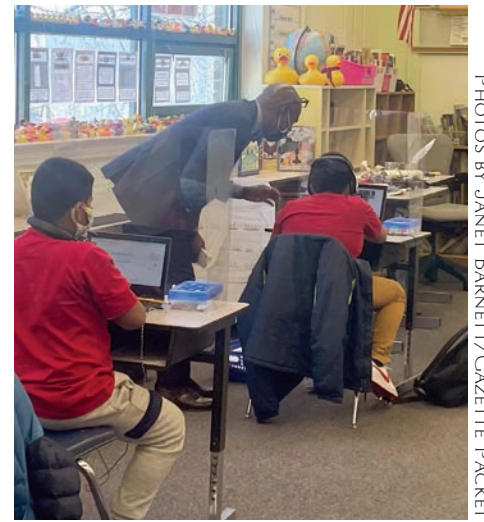




Alexandria City Public Schools Superintendent Gregory Hutchings gives an elbow bump greeting to a student March 2 at Mount Vernon Community School. ACPS students returned to in-person classes after nearly a year of virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Mount Vernon Community School principal Liza Burrell-Aldana welcomes students and teachers back to school March 2 as fourth grade teacher Emily Porterfield and student Luis Aleman look on.



ACPS Superintendent Gregory Hutchings visits with fourth grade students at Mount Vernon Community school March 2.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

They're Back! ACPS begins return to in-person classes.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

After nearly a year of virtual learning, Alexandria City Public Schools began the process of returning students to the classroom with a hybrid learning plan that began March 2.

"We have been looking forward to this day since last year," said Mount Vernon Community School Principal Liza Burrell-Aldana as she welcomed teachers and students back to the school for the first time since March 13, 2020. "Just watching the kids, seeing them learning safely today is everything. To all of us teachers and administrators, it's just been a great day."

At MVCS, 63 percent of the staff have returned for the hybrid learning model that separates students into two groups for alternating in-person classes two days per week.

"Our pre-k students have returned for either Tuesday-Wednesday or Thursday-Fri-

day classes with anywhere between six and nine kids in each classroom," Burrell-Aldana said of the only dual-language school in the ACPS system.

Burrell-Aldana said that 21 of the 39 MVCS classrooms have a regular teacher in place with others using teachers via classroom monitors.

"This has been a one-year process," Burrell-Aldana said. "Our teachers have done a great job educating our children through this virtual learning experience and making sure they are still learning despite all the odds and the distance."

Nine-year-old Luis Aleman was excited to return to school for the first time in a year.

"It's been tough studying at home all year," Aleman said. "I have two siblings who don't let me do anything so it's good to be back here."

Aleman said that the students are staying six feet apart, washing their hands and practicing social distancing.

"We have been looking forward to this day since last year."

— MVCS principal
Liza Burrell-Aldana

"For recess we walked around the school building," Aleman said. "We can't play on the playground because it's not social distancing."

Fourth grade MVCS teacher Emily Porterfield was excited to be returning to the classroom.

"It's an incredibly proud moment to be

back here today," said the 23-year ACPS veteran. "It was 351 days ago that we really had to pivot as teachers, but we remained flexible in collaborating and working with each other to keep schools open the entire time. Now we are just opening the physical classroom space."

SEE THEY'RE BACK, ON PAGE 14

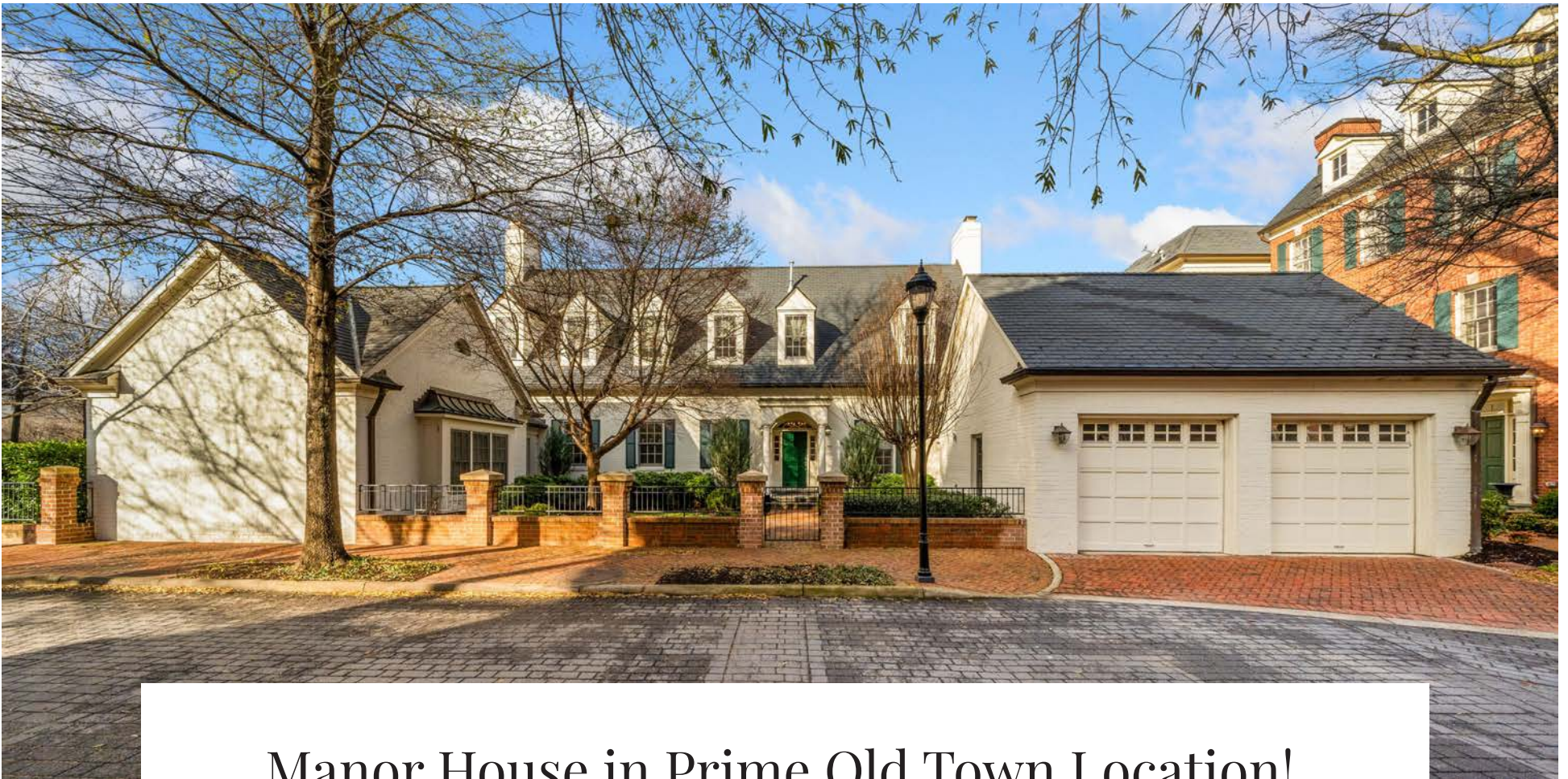


A banner welcomes students back to Douglas MacArthur Elementary school March 2.



PHOTO VIA TWITTER @PETERVELZ46

Vice President Kamala Harris visited Fibre Space, a woman-owned small business in Alexandria on Wednesday, March 3, to talk about passing the American Rescue Plan, getting the pandemic under control, getting relief to those who need it, and supporting women in the workforce. "Greetings from Alexandria, VA where the @VP is visiting Fibre Space, a beautiful woman-owned small business, to hear how they are managing to get through the pandemic," said Peter Velz, press operations director for the Vice President, in a tweet.



Manor House in Prime Old Town Location!

1011 N. WASHINGTON STREET | OFFERED FOR \$2,750,000

Offering a luxurious lifestyle within walking distance of shops and restaurants in the newly revitalized north end of town! With a gracious entry, elegant sunken living room and spacious dining room, this house is made for entertaining on a grand scale. The chef's kitchen boasts top-of-the-line appliances and granite countertops, a huge center island and a breakfast room with gas fireplace. The upper level has a sumptuous primary bedroom suite as well as three additional bedrooms and two baths.

The lower level will surprise you with a walk-in wine cellar, a wet bar right out of the movies and a media room, as well as a guest bedroom and bath for occasional overnight guests or an au pair. With beautifully landscaped grounds and a two-car garage, this home has it all! Shown by appointment.



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High Time? Advocates call on the governor to legalize marijuana as soon as possible.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

The debate over legalizing marijuana is about to light up, putting Gov. Ralph Northam at the center of a budding controversy. At issue is a question of timing. Should he agree with lawmakers that legalization should wait until New Year's Day 2024, giving the commonwealth enough time to stand up the new Cannabis Control Authority? Or should he amend the bill the General Assembly put on his desk to legalize weed now to prevent communities of color from being overpoliced in the interim?

