

Madison Beats Westfield, Improves to 3-0

SPORTS, PAGE 9

Barry Connor #5 passes the ball to Madison receiver Jackson DeSimone #10. Warhawks won, 21-14, the school's first win against Westfield in school history.

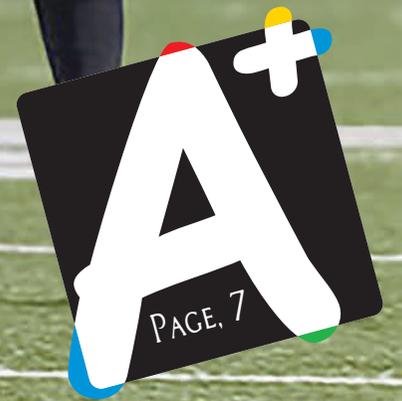


Madison Alumna Publishes Award-winning Book

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A Lawsuit Challenges TJ Admission Changes

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PHOTO BY WILL PALENSCAR/THE CONNECTION

She Keeps On Giving

BY CHAR MCCARGO BAH

This wife, mother, grandmother, entrepreneur and First Lady of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, Inc. (IBPOEW) is always on the move in fundraising and helping her communities in Sterling and Vienna.

Cynthia C. Polk is a multi-talented person who keeps giving and helping the communities. Her professional careers are paralegal for a general practice law firm in Sterling, Va. and an entrepreneur licensed nail technician, sole proprietor. She was also appointed as the third serving Grand Organizer (First Lady) of the organization for the Grand Temple Daughters of Elks in 2018. As an organizer, she developed the Grand Organizer's Department, "Wings of Hope," whose primary purpose is to assist families in crisis, regardless of their social-economic background. Because of COVID-19, many families in her communities needed help because they lost their jobs. By donating her own money, and with the help of the Elks members,



Cynthia C. Polk

they raised the needed funds for the Wings of Hope.

THE WINGS OF HOPE under the leadership of Mrs. Polk has assisted families in getting their children school supplies, medical expenses, rents, groceries and household supplies. In addition, she has sponsored many community service projects in Virginia, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, Kentucky and Indiana since

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Cynthia and Leonard Polk

2019. Some of the community service projects included free dinners for furloughed workers, free food for families in need, annual diaper-bag-drive and meals-on-wheels. Her community services were expanded to include an Easter-Egg-Scavenger-Hunt for the children, food pantry, women and children clothes (closet).

Cynthia and Mr. Prentice Booker are the Directors of the Beauty & Talent Pageant Program for the State of Virginia Elks.

Cynthia brings her organizational and managerial skills in her role

Cynthia C. Polk is always on the move in fundraising and helping her communities in Sterling and Vienna.

as First Lady. Mr. Lawrence Robinson of the IBPOEW says this about Mrs. Polk, "A strong attribute to Cynthia's success is her ability to get along with people, young or old regardless of race, color or religion."

Clarke School of Law in Washington, DC and he earned his Juris Doctor Degree. Mr. Polk is a practicing lawyer and a counsellor for the Supreme Court of the United States of America since 2008. He is also the 14th Grand Exalted Ruler/Grand Patriarch and Chief Executive Officer of the IBPOEW of Jacksonville, Fla.

WHEN CYNTHIA WAS EIGHT years old, her mother told her that she could do anything she sets her mind on. Well, Cynthia took her mom's advice and pursued her passion in helping others. She firmly believes that, if you help one person, then, that is one less person struggling in the world.

Mrs. Cynthia C. Polk keeps giving and giving. She is truly a woman on the move.

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>.

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NEWS

A Lawsuit Challenges TJ Admission Changes

Parents sue to stop TJ's admission policy changes alleging anti-Asian race discrimination.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County School Board and Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand face a new lawsuit filed against them last week in United States District Court in Alexandria. The lawsuit alleges race discrimination against Asian-American students by the School Board and the superintendent in changing the admissions process to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, known as "TJ." The Pacific Legal Foundation filed the civil suit on Wednesday, March 10, on behalf of their client, Coalition for TJ, a group of mostly concerned parents at the high school.

