two activities each day.

"Creating a daily routine is fundamental in developing a healthy relationship with one's own needs," said Jennifer Ha, Ph.D., Visiting Professor of Counseling at Marymount University. "Without this regular and intentional mindful attention, your mood and overall mental health can deteriorate, sometimes without one even realizing it."

Part of protecting mental health is having a sense of stability. "As human beings we thrive with a degree of predictability and certainty," added Diana Fuchs, Ph.D., a retired clinical psychologist based in Springfield. "We want to know that we have some control over our lives and what's going on around us, especially when we have a major world pandemic that makes us feel as if the fabric of society is being unraveled."

In fact, studies show that undertaking some activities on a schedule helps to reduce stress during negative life events, including one study found in the Occupational Therapy Journal of Research. "Daily

"Covid has been hard for everyone, but I hear a lot of people saying now that they are scheduling a specific time for daily activities to force them into a routine."

— Holly Platt

routine gives us a sense of predictability, decreases anxiety related to uncertainty and provides a comfort that no matter how difficult the day might be, some things will be predictable and as we prefer them," said Dr. Gail Saltz, Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the NY Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine. "This may be especially true for people that find change anxiety-producing and find transitions difficult."

From improving sleep quality to pledging to drink more water each day, a routine can improve one's overall wellbeing. "An exercise routine is healthy physically, but also mentally by decreasing stress and improving mood," said Saltz. "Having predictable work hours, separate from other hours, ... decreases ... likelihood of burn out."

Though the end result might be similar for most people, creating a routine is a highly individualized process, said Fuchs. "It can be helpful to visualize our day by writing out our daily routine," she said. "For example, 'At 3pm I get to leave work and see my son. At 8pm, I get to snuggle up with a cup of tea and read a good book.'"

Treat a routine like a medical appointment that you schedule in advance and commit to keeping, suggest Fuchs. "No doubt most of us already have some form of routine when it comes to self-care, brushing teeth and taking a shower, for example," she said. "Break down your day into smaller, manageable time frames. 'Ultimately you want to construct a time frame that works best for you.'"

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Virtual: The Glow Party
Friday, March 19, 7-9 p.m.
\$30 each/\$25 MCC district residents

Old Firehouse Family Event



Virtual Family Fun Trivia Night
Friday, March 26, 7-9 p.m.
\$5 per family (per Zoom invite)

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Monday, March 29, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
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Tuesday, March 30, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.
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OFC School Break Trip



Dave & Buster's
Wednesday, March 31, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
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BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

TEXT FOR FOOD

No Kid Hungry Virginia encourages families to text FOOD or COMIDA to 877-877 to find free summer food sites organized by school districts and community organizations. Meal sites are offering a variety of distribution models to help safely connect students with meals and promote social distancing, including "Grab and Go" service and food delivery along bus routes while passing out multiple days' worth of meals at one-time.

FRESHFARM MARKETS OPEN

Local FRESHFARM Markets are opened. Residents are encouraged to pre-order as much as possible, but grab-and-go and prepackaged options will be available for purchase at all of the markets listed below.

Saturday Markets
Arlington, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. -- N Courthouse Rd. and 14th St N, Arlington
Oakton, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. -- 2854 Hunter Mill Rd., Oakton.

Sunday Market
Mosaic, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. -- 2910 District Ave., Fairfax

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

Shepherd's Center of Oakton Vienna Caregivers' Support Group takes place first and third Thursday of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (UUCF) - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. For caregivers to adult family members with dementia. First and third Thursdays of every month. Hosted by Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna, scov.org. Contact facilitator Jack Tarr at 703-821-6838 or jtarr5@verizon.net.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, www.havenofnova.org or havenofnova@verizon.net.

Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30-3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

STEM Professionals Needed. Volunteers are needed to assist K-12 STEM teachers in northern Virginia as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2019-20 school year, beginning in September. Please contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488 or donaledge@aol.com.