"The governor has been talking about reparative justice for the communities and individuals harmed by the war on drugs and racially biased policing," said Ashna Khanna, legislative director for the ACLU of Virginia. "A way to make that lip service reality would be to enact these changes now and stopping the harm of marijuana prohibition."

Last weekend, lawmakers emerged from a closed-door conference committee with a compromise bill that has angered many of the governor's allies. Crafted in secret, the conference report put legalization on hold until a new regulatory agency can be created and commercial licenses issued. Advocates have been calling on lawmakers to separate the date of legalized possession and the start of commercial sales, but lawmakers who were part of the conference committee disagreed.

"There's no legal marketplace. It would just be the illicit market," said state Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30). "We want to create a marketplace that has products that have been tested and not have additives and make sure that the people we're selling to have been ID'd to make sure they're 21 and older."

THE ALEXANDRIA DELEGATION is at the center of the debate. The two lawmakers leading the secret talks over the weekend were Ebbin of Alexandria and House Majority Leader Charniele Herring, who also represents Alexandria. Members of the conference committee determined that the best course of action would be for marijuana to remain illegal for now, still subject to civil fines and penalties. They



Gov. Ralph Northam during a visit to Alexandria in August 2019.

also slapped a re-enactment clause of the regulatory parts of the bill, forcing lawmakers to consider

"This is better than nothing at all. What's not progressive is to sit on our hands and do nothing."

— House Majority Leader Charniele Herring

that aspect of the legislation again when they meet next year.

"This is better than nothing at all. What's not progressive is to sit on our hands and do nothing," said Herring, who introduced the decriminalization bill last year. "At least we have a date in stone. At least we are standing up the authority and starting to promulgate regulations, and so it is a product that we can work with."

Advocates say the final few days of secret negotiations were rough, and the process was in danger of collapsing at several points. So the fact that lawmakers put something — anything — on the governor's desk this year is a victory of sorts. As governor, Northam has the power to amend the bill almost

any way he sees fit, and he has until the end of this month to take action. That means he's now being lobbied heavily by advocates for criminal justice reform to legalize marijuana as soon as possible instead of waiting for the business dynamics to materialize.

"I'm extremely disappointed that we legislated business before justice," said Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice Virginia. "The governor said that this bill was supposed to prioritize racial equity but it's clear that it only prioritized a cannabis profit industry."

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY session began with Northam calling on lawmakers to legalize marijuana, building on momentum from the

decriminalization bill he signed into law last year. During his State of the Commonwealth address, the governor framed the move as an acknowledgement that Virginia's criminal justice system treats people unfairly. He used his speech to spotlight some statistics showing Black people are three and a half times more likely to be charged with marijuana crimes and four times as likely to be convicted.

"It's time to join 16 other states and make marijuana legal, and end the current system rooted in inequality," said Northam in a speech delivered in a House chamber that was mostly empty because of pandemic precautions. "We've done the research, and we can do this right away, leading with social equity, public health and public safety."

But the legislation the governor

sent to Ebbin and Herring did not call for action right away. Instead, the governor's timeline called for legalization to wait until commercial sales begin. Advocates who worked with lawmakers during the tense negotiations said the governor's office maintained that position throughout the process, leading to an end result that delays legalization until New Year's Day 2024. That means that the governor is now hearing from people urging him to change his position on the timing of legalization.

"He certainly does have the power to make that or any other recommended amendments, however the administration is the most ardent supporter of keeping those two dates connected," said Jenn Michelle Pedini, executive director of Virginia NORML. "The date of legalization, meaning personal possession and personal cultivation, need not be tied to the date of retail sales. That's been our position throughout, and that's still our position today."

CRIME STATISTICS show worries about disproportionate policing is not an academic concern. According to the Alexandria Police Department, 64 percent of people arrested in Alexandria for drug arrests in 2019 were African American. Almost half of those arrests were Black males. Despite comparable usage rates, Black people are 3.4 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession, according to a recent report from the American Civil Liberties Union, which also found that arrests for possession of marijuana make up about 52 percent of drug arrests.

"Even the thought of business before justice is hard to stomach," said Del. Cia Price (D-95). "Some of my constituents are in jail right now and more may be sent to jail while we are establishing a regulatory authority for the business pieces."

BULLETIN BOARD

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

THURSDAY/MARCH 11
2021 Women's Leadership Forum. 8:30-10:30 a.m. The Chamber's Professional Women's Network will host its signature event,

The Women's Leadership Forum, virtually via Gather Town. After almost a year full of the unexpected and the unprecedented, this forum will bring together women at all stages of their careers for an interactive discussion filled with inspiration and insight, centered around this year's theme of resiliency, and learning how to find the opportunities amidst the challenges. Cost is \$25 for Members | \$40

for Prospective Members. Visit the website: www.thechamber-alex.com.

ROTARY CLUB ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT PROGRAM

The Rotary Club of Alexandria is accepting applications for the 2021 Grant Program. The

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 5



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Teachers Charlotte Buckhold and Brandy Smith with the kitah sagol (purple class) in their costumes and Mishloach Manot, bags of goodies celebrating Purim at Agudas Achim Congregation Feb. 26.

Celebrating Purim

Observance marks the saving of Jews from execution in Persia.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Students at Agudas Achim Congregation donned their best costumes Feb. 26 to celebrate Purim, the holiday marking the saving of the execution of Jewish people in 5th century BC in Persia.

"Purim is when Queen Esther saved the Jewish people from being executed and exiled from Persia," said preschool teacher Charlotte Buckhold. "One of King Ahasuerus's advisors, Haman, wanted to get rid of the Jewish people because they were not bowing down to him. That was going to happen until Queen Esther came in and saved the day."

Buckhold's kitah sagol, or purple class, students gathered outdoors to shake their groggers, used to make loud noises to drown out the name of Haman. The traditional three-cornered food of hamentashen, or "oznei Haman" (Haman's ears) were shared.

The story of Purim is related in the biblical book of Esther. The ritual observance of Purim begins with a day of fasting the day pre-



Preschoolers at Agudas Achim Congregation hold their groggers to celebrate Purim Feb. 26.



Hamentashen, the traditional three-cornered food of Purim.

"Purim is when Queen Esther saved the Jewish people from being executed and exiled from Persia."

— Agudas Achim preschool teacher Charlotte Buckhold

ceding the actual holiday. On Purim Jewish people are enjoined to exchange gifts and make donations to the poor.

"Mishloach Manot is the tradition of giving gifts of food," said Buckhold, adding, "it's very Jewish to give people food."



Register Now for the Spring "Virtual" Senior Academy

Session Begin Wednesday, April 7

BY MARYANNE BEATTY
SENIOR SERVICES OF ALEXANDRIA

Spring is in the air and Senior Services of Alexandria is excited to be hosting its Spring Senior Academy virtually via zoom starting in April. This 4-week free course will meet every Wednesday morning starting April 7 from 10 to 11:30 am and continue April 14, 21 and 28. The Senior Academy is for Alexandria residents 65 and older or those who work in the City to learn about how the city operates including programs and services for older adults.

Each Wednesday morning session will feature speakers including a welcome from Mayor Justin

Wilson, presentation by the City Manager's Office as well as other departments including Transportation, Planning, Office of Housing, Alexandria Health Department and the Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Attendees will also hear from our first responders, Police, Fire and Sheriff.

Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions and receive a lot of great information on city programs and how to get engaged. To register go to www.seniorservicesalex.org or contact Lindsay Hemphill at admin@seniorservicesalex.org or MaryAnne Beatty at communications@seniorservicesalex.org.



JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

CORRECTION: Volunteers in the page 4 photo of the Pawsitive Partners story in the Feb. 25 issue of the Alexandria Gazette Packet were misidentified. Pictured from left to right are: Lynda DiValentin, Sarah Rasmussen, Ginny Richards and Marta Ishmael.

Inside Guest House

Challenges posed by Covid add to tough road to recovery.

By Shirley Ruhe
Gazette Packet

Kari Galloway, Executive Director of Friends of Guest House in Alexandria says, "It's hard. Our clients feel like they just got out of prison and then they come here and get quarantined for two weeks in their room." Guest House is the only residential women's facility for recovering non-violent offenders in northern Virginia, and the largest in the state. Currently it serves 30 women in the six-month residential program and 17 in the transitional After Care.

Loneliness is a real enemy of addiction recovery, says Galloway. Women can feel desperate and isolated. Usually the strong support system at Guest House helps pull people through, but during COVID the therapy sessions, case work and AA meetings are all by Zoom and for the first two weeks they are quarantined. "We know the prisons and jails they come from are hot spots."

Shauna Creek, a case manager at Guest House explains, "In addition, under normal times we have a strong support system of alumni who come back to mentor, take clients out for a cup of coffee and find a sponsorship to help them keep clean. This is a serious and delicate relationship. But nobody is coming in because of COVID." There are Zoom meetings but it's not the same.