"This type of racial balancing is unconstitutional," said Pacific Legal Foundation attorney Erin Wilcox at a press conference held that morning outside the courthouse.

The Plaintiffs allege FCPS' recently-implemented overhaul of the TJ admissions process changes, which eliminated the long-standing race-neutral standardized admissions test is specifically aimed to reduce the number of incoming Asian-American students to racially balance the school according to the racial demographics of the school. "Up until this year, admissions to TJ have been race-blind," said Wilcox. "Unfortunately, Fairfax County Schools officials apparently believed that this is too many Asian students," she said.

THE COMPLAINT alleges that without the court issuing an injunction, the number of Asian-American students in the incoming TJ Class of 2025 is likely to be cut in half due to the "defendants' stated desire to manipulate TJ's demographics." "The discriminatory intent they've shown is intertwined and an inseparable part of the policies they put in place," Wilcox said.

According to the lawsuit, in the fall of 2020, Superintendent Brabrand and the School Board saw a reporting requirement by the Virginia Department of Education to include the racial/ethnic make-up and socioeconomic diversity of its students, faculty, and applicants as an opportunity "to completely overhaul the TJ admissions process in order to racially balance the school's demographics, going far beyond the minimal reporting requirements."

Located in Alexandria, TJ is a regional Virginia state-chartered magnet school operated by FCPS with students eligible for admission from Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, and Prince William counties, and the City of Falls Church. TJ is ranked the number one public high school in the 2020 National Rankings.

The School Board voted to eliminate the TJ merit-based admissions test at its Oct. 6



PHOTO BY SUSHANT SEHGAL

Erin Wilcox, attorney with Pacific Legal Association



PHOTO BY SUSHANT SEHGAL

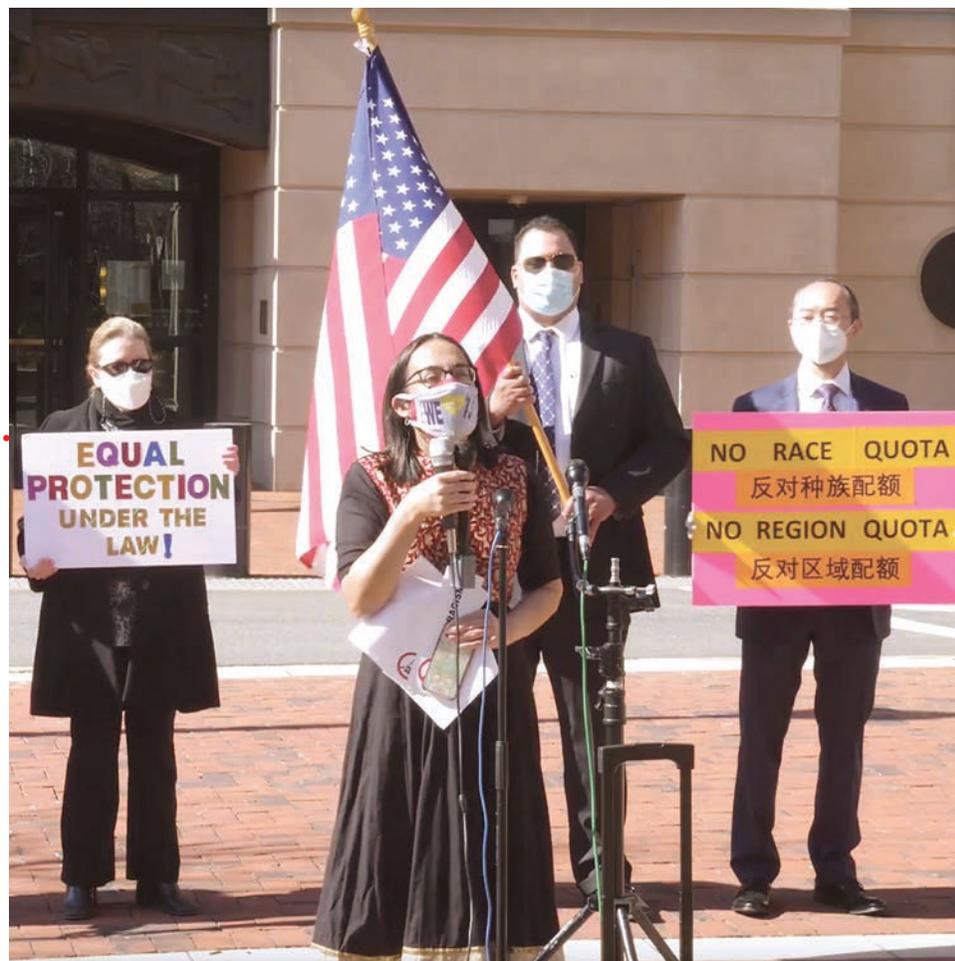
Julia McCaskill, mother of a TJ student and two younger children, one in eighth grade and the other in sixth grade.