Assistance League of Northern Virginia, a volunteer nonprofit, invites community members to join the organization to participate in its Reading Express program. Volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring to first grade students during the school year. To learn more contact VP Membership Mary Gronlund at gronbiz@aol.com or Program Coordinator Lynn Barron at lynnieb517@verizon.net.

CALENDAR

MARCH 1-29

"Life in Historic Virginia." At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Part of the Park Authority's new series of "Field Trips for All" that are designed to supplement classroom and online lessons. Parks provide an experience not easily duplicated in the classroom, and these field trips offer parents a unique opportunity to provide their kids with real experiences while applying the concepts required in the Virginia Standards of Learning. This history program is designed for students in grades one through six. Life in Historic Virginia is offered on Mondays, March 1, 15, 22 and 29, 2021. The 45-minute programs at Sully Historic Site run at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., and the cost is \$40 per family. Call 703-437-1794.

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.

MARCH 6-7

Franchise Show Chantilly. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At The Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. The community is invited to The Franchise Show at the Dulles Expo Center from March 6 - 7, 2021. Full-time and part-time business opportunities from every industry, at every investment level. Visit the website: <https://thebizex.net/dc/virginia-franchise-show-march-6-2021/>

SATURDAY/MARCH 6

Geocaching Workshop. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Learn to use hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) units to locate hidden treasure caches within the park. Once you master how to enter latitude and longitude coordinates into a GPS, 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. Cost is \$22 per person. Call 703-471-5414.

SUNDAY/MARCH 7

Capital Harmonia's Virtual Women's Choral Festival. 4-5 p.m. Join virtually for the 6th Annual Women's Choral Festival. The festival honors Women's History Month and includes a performance of music written by women composers, interviews with composers Laura Farnell and Susan LaBarr and a conversation with our House of Ruth partner, Director of Development, Elizabeth Kiker. Enjoy the festival on either: YouTube https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCU2LgVhIF7C9_HbSxCza8jQ

Facebook Live www.Facebook.com/capital-harmonia.

TUESDAY/MARCH 9

Homeschool at the Pond. 3:30-5 p.m. At Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Hidden Pond will offer a series of classes geared toward meeting homeschool science requirements for students age 6 to 12. The "Homeschool at the Pond" program is based on Hidden Pond's popular Pohick Rangers series and meets every other week. The cost is \$65 per child. Call 703-451-9588; or visit Hidden Pond Nature Center.

MARCH 8 AND 13

Family Outdoor Exploration. Investigate topics, such as Stream Life, Pond Life, Historic Ice Cream, and much more. Once you register, staff from the park will reach out to you to plan the perfect outing for your family. The program at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park runs from 10 to 11 a.m. on Monday, March 8, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 13, and from 3 to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, 2021. The cost is \$40 per family, and family members of all ages are welcome to attend. Call 703-631-0013.

SUNDAY/MARCH 14

Birding for Beginners. 9-10:30 a.m. At Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. During this program you will learn about birds at Lake Fairfax Park and gain some basic identification skills to help you get started on birding. The program begins with a bird identification discussion. The cost is \$12 per person. This program is designed for bird-lovers age 12 to adult, but children age 12 to 16 must be accompanied by a registered adult. Call 703-471-5414.

SATURDAY/MARCH 20

Maple Syrup Boil Down. 11 a.m., noon, and 1 p.m. At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. It's sugaring time at the mill, so bundle up, brave the weather and watch and learn as sap is boiled down into a sweet syrup over an open fire. While supplies last, sample some of this delicious syrup over cornbread baked with cornmeal ground at Colvin Run. Call 703-759-2771.

SATURDAY/MARCH 20

Fairfax Genealogical Society Spring Fair - "Power Up Your Family Research with DNA". Virtual meeting. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Genealogist Karen Stanbary will present this one-day program featuring tips and tools for using DNA data to aid your family research. Registration (\$50 for non-members; \$30 for members of FxGS) at <https://fxgs2021mar.eventbrite.com> or on the FxGS web page, www.fxgs.org/2021springfair. Details of the program and other FxGS activities on the web site, www.fxgs.org or by calling 703-644-8185.