Galloway says, "human connection is so critical for our women."

Creek says most of the women in the After Care program lost their jobs when COVID hit. "I had three women relapse. They couldn't handle the time without being busy; they needed constructive outlets. Losing their jobs distressed them."

Creek continues, "Relapse is a part of recovery but without support they feel so alone trying to get their lives together."

Liz Royall says she had just graduated from the residential program a couple of weeks before COVID hit. She went into After Care where she had a job at the front desk at Hampton Inn. Royall got laid off when the pandemic hit. But five months later they were able to hire her back. Now she has her own apartment, gets up, goes to work and attends her AA meeting "like I did today." She spends time with her nine-year-old son Grayson.



Guest House "Writing and Rhythm" class on Mondays gets everyone going for the week. In-person classes have just started again with social distancing.

Royall had entered Guest House after her fourth parole violation for using fentanyl. She was facing prison time. She says it is great at Guest House; it's like a big family. But she says you have to change everything about yourself at once and there is a completely new structure. "It's hard juggling it all."

She adds, "There is so much wreckage from my past. I got overwhelmed all at once and there were a lot of days that were really hard. It seemed better to go use and stop the emotional pain." But she feels like all of the support changed everything. But now the support is on Zoom and while helpful, it isn't the same.

There have been ups and downs and days when she didn't think she could make it. Royall just got her driver's license back. "That's huge."

"Time heals and distance puts you further away. People are starting to trust me again," and most important she can see her son Grayson unsupervised again. "He was con-

fused about it. He just wanted his mommy."

Galloway says Guest House scaled back the program by about half at the height of COVID. Then slowly they added back from 15-17 women. Now they are full again with no open beds anticipated until June or July. During that time revenue was off and in addition women in the After Care program lost their jobs and had to seek rental assistance. Help came from a number of sources such as the City of Alexandria, ALIVE! and the Federal government.

Two-thirds of Guest House funding comes from the Virginia Department of Corrections and the remainder from grants and community support. "We're doing pretty well. We always need some things and with more money we can do more. But the community has been supportive and generous." Galloway adds whenever they needed something, "oh my goodness; an angel would show up with Clorox wipes or toilet paper."

The daily routine now involves scrubbing down high touch surfaces every two hours

including tables and computers, wearing masks and physical distancing. She explains the beds are six feet away from each other and women sleep head to toe." Women who are in quarantine for two weeks have food delivered to their room. These times are tough with no contact with their families and a completely new set of life expectations.

Galloway says they have had only a few test positive for Covid and nobody has been really sick. "We have been super vigilant about cleaning and not touching faces. 'I think maybe some of this is good and may never go.'" Galloway adds, "I'm happy to report the Alexandria Health Department has knocked themselves out to help get everyone vaccinated. We live in a big congregate setting."

Galloway says once they have been able to get back into a 9-5 routine again, it will be huge. The structure is important. Guest House is moving in that direction, renting space in a local church to hold in-person classes. This just started last week but the efforts move slowly as they find instructors who are vaccinated and comfortable with the face to face classes.

Today Creek is on the way back from the food pantry with three of her After Care clients. "They are in need. They still have to be responsible for feeding themselves and most still don't have a job back. Ninety percent of my clients had to receive some kind of rental grant." Other days, Creek may be visiting the transitory houses to check in on the women who live there. "I may do a urinalysis or a quick case meeting to check on how they are doing with their goals. I check to be sure they are ok with food, their finances." Or there could be an immediate need for medications that they can't pick up after work.

Creek says, "It's all about the women, the transformation from when she first comes in when the world can't get any worse as she figures out who she is. It's remarkable." Creek continues, "My heart has been broken into pieces so many times but just because you fall down doesn't mean you have to stay down. Can you make better choices?" She tells them, "As long as you fight, I'll fight with you."

Galloway adds, "We want so much for the women to see the possibilities they don't see in themselves."

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 3

Rotary Club of Alexandria Grant Program provides financial support to nonprofit organizations that advance literacy for children and adults and/or improve the lives of children, youth, seniors, and others with special needs within the city limits of Alexandria. The Rotary Club of Alexandria provides funds for specific programs and activities that strengthen core programs; provide seed funding for a new program, program elements or initiative; or support capital expenditures. Collaborative projects with other nonprofits are accepted, with a single grant made to the lead organization. Usually, grants for

ordinary operating or maintenance expenses are not considered. Applicants are encourage to include how last year's gift helped your organization deal with the effects of COVID-19 and how it has helped shape this year's request. Applications should be filed no later than March 5, 2021, and grant decisions will be announced on or about May 1, 2021. Contact the Contributions Committee at alexrotarygrants@gmail.com.

SEEKING COMMUNITY INPUT

The City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will redesign the existing Colasanto Pool, closed since 2010,

at 2700 Mount Vernon Ave. The City has selected and hired a design team led by LSG Landscape Architecture through a procurement process, which concluded at the end of 2020.

The City invites the community to provide input on the project through a virtual meeting on Thursday, March 4 at 7 p.m. Input received at the meeting will be used to direct the project, which will go through an iterative community design process.

For questions, see the project web page or contact Bethany Znidersic, Acting Division Chief, at bethany.znidersic@alexandriava.gov or call 703-746-5492.

COLLECTING FOR GEORGE FLOYD'S MEMORY

In the wake of the tragic murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, the Alexandria Black History Museum put out a call to the local community to record their feelings, thoughts, artwork, photographs, and objects. The Museum sought to document the legacy of the community's response to this tragedy and the wave of peaceful protests and vigils, posters, signs, and sidewalk messages that appeared across the region, to preserve this story for the future. The Museum staff received and collected objects, such as Black Lives Matter masks, pins, signs, artwork and t-shirts.

They also received a large volume of digital photographs capturing vigils, marches, signs, and the empty plinth of the Appomattox statue that was removed from the City center. The collecting initiative is still active and as we reach the anniversary of George Floyd's murder, the Museum encourages the public to leave their comments and images of possible donations to the Museum's collection via the online form available on the website. Visit alexandriava.gov/BlackHistory.

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA STREET SWEEPING PROGRAM

Each year towards the end of the winter.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 13

Marijuana Legalization Can Reduce School Inequity

BY ROB KRUPICKA

Marijuana legalization, which was just passed by the General Assembly, presents a rare opportunity for society to right decades of wrongs. When Governor Northam proposed legalization he included a bold idea to fix generations of inequity in the Commonwealth by requiring that forty percent of the tax revenues be used to fund Virginia's popular, but underfunded early childhood education system.

As a former legislator, member of the state board of education and local official, I know all too well that economically disadvantaged children are more likely to show up to kindergarten underprepared for school. New data from the University of Virginia tells us how

much of a challenge this is.

In northern Virginia, as many as 49% of Alexandria kids, 31% of Arlington kids, 46% of Fairfax, 33% of Loudoun and 44% of Prince William County kids all show up to kindergarten unprepared for success. Outside of Northern Virginia the numbers are similar, rising up to 59% of Richmond City kids and 66% of Northampton kids not being ready. The state average is a depressing 44%. We also know that a disproportionate number of economically disadvantaged families come from black and brown communities.

These children all lack key literacy, math, and social skills to excel in school. They are at a considerable disadvantage to their peers from more well-off families. No child's potential for success should be governed by their economic sta-

tus. Yet, strikingly, there are over 20,000 young children and families who need support to enter school with all the tools they need to learn.

Young children of economically disadvantaged households carry their lack of Kindergarten readiness throughout their school careers perpetuating a cycle of inequity and academic set-backs that continue to plague our economy and society.

With legalization slated to start in 2024, the new market for marijuana is slated to provide the funds that can help right the wrong of systematic school readiness failures. For years voters in Virginia have told pollsters that they agree we need high quality early childhood education. The political challenge has always been how do we pay for it. Well, once the market-

place is established, we will have a way.

Thanks to Governor Northam's leadership, legalization comes with a potent policy answer to one of the most glaring areas of injustice in our education system. Patroned by Senators Lucas and Ebbin as well as Delegates Herring and Scott, SB1406/HB2312 provides a framework for legalization. Now that the bill has been sent to the governor to amend or sign, the question is not whether we will ever legalize in Virginia, the question is whether we will do it soon enough to change the academic trajectory of babies being born right now.

Rob Krupicka is former Virginia State Delegate, Virginia Board of Education Member and Alexandria City Councilman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Overfunding Alexandria's Stream Projects by Several Million

According to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the regulatory agency responsible for overseeing stream construction projects throughout the Commonwealth, DEQ no longer allows default calculations for phosphorus to be used in pollution reduction crediting. Since late 2019, Virginia now requires all stream "restoration" projects to use sediment and phosphorus calculations based on actual soil samples collected instream locally. (Phosphorus is highly concentrated in human and animal waste and fertilizers vs. phosphorus-poor stream bank soils and is probably the main nutrient of concern affecting water quality downstream.)

For this and other reasons, it was recognized several years ago that natural channel design projects were not cost-effective nor were they providing the greatest pollution reduction benefits and required ecosystem improvements ("uplift"). Therefore, effective July 1, 2021, t

he stream construction industry will be regionally phasing out this outmoded approach in favor of alternative methods for reducing pollutants.

What does all this say for transparency, integrity, and accountability with the public one serves when City staff is heard repeatedly selling their stream projects at the "now or never" price of \$16,000

per pound of phosphorus removed? This steal of a deal, in fact, is based on the bogus, highly inflated figure of 1.05 lb. phosphorus per ton of sediment from soil samples collected in phosphorus-rich agricultural district streams near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Stream bank soil samples expertly taken and analyzed show the actual cost per pound of phosphorus removed along the Taylor Run project footprint to be \$77,000! Virginia and Alexandria taxpayers in effect have overfunded the 3 current City of Alexandria projects many millions of dollars based largely on highly inflated calculations that bear no semblance to actual phosphorus levels.

City staff never once tried to adjust this flawed cost analysis for fairness and adherence to scientific integrity, despite knowing full well of the impending new crediting requirements and cost ineffectiveness of natural channel design. Nor did they disclose any of this information to the public at meetings and project websites. Such behavior is little different than a car dealer knowingly selling vehicles compromised with safety recalls yet not providing full disclosure to the buyer.

Rod Simmons,
environmental scientist and
ecological restoration specialist
Arlington

Density: Source of Problems

Dear Editor:

Many people think that density is really good for Alexandria, but in my opinion, almost every major problem within our community can be traced to over-densification. We are the densest city within the State of Virginia, and we continue to get denser by the day. We have only 15.0 square miles of land space, so we can't just keep building townhomes and condos everywhere without considering improving the infrastructure, especially sewerage and flooding, and having an efficient grid, since higher density requires less dependence on the automobile.

Moreover, the auto-based communities being built do not accommodate our geography. Alexandria is at the nexus of major north south

/east west thoroughfares to DC and Arlington, and this through traffic is likely to persist for some time to come, especially with the decline of Metro service. You just can't keep building auto-based communities that feed into this mix without further impacting traffic and quality of life.

The effect of this increasing traffic congestion cannot be underestimated. as our ability to provide adequate parking facilities for visitors and residents is diminishing in most areas of the city. Our ability to conduct business especially in Old Town will be severely curtailed, thereby resulting in fewer people visiting the many unique shops and restaurants.

Also, when additional communities are built, more services are

required (e.g., schools and fire stations) which should be planned for with no impact on current taxpayers, but this is not always the case. Living within an overly dense auto-based environment with the effects of increased traffic congestion and air pollution is not a winning combination.

The mental health implications cannot be underestimated. Our current policies governing planning and zoning need to be rigorously followed without giving every new development a free pass through the process. Otherwise the few examples I have cited will only get worse and we will end up looking like Crystal City.

Townsend A. "Van" Van Fleet
Alexandria

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OPINION

Budget Passed

Enormous number of measures baked into budget to address critical needs in an unprecedented year.

BY DELEGATE
PAUL KRIZEK



Krizek

The 2021 session of the Virginia General Assembly came to a close on Monday, March 1st, which really concluded with a long twelve hours on the floor Saturday that included the final passage of the Budget bill, and tax conformity legislation that set a critical \$100,000 threshold for PPP expense deductibility for 2020 for all businesses in the Commonwealth.

The budget was not just one of our final bills passed, but one I played a significant role in as we wrapped up this special session. The budget allocates state funding to our legislative priorities, maintains our AAA bond rating, and promotes fiscal responsibility by adding an additional \$250 million to our total of \$900 million into our Revenue Reserve Fund — to help rebuild our economy and put our Commonwealth on a path to come back from this pandemic better than before. In my position as one of the seven Subcommittee Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee, I was instrumental in the passage of many important amendments to the budget, and in assisting my colleagues in getting their critical budgetary priorities included in our final product.

COVID

The budget employs new and existing federal dollars to address critical needs such as COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, and disease surveillance and investigation. \$89.3 million non general funds (NGF) over the biennium is allocated for mass vaccination efforts, maximizing new federal dollars. It provides \$6.1 million GF and \$40.9 million in new federal funds for state agencies to support disease surveillance and investigation, testing, and contact tracing. The new funding supports 47 epidemiologists and communicable disease nurses across the Commonwealth's 35 local health districts and 3.5 program managers in the central office.

Education

This budget has a big focus on education, adding \$466.8 million for education over the biennium,

restoring over 95% of funding removed since the onset of the pandemic. These funds are critical as students and teachers begin returning to in-person learning.

Initiatives include learning loss supplemental payments, which provide \$40 million GF monies in FY 2021 to support local efforts to address COVID-19 learning loss. These funds may be used for extending the school year, summer school, tutoring, remediation and recovery, counseling and student supports, and certain facility modifications. This also permits school divisions to carryover funds from FY 2021 to 2022, with no local match required.

\$26.6 million will fund additional school counselors bringing our counselor to student ratio to 325:1. \$49.5 million provides for funding three specialized student support positions per 1,000 students, including school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, and behavioral analysts. \$62.1 million will be used to temporarily expand family eligibility for the child care subsidy program to assist families affected by the pandemic.

Compensation

Within our final budget, we have included a much-needed 5% salary increase for state employees and state supported local employees, which includes teachers and law enforcement officers. Correctional officers will receive a \$1,000 bonus, and our state police will receive an additional 3% salary increase plus an additional \$100 per year of service to address salary compression.

Unemployment

The budget contains \$18.9 million in one-time funding for the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) to forgive no-fault overpayments of unemployment insurance benefits. Many unemployment claimants around the Commonwealth, some my own constituents, have experienced receiving invoices from the VEC to return money paid out to them due to clerical errors, so this change was critically necessary. Skilled game revenue from this year will add \$25 million to the Rebuild Virginia program, bringing total support for the small business assistance fund

to \$145 million. But come July 1st, those skill game machines will be illegal and need to be removed from all public locations, mostly found in restaurants, convenience stores, and truck stops.

Elections

The budget authorizes the Department of Elections (ELECT) to use about \$1 million in remaining funds appropriated during Special Session I, 2020 General Assembly for the reimbursement of postage on absentee ballots. It also adds language to extend absentee voting-related policies, such as ballot drop boxes and my initiative for prepaid postage on the return of absentee ballots until new laws formally codifying these changes take effect on July 1, 2021. Language is also included to create uniformity in collecting petition signatures for state and local offices during the COVID-19 pandemic. \$300,000 is included in FY 2022 for ELECT to educate voters on changes made to election law in the 2020 and 2021 General Assembly Sessions.

Healthcare

The budget adds \$129.9 million in state and federal funds to increase Medicaid personal care rates. It also provides \$6.9 million in state and federal funds in FY 2022 for up to 40 hours paid sick leave for personal care attendants. \$93.4 million in state and federal funds to provide a \$15/day add-on payment for Medicaid nursing home patients, including \$4.4 million GF in FY 2022 to increase the Auxiliary Grant rate by 10 percent to support individuals in assisted living facilities. 435 Developmental Disability waiver slots will be added, bringing the total to 985 slots in FY 2022, with the goal of eliminating the waiver slot waiting list in coming years.

Locally, we were able to include \$5 million for the National Museum of the United States Army; and, provide \$200,000 to the Lor-ton Community Action Center; \$500,000 to United Community; \$200,000 to Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services; \$250,000 to FACETS; \$200,000 to Koinonia; and \$200,000 to BritePaths in FY 2022 from the TANF block grant to provide services to low-income families in Northern Virginia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, our efforts resulted in \$2 million towards the purchase of River Farm, and \$1.5 million for Mason Neck Park's drinking water supply. My amendment of \$1 million will increase enforcement of unlawful direct shipment of alcoholic beverages into Virginia to curb the negative effects of unlicensed alcohol shipments on lawful Virginia businesses and allow Virginia to recoup lost tax revenue from

SEE BUDGET PASSED, PAGE 11

ALEXANDRIA
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His Name Lives On – Charles Hamilton Houston

By CHAR McCARGO BAH
GAZETTE PACKET

Before 1965, Alexandria, Va. had separate schools for African Americans in the Alexandria school system. The last segregated graduating class from Parker-Gray High School was the class of 1965. In September 1965, Parker-Gray opened their doors as an integrated middle school. The fight for equality and integration was the initiative of one man who trained a group of lawyers to end segregation.