FAIRFAX COUNTY ACTIVATES CORONAVIRUS INFO CENTER

Fairfax County activated a Joint Information Center in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on March 13. Fairfax County Health Department COVID-19 webpage - www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus Emergency Information Blog (you can subscribe by email or follow by RSS) - www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog Coronavirus (COVID-19) Call Center - The community may call 703-267-3511 with questions. The call center is open from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends. Residents may also text FFXCOVID to 888777 to receive updates from Fairfax County about COVID-19. Twitter - @fairfaxcounty and @fairfaxhealth Facebook - www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty and www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyhealth

COVID-19 TEXT MESSAGES IN SPANISH

As part of its efforts to provide coronavirus-related information and assistance in multiple languages, Fairfax County now provides COVID-19 text alerts in Spanish. To sign up, text FFXCOVIDESP to 888777.

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Back to Abnormal



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Well, those last two weeks were kind of fun (comparatively speaking), to the dozen or so previous weeks. 'Fun', when you're a cancer patient experiencing side effects from treatment, is a moderation, absence even of said effects. My recent two-week break from taking my thyroid cancer medication was due to those side effects. Mentioned in a previous column, I was having balance and dizziness issues. In short, I couldn't walk or drive - for that matter, in a straight line. After consulting with my oncologist who deferred to the oncology pharmacist who's been monitoring/adjusting my medication dosage, it was agreed that I should cease and desist until my symptoms subsided. As of this past Thursday, my symptoms had mostly disappeared so I have resumed my treatment, albeit at a lower dose. (This will be the second reduction in my dose since we've been trying to find the sweet spot where the tumors are stable and the side effects are manageable.)

Actually, these last two weeks of being side-effect free was more than just a break in the action. It was a revelation of sorts. The infirmity/muscle weakness I was having was not due to the older age I have become. It was the medication. During this past fortnight, I began to feel like myself again. I could get in and out of chairs without pacing myself. I could roll over in bed and pull up the covers without a fuss. And of course, I could walk and drive a straight line. It was wonderful. When one is in the midst of a cancer diagnosis/existence, any indication that your bodily functions are performing "within normal parameters," to quote Lt. Comm. Data from "Star Trek: Next Generation" is somewhere between reassuring and life affirming.

Generally speaking, we all know that cancer doesn't make its diagnoses big and strong. Realistically speaking, you're happy with normal. Conversely, when 'normal' isn't how you feel, it's hard to portend that death/disability is not fast-approaching. Moreover, it's an especially slippery slope when one has been given a "terminal" diagnosis originally and more recently had that diagnosis modified to include a second type of cancer: papillary thyroid cancer stage IV, to go along with my pre-existing non small lung cancer, also stage IV. One has to fight emotionally to keep from getting lost/going down that rabbit hole. Any good news/an unexpected positive reaction with your disease, like your mind and body returning to pre-cancer normalcy is about as good as it gets. So even though I'm back on the medicine, I feel empowered, upbeat, hopeful even. To that end/continuation of life, I am not going to worry yet that the reduced dose will allow my tumors to grow. I'm just not going to go there. What would be the point? I'll find out soon enough, a few days after my next CT scan in mid-March. Until then, I am going to bask in my semi return to glory.

Speaking of 'glory,' as a cancer patient, one has to grasp and hold on to anything of emotional, physical, psychological or spiritual value. In addition, what information you receive which is not particularly positive, in that it's premature/unproven/not corroborated by science, has to be compartmentalized. As with Jerry Seinfeld, you have to put it in the vault and almost throw away the key. Allowing negative possibilities or unpalatable scenarios to take root in your brain really does a disservice to your potential survival. Ever since I was diagnosed with a "terminal" form of cancer, I've tried not to put the cart in front of the horse, if you know what I mean? The diagnosis was bad enough on its own. I didn't need to make it worse by piling on. If and when my life becomes more challenging/more cancer centric than it is now, I'll deal with it. I don't need to bring it on any sooner than is absolutely necessary. I've had 12 years I wasn't expecting since receiving an initial "13 month to two" year prognosis. Twelve years later, I don't see any reason to change my approach.

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



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