THE OTHER
ALEXANDRIA



Charles H. Houston

Charles Hamilton Houston, Esquire, was a Washingtonian lawyer who trained many African American lawyers at Howard University to dismantle the Jim Crow laws that existed in the United States prior to 1965. Some of Houston's students were Thurgood Marshall (Baltimore, Md), Joseph C. Waddy (Alexandria, Va) and Oliver Hill (Richmond, Va). On the other hand, Samuel W. Tucker (Alexandria, Va) who attended Howard University when Houston was a professor, was influenced by Houston.

Under Charles Houston's guidance, his students received training to secure civil rights for African Americans. After those students graduated from Howard University, Charles Hamilton Houston left Howard University in 1935 to serve as the first special counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP). He developed a strategy to attack segregation at the public education facilities. Houston exposed the inequality that existed in the separate-but-equal doctrine dating from the Supreme Court's decision on Plessy v. Ferguson (1897). He won one case after another; he was modeling for his students from Howard University how to dismantle the racial laws of their time.

His method inspired his followers, especially Thurgood Marshall and Samuel W. Tucker.

Charles Hamilton Houston was born on Sept. 3, 1895 in Washington, D.C., to a middle-class family. His father, William was a son of a former slave. William was an attorney who practiced law in D.C. for four decades; and Charles' mother, Mary was a seamstress. Houston attended segregated schools in D.C., graduating from Dunbar High School. He attended Amherst



The Old Charles Houston Elementary School.

College in 1911 and graduated in 1915. He returned to D.C. where he landed a job at Howard University and taught English. When World War I began, Houston enlisted as an officer. After World War I, he attended Harvard Law School. He earned his bachelor of law in 1922 and he was admitted to the D.C. Bar in 1924. He joined his father's practice prior to becoming a professor at Howard University.

Houston played a role in nearly every civil rights case that reached the United States Supreme Court between 1930 to the 1950s. One of Houston's most historic cases that made it to the Supreme Court was Brown v. Board of Education (1954). Unfortunately, Houston

did not live to see the Supreme Court ruling on this case that he helped to propel to the Supreme Court.

His former student, Thurgood Marshall was the lawyer that presented the case to the Supreme Court that overturned the separate but equal law in the 1954 ruling.

Houston's students Samuel W. Tucker and Oliver Hill would go on to fight civil rights cases throughout Virginia. Houston's student Joseph C. Waddy became a D.C. Judge; and, Thurgood Marshall became a Supreme Court Justice.

The entire African American race was on Houston's shoulders, he fought in the courts for their rights. On April 22, 1950, Houston

at the age of 54 died from a heart attack. The African Americans in Alexandria mourned their national lawyer and hero. They named the old Parker-Gray School located at Wythe Street, Charles Houston Elementary School after their National Civil Rights lawyer.

Today on the old site of Charles Houston Elementary School stands the Charles Houston Recreation Center – Houston's name lives on.

Char McCargo Bah is a published author, freelance writer, independent historian, genealogist and a Living Legend of Alexandria. She maintains two blogs, <http://www.theotheralexandria.com> and <http://www.findingthingsforu.com>.

Save the Date for Maury PTA Fundraiser

It's time to get ready for Mariner Madness Saturday, March 6. Grab a bagel and coffee while the kids play at this year's PTA fundraiser at Maury Elementary School. Then log on to a virtual magic show at 11 a.m. by clicking on Maury Update tab and head to an online auction with a cocktail master class at 7:30 p.m.

Bagels will be provided by Bagel Uprising with Coffee from St. Elmo's, and a pre-ordered art kit can be picked up at the same time. The virtual free magic show will be presented by Joe Romano from the Ultimate Magic Academy.

The main fundraising event will be Mixology Master Class

with Jon Schott from the People's Drug and King's Ransom. Cocktail kits and nibbles "just to put you in the mood for the auction" can be purchased along with the General Admission ticket. They will be delivered to your home the day of the auction, but it is also possible to buy a General Admission ticket without the mocktail kit.

Auction teasers include Murphy's Irish Pub champagne brunch for 10, five nights at Deep Creek Lake luxury bed and breakfast retreat, celebration of spring with a luxury picnic and a two-night stay at Tide's Inn Resort.

— BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Local Republicans To Hold Candidate Information Session

Local Republican party Chairman Pete Benavage announced that the party is planning an information session on March 6 for local Republicans interested in running for office. The session will focus on the rules for filing to run, fundraising, the party's primary process, and tips for candidate messaging.

The Alexandria Republican City Committee's (ARCC's) leadership sees opportunity in the 2021 local elections. They say there is widespread dissatisfaction with the current Democrats in office on a variety of local issues including housing density, transportation congestion, inadequate flood control, rising taxes, overcapacity-underperforming schools, and proposals to co-locate housing on school property.

Benavage says "The local Republican party is actively encouraging local moderates and conservatives to step up to the plate. We will call on the experiences and expertise of elected Alexandria Republicans, former Vice Mayor Bill Cleveland, former City Councilman Frank Fannon, and others in shaping our infor-



Republican party Chairman Pete Benavage and former Vice Mayor Bill Cleveland.

mation session and coaching our candidates."

Linda App, President of the Commonwealth Republican Women's Club (CRWC) in Alexandria, said "The 2020 Election brought us a lot of interest and new members who are not happy with Alexandria's all-Democrat city council or Democrat elected officials in the General Assembly. Many new Republicans are former Democrats. This is the right time for Republicans to run in Alexandria. I think some of our members will be running."

SEE LOCAL REPUBLICANS, PAGE 13
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Plant-Based Cottage Bakery Coming to Del Ray

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Ah, the smell of pastries – there’s really nothing like it. Soon, Del Ray residents and visitors will be able to follow their noses to a new place for flaky croissants and more: Le Petit Grump.

The cottage bakery is starting small – really small, in fact. Owner Mel Gumina’s 437-square-foot

APPETITE home in Del Ray is the place where the magic has been happening for months as Gumina perfects her pastries in anticipation of a springtime opening.

“Food has always been a passion of mine,” Gumina said. “I love how it brings people together.”

Another notable facet of the bakery? It’s all plant-based. That’s right: No dairy, eggs or other animal products will be used in the food, broadening the menu to an even wider swath of customers.

The idea for a bakery came to Gumina well after she’d transitioned to a plant-based lifestyle. Rich baked sweets were a category of food she missed when she transitioned her diet, and she wants to



bring that back to the community in a big way.

“When I walk into a bakery to maybe buy a loaf of bread, it’s the pastries -- the smell -- that gets you, takes you to a place of breakfast and cappuccino on a porch on a sunny day,” she said.

A graduate of culinary school, Gumina’s dreams of opening a bakery became closer to reality once she realized that “cottage businesses” – that is, businesses run without a public storefront – were a perfectly viable way of operation.

“Eating the food that was put out there by other plant-based cottage businesses showed me that it is more doable than I thought,” she said, noting that other vegan restaurants and eateries have been



Mel Gumina and Marcus.

incredibly generous with their time and expertise to help get Le Petit Grump up and running.

“This is not something that has been in the works for years and years,” she said. “The idea came to me one day, and I just had this really good feeling about it and I ran with it.”

And the region’s vegan and vegetarian circles are abuzz with excitement about the bakery’s progress – and opening.

“I was really fortunate for the outpouring of love I’ve received from the vegan community,” she said.

And about the bakery’s name, Le Petit Grump: It’s a reference to Marcus, Gumina’s 12-year-old pup. “He is the most lovable little grump,” she said. “He was my inspiration to transition to vegan lifestyle in the first place.”

Gumina intends to start small, both in terms of menu items and orders. At this point, she’s eyeing a system of opening up a finite amount of orders each week, culminating in specific pickup times on the weekends.

“My plan for right now, because my kitchen is so small, is to keep it very simple,” she said. At first, she’ll be primarily offering croissants in multiple flavors – plain, chocolate and the like. But as the business grows, so will her offerings.

And in the meantime, she’s putting the finishing touches on practice run after practice run, making sure her recipes and oven are just-so prior to opening to the public.

“The response from the community is more than I ever could have imagined.

People have been so supportive and so lovely,” she said.

“Now I just hope I can feed everybody that wants to eat!”

Hope Nelson is the author of “Classic Restaurants of Alexandria” and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

CALENDAR

NOW THRU MARCH 24

Wednesday Morning Study Group. 10:30-11:30 a.m. Via zoom. Fairlington UMC 3900 King St., Alexandria. Join in a nine-week study of Laudato Si: Caring for Our Common Home, the groundbreaking encyclical letter by Pope Francis on climate issues and a Christian faith-based response. Visit the website: www.fairlingtonumc.org.

NOW THRU MARCH 24

Forty+ Fire Pit Party. Virtual and In-Person. Featuring: Choreographer Jane Franklin. Dates: Wednesday, weekly, Feb 24 - March 24; from 3 - 4 p.m. and Sunday, March 21; from 4 - 8 p.m. Forty+ Projects celebrate the collective creativity of people past the age of 40 resulting in unique collaboration. Projects explore movement and performance technique within a creative premise. Forty+ will meet weekly on Zoom with occasional in-person, socially distanced outdoor rehearsals at the film locations. The Fire Pit Party is an on-site filmed project in the Alcova Heights neighborhood of Arlington County. Dances will travel through the neighborhood, from one fire pit to the next, and involve participants of all ages. Tuition: \$100. Visit <https://www.janefranklin.com/adult-dance/forty-plus> or call 703-933-1111.

MARCH 1-29

“Storytelling in the Garden.”

9-9:45 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Bring a blanket or just settle in the grass and sit back with the family to hear the park’s storytellers read a tale with a different theme at each meeting. Afterward, take some time to explore the park’s gardens, ponds and historic house. The storytelling program is offered every other week in March, on March 1, 15 and 29, 2021. It’s designed for family members age 2 to adult. Cost is \$5 per person for each session. Parents and children must register to track registration numbers. Call 703-642-5173.

MARCH 5-27

In the “Give Me Shelter” art exhibit, local artists explore the meaning of the word “shelter” as a noun and verb. We all have learned what it means to shelter in place. The current crisis has nearly 40 million Americans at risk of homelessness. Seeking donations during this exhibit to benefit the Carpenter’s Shelter. View exhibit at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Details: www.DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

FRIDAY/MARCH 5

Nature Photography at Dawn. 6 to 8 a.m. At Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. In the “Nature Photography at Dawn” program, learn how to use a DSLR and a tripod to capture images of the natural world early in the morning. See what wildlife is waking with the sun at Huntley Meadows Park and get tips on how

to capture these magical moments. The class is designed for adult photographers with beginner to intermediate skill levels. Bring your own DSLR camera and bring a tripod if you have one. The cost is \$24 per person. Call 703-768-2525.

MARCH 6, 28

Family Hilltop Outing. At Historic Huntley, 6918 Harrison Lane, Alexandria. Parents and kids are invited to take a family-friendly tour of Historic Huntley on a “Family Hilltop Outing” on three days in March 2021. Learn what significance this villa had to one of our Founding Fathers. Challenge yourself using historical tools, such as ice tongs. See if you can master old-time children’s games. The program at Historic Huntley is designed for family members age 5 to adult. It runs from 3 to 4 p.m. on March 2, from 11 a.m. to noon on March 6, and from 1 to 2 p.m. on March 28. The cost is \$8 per person. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult. Call the park at 703-768-2525.

MONDAY/MARCH 8

Corn Grinding & Clay Pottery. 2:30-4:30 p.m. At Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Powhatan Native Americans used the plants and animals you see every day for their medicine, groceries, clothing and fun. Immerse yourself in a way of life from 400 years ago at the “Corn Grinding & Clay Pottery” program at Huntley Meadows Park. Grind

corn, make a clay pot, master corn darts and go on a guided tour to see the park from the perspective of a Native American. Bring those history lessons to life with hands-on experiences. The cost is \$12 per person. Call 703-768-2525.

MONDAY/MARCH 8

Pipeline Playwrights Launch Party. 7:15 p.m. Via Zoom for its Spring 2021 Season and Our Time, Our Stories (OTOS) production announcement. The plays in OTOS focus on women protagonists who insist in overcoming social and legal barriers. Facing injustices that prevent women from sharing in freedom and fairness, the protagonists are victorious in their personal and public domains. Pipeline will present five online productions in 2021 and 2022, beginning with A Very Present Presence by Ann Timmons in May 2021. For more information, visit www.pipeline-playwrights.org

FRIDAY/MARCH 12

Garden Talk: Designing an EcoSavvy Garden. 1:30-2:30pm. (Adults) Learn to work with nature’s resources to develop a beautiful, low-maintenance urban garden. With a little bit of knowledge, careful planning, and some effort, see how native trees/shrubs provide structure and year-round interest, along with colorful annuals and perennials that add seasonal color splashes. Extension Master Gardeners show you how to create a healthy, sustainable, and eco-savvy garden. \$12 per person. Register

online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes (B6X .3T3H) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

SATURDAY/MARCH 13

Virtual Floral Design Demo: Swing into Spring. 1-2:30pm. (Adults) Learn how to create a modern Hogarth curve floral design—a gentle curving design that leads your eye through the floral composition. Certified floral designer Betty Ann Galway will show you how to make these graceful shapes for your spring floral project. \$22 per person.

Virtual participants will receive a link to connect via Zoom and a supply list prior to the program. This workshop is also available in person. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes (8GI.NP9M) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

MARCH 13-14

Mini Photo Sessions. 9:30-6 p.m. At The Rectory on Princess Street, 711 Princess Street, Alexandria. Private 30-minute photo sessions at The Rectory on Princess Street with four local photographers, to capture your pringtime moments with a gorgeous tulip magnolia tree. Cost is \$200. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/march-magnolia-mini-photo-sessions-at-the-rectory-on-princess-street-tickets-140086808415>

River Farm Offer Falls Short of Asking Price

NOVA Parks and partners made an offer but the farm remains on the market.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

In an attempt to keep the property open to the public, the NOVA Parks, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and their partners recently made an offer to buy River Farm in Mount Vernon, but the American Horticultural Society board of directors has voted to decline their offer, looking for their original asking price of \$32,900,000 that they say they need to keep the society in operation.

"We deeply appreciate the interest of NOVA Parks in River Farm and their proposal to purchase an option on the property, which if exercised, would involve payments to AHS over several years. We deliberated carefully over the proposal and its terms and concluded that their offer as currently written simply does not meet AHS's needs. So, with thanks to them for their interest, the board declined the offer," noted AHS Board Chair Terry Hayes.

Paul Gilbert, the executive director of NOVA Parks, said their offer was "based on the appraised value," and noted that the \$32 million price is an unsupported value constructed on "completely unrealistic expectations," he said.

Officially Speaking

Locally, elected officials have supported the purchase of the farm to keep it undeveloped. Earlier this month, Senator Adam Ebbin (D-Alexandria) and Delegate Paul Krizek (D-Mount Vernon) were behind a successful effort by both the Virginia Senate Finance and Appropriations and House Appropriations Committees to come up with the money. This included \$2 million in funding to preserve River Farm in its proposed budget, and another \$5 million in combined funding for the preservation of both historic Chickahominy tribal lands and River Farm.

Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck (D) is anxious to preserve the farm too. "While disappointing, AHS' decision is unsurprising," Storck said. "We all remain committed to working with AHS to find a way to preserve this beautiful place of history nestled within the Mount Vernon community. I, personally, see this as part of the process you would find with any real estate sale. I remain hopeful that the AHS Board will support the criticality of preserving this historic property for the public and future generations. We know this commitment has been a long-standing mission of the AHS Board and its members," Storck said.

The AHS Board says they will continue to review and consider offers and would prefer that the buyer of the property would maintain it for single use and not subdivide it, continuing to allow the public to access the property as much as possible. "The Board welcomes further dialogue with NOVA Parks to the extent they are interested in submitting a different proposal," the Board said.

Gilbert said that NOVA Parks and the AHS



A Board of Supervisors hearing is scheduled for later in March.



The riverfront location could make River Farm's property attractive to a developer to subdivide and build expensive homes.



The mansion is a highlight of the farm.

Board are still keeping the dialogue open on the purchase. If NOVA Parks buys the farm, it will remain undeveloped and open to the public. "That's what our proposal does," Gilbert said.

Still For Sale

Local agent Sue Goodhart of Compass Real Estate Group in Alexandria has listed the farm, calling it a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to own 27 plus acres of riverfront property in the Washington, DC metropolitan area."

"Imagine owning an estate renowned for its unobstructed views of the Potomac River and impeccably maintained gardens," the listing states.

With the pandemic impacting everything for the last year, the AHS feels that they need this sales price to expand their national impact.

They will find another site for their headquarters said Bob Brackman, Interim Executive Director, "Once River Farm is sold, AHS will determine the best location for its headquarters to serve and build our national audience."

See the listing <https://www.thegoodhart-group.com/a-once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity-at-river-farm/>

Steeped in History

River Farm, located just off the George Washington Memorial Parkway, has a long

history, starting with Giles Brent Jr., and his wife, a princess of the Piscataway tribe, who owned it in 1653 or 1654, the listing states.

Then George Washington bought it and made it part of his plantation. Malcolm Matheson bought the property in 1919 and remodeled the home, and in 1973, American Horticultural Society (AHS) board member and philanthropist Enid Annenberg Haupt provided funds for the AHS to purchase the property, the listing states. The grounds now house the offices of AHS and are used for weddings, events, and gardening.

Haupt intended for the property to remain open to the public.

Historic Overlay District?

The County is currently considering the creation of an Historic Overlay District (HOD) for the River Farm property. New state legislation recently approved by the House and Senate will allow the county to protect the land by permitting inclusion of a provision in our historic preservation ordinance that would allow public access to "an historic area, landmark, building, or structure, or land pertaining thereto, or providing that no subdivision shall occur within any historic district unless approved by the review board or, on appeal, by the governing body of the locality as being compatible with the historic nature of such area, landmarks, buildings, or structures."

"I remain hopeful that the AHS Board will support the criticality of preserving this historic property for the public and future generations," Storck said in a community email. "We know this commitment has been a long standing mission of the AHS Board and its members."

www.saveriverfarm.com/
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/plan-amendments/river-farm-hod

Alexandria Police Arrest One For High-Speed Race On I-495

The Alexandria Police Department arrested one driver in connection with a high-speed vehicle race this weekend on I-495.

On Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021, around 11:15 p.m., an Alexandria supervisor on patrol in Old Town observed and heard several vehicles with loud exhaust systems accelerating and slowing on I-495. Upon receiving an alert from Virginia State Police about vehicles racing in the area of I-495 and Telegraph Road, Sergeant Ryan Waple positioned himself to observe three to four vehicles traveling in a group, positioning themselves to race. The drivers of two vehicles, including a silver Mustang GT, then revved their engines and accelerated. Sergeant Waple followed with due regard for safety, as the vehicles reached speeds of 105MPH. At that point, he activated his emergency equipment and successfully stopped and apprehended the driver of the Mustang GT.

Mr. Edgar Lovos Granados was charged with Racing (46.2-865) and Reckless Driving by Speed (46.2-862). The Mustang GT was

impounded by the Police department.

"This type of behavior is dangerous to anyone these drivers are sharing the road with and will not be tolerated," said Chief Michael L. Brown. "We want to commend Sergeant Waple for his effort to stop this reckless behavior."

APD has worked in coordination with Virginia State Police to address the speeding and racing issues with numerous speed education and enforcement efforts. We recognize we still have more work to do to stop this dangerous behavior.

The Police department also understands the community's concerns and frustrations with the loud noise caused by altered vehicle exhaust systems.

However, under Virginia House Bill 5058 and Senate Bill 5029, law enforcement officers are now prevented from initiating traffic stops for a variety of offenses, including vehicles with altered exhaust systems.

For media inquiries, contact Amanda Paga, Senior Public Information Officer at amanda.paga@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.6600.

12 Weeks of Street Sweeping

Each year towards the end of the winter season, the City of Alexandria begins its annual street sweeping program. Crews increase their efforts to clean City streets, helping to keep neighborhoods and commercial corridors clean and protecting waterways. Litter, debris, and leftover grit from winter road maintenance can clog storm sewers and pollute streams and rivers.

This year's effort begins Monday, March 1 and will take approximately 12 weeks to complete one pass of cleaning the City's 560 lane miles of streets. The street sweeping program includes three major groups: commercial sweeping, no parking sweeping, and residential sweeping.

As a reminder, all street sweeping-related "No Parking" restric-

tions are back in effect as of March 1, 2021. Please refer to the signs for specific hours and days of restrictions. In the event of inclement weather, street sweeping will not occur; however, parking restrictions still apply, as Parking Enforcement follows the ordinance, not the weather.

Residents can help by cleaning the curb in front of their homes and ensuring that nearby storm drains are not blocked. Street sweeping debris can be discarded during the regular trash collection. Residents may also request additional street sweeping on their block by using Alex311 or calling 703.746.4311. For questions or concerns about street sweeping, please email

street.cleaning@alexandriava.gov

Budget Passed

FROM PAGE 7

these products. Also, included was my amendment for funding for the Department of Environmental Quality to test the effectiveness of certain plants to remove road salt from impervious surface stormwater runoff, and money for DMAS to convene a workgroup to develop strategies to finance health care services for undocumented

immigrant children to ensure that all children living in the Commonwealth have access to quality healthcare. And, I was able to help secure an additional \$10 million towards NoVA localities' FY22 obligation to WMATA's capital and operating programs to ensure that public transit keeps Northern Virginia moving.

It was a busy session!



JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

INDUSTRY LEADERS – Synergy Home Care, a provider of services for those who want to age in place, has been selected for the third consecutive year as the distinguished 2021 Best Home Care Leader in Excellence, Best Employer of Choice and Best Provider of Choice by industry research firm Home Care Pulse. Synergy Home Care CEO Mitch Opalski, seated center, is surrounded by staff members (clockwise from back left) Deysi Ludena, Irene Blair, Samuella Kanu, Valeria Fonseca and Tiffany Johnson.

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<p>Notice Abandoned Vessel</p> <p>Notice is hereby given that the following vessel has been abandoned for more than 60 DAYS on the property of: Washington Sailing Marina. 1 Marina Dr. GWM Parkway, Alexandria, VA 22314.</p> <p>Description of Vessel: 16' Prindle Sailing Catamaran White hull HIN: SUR-07608M84A</p> <p>Application for Watercraft Registration/Title will be made in accordance with section 29.1-733.1 of The Code of Virginia if this vessel is not claimed and removed within 30 days of first publication of the notice. Please contact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources with questions.</p> <p>Notice Abandoned Vessel</p> <p>Notice is hereby given that the following vessel has been abandoned for more than 60 DAYS on the property of: Washington Sailing Marina. 1 Marina Dr. GWM Parkway, Alexandria, VA 22314.</p> <p>Description of Vessel: 26' Macgregor Sailboat "No Worry's" white hull with daggerboard Registration: VA 6492 BJ</p> <p>Application for Watercraft Registration/Title will be made in accordance with section 29.1-733.1 of The Code of Virginia if this vessel is not claimed and removed within 30 days of first publication of the notice. Please contact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources with questions.</p> <p>Notice Abandoned Vessel</p> <p>Notice is hereby given that the following vessel has been abandoned for more than 60 DAYS on the property of: Washington Sailing Marina. 1 Marina Dr. GWM Parkway, Alexandria, VA 22314.</p> <p>Description of Vessel: 17' Thistle Sail-</p>	<p>boat Blue hull with red stripe</p> <p>Application for Watercraft Registration/Title will be made in accordance with section 29.1-733.1 of The Code of Virginia if this vessel is not claimed and removed within 30 days of first publication of the notice. Please contact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources with questions.</p> <p>Notice Abandoned Vessel</p> <p>Notice is hereby given that the following vessel has been abandoned for more than 60 DAYS on the property of: Washington Sailing Marina. 1 Marina Dr. GWM Parkway, Alexandria, VA 22314.</p> <p>Description of Vessel: 16' Prindle Sailing Catamaran White and blue hull HIN: SUR08108M85E</p> <p>Application for Watercraft Registration/Title will be made in accordance with section 29.1-733.1 of The Code of Virginia if this vessel is not claimed and removed within 30 days of first publication of the notice. Please contact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources with questions.</p> <p>Notice Abandoned Vessel</p> <p>Notice is hereby given that the following vessel has been abandoned for more than 60 DAYS on the property of: Washington Sailing Marina. 1 Marina Dr. GWM Parkway, Alexandria, VA 22314.</p> <p>Description of Vessel: 21' Clipper Marine Sailboat "The Seaward" white hull with blue deck Registration: VA 5856 BX HIN: CLM009450573</p> <p>Application for Watercraft Registration/Title will be made in accordance with section 29.1-733.1 of The Code of Virginia if this vessel is not claimed and removed within 30 days of first publication of the notice. Please contact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources with questions.</p>

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WELLBEING

A Schedule Can Anchor Your Day

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

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

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 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



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.

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.'"

"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

NEWS

Local Republicans

FROM PAGE 8

To register for the March 6 Republican Candidate Information Session, go to www.AlexGOP.org.

ARCC is the local branch of the national Republican Party. CRWC is the Alexandria chapter of the National Federation of Republican Women. More information is available at www.AlexandriaCRWC.org.

—COMMONWEALTH
REPUBLICAN WOMEN'S CLUB

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

ter season, the City of Alexandria begins its annual street sweeping program. Crews increase their efforts to clean City streets, helping to keep our neighborhoods and commercial corridors clean and protecting our waterways. Litter, debris, and leftover grit from winter road maintenance can clog storm sewers and pollute our lakes and rivers.

This year's effort begins Monday, March 1 and will take approximately 12 weeks to complete one pass of cleaning the City's 560 lane miles of streets. The street sweeping program includes three major groups: commercial sweeping, no parking sweeping, and residential sweeping. As a reminder, all street sweeping-related "No Parking" restrictions are back in effect as of March 1, 2021. Please refer to the signs for specific hours and days of restrictions. Residents may also request additional street sweeping on their block by using Alex311 or calling 703.746.4311. For questions or concerns about street sweeping, email street.cleaning@alexandriava.gov.

FEB. 23 TO MARCH 23

Online Study Group, 7:30-9 p.m. Via Zoom. Sponsored by Fairlington United Methodist Church of Alexandria. Free, weekly in-depth look at the mysteries of suffering and how to make better sense of them. Join at any time. Visit the website: www.fairlingtonumc.org

REGISTER FOR WINTER RECREATION

Registration for winter classes and activities offered by the City of Alexandria's Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities is still available. Winter registration applies to programs taking place March 2021. Spring registration will begin at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, March 3, for City residents and on Friday, March 5, for nonresidents. Get ready for a flurry of fun this winter with a variety of in-person options for all ages, plus new virtual programs. View a complete list of winter programs online. Due to potential schedule and capacity adjustments from COVID-19, a printed or online program guide will not be produced for the winter program season. Sports leagues and programs are also being offered by affiliate programs. Please visit Alexandria Soccer Association

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

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Obituary



Kenneth Eugene Harrison

Kenny passed away peacefully in Knoxville, TN, February 26, 2021. He was born March 13, 1941 in Alexandria, VA. to Ruth Bruffy Harrison and Walter Albert Harrison.

Kenny is survived by his nieces, Susan Perkins McKeehan (Knoxville, TN) and Kathy Greenia Padgett (Port Republic, MD), his great niece Christina Perkins Johnson (Nashville, TN), his great nephew Brent Jeffrey Perkins (Chattanooga, TN), and his brother Walter Albert Harrison Jr. (Elmhurst, NY). Kenny is predeceased by his sisters, Janice Eldora Harrison and Betty Harrison Greenia.

Kenny, nicknamed Spoon, lived most of his life on East Windsor Ave in Del Ray, Alexandria, VA. He had a generous spirit and loved to help people. He is a part of many memorable milestones and will be missed greatly by his family, friends and neighbors. A graveyard service was held at Mt Comfort Cemetery in Alexandria on Wednesday, March 3rd at 11:00. Contributions in lieu of flowers to the family can be made to your favorite charity.

Obituary



Cheryl Ann Watson, 65, passed away peacefully in her sleep at home on Bluebird Road in Hague, VA on February 23, 2021. She was a 1974 graduate of St. Gertrude High School in Richmond, Virginia and a 1978 graduate of James Madison University, where she received her Bachelors in Social Services. Cheryl retired from Fairfax County Social Services after 30 years.

Mimi-as she was affectionately known to her five children and 11 grandchildren-fought a valiant and courageous battle with a non-malignant brain tumor.

Her warrior spirit and strong faith carried her on this long seven-month journey. A lesson for all those she loved to do what's necessary to get what you want.

Cheryl loved to be surrounded by family and friends, sitting on a beach and collecting sea shells, sea glass and sharks' teeth, paddle boarding, crocheting or knitting a blanket for a loved one to keep them warm, reading and was a master of word games.

She will be remembered for her gentle spirit, sweet smile and her welcoming heart and home.

Cheryl is preceded in death by her first husband, James E. Collins; mother, Phyllis Ann Ford McDonald; brother, Christopher Scott McDonald and her son, Forrest Alan Watson.

She is survived by her loving husband, Ronald Lee Watson, Sr.; sons, John Wesley Collins and Ronald L. Watson, Jr.; daughters, Ashby Ann Collins, Julie M. Watson Peniche and Heather Obomsawin; brothers, John Branch McDonald and James Daniel McDonald; sisters, Kathryn Lee McDonald Conway, Melissa Cable McDonald Gallant and Susan V. Collins; 5 nephews, 1 niece, 11 grandchildren and her father, Henry Clarence McDonald, Jr.

A memorial service for Cheryl will be announced at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to StJude.org or FeedMore.org.

Obituary

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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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News



ACPS Superintendent Gregory Hutchings March 2 outside Mount Vernon Community School.



Teacher Emily Porterfield monitors her fourth-grade class March 2 at Mount Vernon Community School.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

They're Back!

FROM PAGE 1

March 2 marked the return of about 1,200 special needs students in kindergarten through fifth grade, including students in grades K-5 receiving English Learner services.

ACPS will open March 9 for special education students then fully reopen to hybrid learning for all students on March 16. Safety protocols are in place including Plexiglas screens at desks that have been spaced at least six feet apart.

"We want to be providing a safe learning environment for our students," said ACPS superintendent Gregory Hutchings Jr. "We will work with our kids on social distancing and families have an option to move from hybrid to virtual learning. Everybody has to make the right choice for their student and we're willing to accommodate and work with them."

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 13

at alexandria-soccer.org; Alexandria Little League at alexandriabaseball.com; Alexandria Lacrosse Club at alexandrialacrosse.com; Alexandria Rugby club at alexandriarugby.com and Alexandria Football at alexandriatitansfootball.com. Visit alexandriava.gov/ Recreation to register online or learn more about winter recreation programs offered by the City. For in-person registration, call the Registration and Reservation Office at 703-746-5414 to schedule an appointment.

REGISTER FOR COMMUNITY POLICE ACADEMY

The Alexandria Police Department is accepting applications for the 45th session of the Community Police Academy. The six-week virtual Alexandria Community Police Academy provides an opportunity for residents to learn about various aspects of the Police Department, such as administrative philosophy, internal policies and the guiding principles of law and ethical conduct governing the delivery of police services.

Classes are a combination of lecture and interactive activities. Class topics will include Patrol Operations, Crime Scene Investigations, Criminal Investigations and the Special Operations Team. The academy will run from March 24-April 30, 2021 with classes held virtually

Hutchings added that each ACPS facility has PPE equipment, social distancing signage, antibacterial gel and hand washing stations throughout the building.

"We also have a health annex for anyone experiencing any symptoms during the school day, making sure there is a location where they can be isolated from the general population," Hutchings said. "While having the COVID-19 vaccine is not a requirement for teachers to return to the schools, we are working with the Alexandria Health Department to make sure that any staff member who wants the vaccine can get it."

The two days per week in-person learning model is expected to continue for the rest of the school year.

"The best part of today has been watching the kids get off the bus and get into the classroom," Burrell-Aldana said. "It was a sense of relief and joy for all of us."

on Zoom every Wednesday from 6-8 p.m. For more information on the Community Police Academy or to apply, visit www.alexandriava.gov/police and search Community Police Academy or e-mail the Volunteer Office at mary.bruno@alexandriava.gov. The deadline for registration is March 1, 2021.

To see other academies offered by the city, visit www.alexandriava.gov/academies.

ALEXANDRIA LIBRARY LAUNCHES MOBILE APP

The Alexandria Library recently launched a mobile app to put the library at your fingertips. From any smartphone or tablet connected to the Internet, you can instantly tap into library resources anytime, anywhere. You can search the library catalog, check your account, place holds and renew your checkouts, locate your local branch, register for virtual events, keep up to date through our e-newsletter, blog and more. The library's new app offers additional features, including ISBN Search, which lets you scan an ISBN barcode anywhere to see if the library owns a title. To download the app, go to <https://alexlibraryva.org/mobile-apps> using your smartphone or tablet's browser. Consider attending the March 3 event at 10 a.m. to learn more about the new app. Contact the Digital Services Librarian at csonnier@alexlibraryva.org.

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This striking 3-4 bedroom end townhome, with fully above grade lower level, features an 8,000+ SF corner lot, 3 deeded parking spaces and brick-enclosed patio. Sparkling updates, 3-sides of windows, 2 fireplaces plus updated kitchen. 1723 Belle Haven Road

Ann Duff 703.965.8700

www.AnnDuff.com



Wellington Estates | \$705,000

Welcome to 7954 Bolling Drive, the ideal investment property for a buyer to truly make it their own home. Opportunity to work with the current builder or bring in your own. List price includes plans & permits ready to be issued. Have a brand new home in Wellington Estates!

Jillian Keck Hogan 703.951.7655

www.JillianKeckHogan.com

VIRTUAL OPEN SAT 3/6, 11AM



Fairlington Meadows | \$575,000

Sought after Clarendon Model! Bright, open floor plan. Kitchen boasts granite countertops & stainless appliances. Beautiful hardwoods. Large patio for entertaining. Assigned parking. Community swimming pools, tennis courts, & playgrounds. 3403 S Utah St.

Jen Walker 703.675.1566

www.JenWalker.com

OPEN SAT 3/6 & SUN 3/7, 2-4PM



Lorton | \$425,000

Beautifully updated 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath townhome conveniently located in Pohick Village. Hardwood floors on main level, updated kitchen, & spacious primary en-suite bedroom. Lower level features wood-burning fireplace. Relaxing patio. 7581 Aspenpark Rd.

Heidi Burkhardt 703.217.6009

www.RealtorHeidiB.com

OPEN SUN 3/7, 2-4PM



Burke | \$688,000

Carefully maintained split level in a lovely tree-lined neighborhood. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, screened porch, deck, stone patio, and lovely backyard garden for outdoor entertaining. Primary bedroom with sitting room. Close to Burke Lake Park. 7308 Outhaul Lane

Mason Montague Bavin 703.338.6007

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