work session with no public comment opportunity. The complaint quotes Brabrand during the discussion at the work session with the Board to say that eliminating the merit admissions test "eliminat[es] the testing component that squeezed out talent and squeezed out diversity in our system." Board members said they hoped the new process increased Black and Hispanic representation in the student body.

On Dec. 17, the School Board voted and adopted, with immediate implementation, further changes to the TJ admissions policy applicable to the incoming TJ freshman Class of 2025 and to future years. The Board adopted the challenged admissions policy that limits the number of students accepted from each county feeder middle school to the top 1.5 percent who meet the minimum evaluation criteria-GPA, student portrait sheet, problem-solving essay, and experience factors: including economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, or special education students.

The lawsuit alleges that coupled with the high concentration of Asian-American students at four middle schools -- Carson, Kilmer, Rocky Run, and Longfellow -- and their history of sending large numbers of students to TJ, racial balancing could be accomplished.

According to the complaint, the plaintiffs sought "to vindicate the rights of Asian-American public school children in and around Fairfax County, Virginia, to compete on an equal footing for admission to the nationally-ranked Thomas Jefferson



Asra Nomani, a cofounder of Coalition for TJ and the parent of a senior at TJ, speaks at the press conference.



Pacific Legal Foundation holds a press conference on March 10 announcing that they filed a lawsuit against the Fairfax County School Board and Superintendent Scott Brabrand on behalf of their client, Coalition for TJ, challenging recent changes to the admissions policy at Thomas High School for Science and Technology.

High School for Science and Technology (TJ) without regard to their race." Overall, Plaintiffs' data analysis reported in the complaint that the student body at TJ, at approximately 73 percent Asian-American students under the merit-based race-blind admissions system would drop to 31 percent under the new racial-balancing admissions system for the Class of 2025 with "no other racial group projected to lose seats."

The lawsuit alleges changes to admissions violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment "...a promise that government at every level will treat every American as an individual, not simply as a member of his or her racial group. Policies like the one implemented by FCPS stand in direct opposition to that promise."

THE PLAINTIFFS requested entry of an order requiring the Defendants to return to

the admissions procedure for entry into TJ in the fall of 2020. "The Coalition for TJ is not going to stand for this kind of discrimination against Asian-American students and they are here to fight for equal protection for their children," said Wilcox.

Julia McCaskill, an immigrant, and parent of a TJ student and students in grades 8 and 6, said at the March 10 press conference that TJ does not belong to a certain race or certain group of people. Low admission rates at TJ for Black and Hispanics are the failure of the FCPS Board, according to McCaskill. "They failed those under-represented areas over the decades instead of fixing the pipeline issue. The authorities are stirring up hate against Asian-Americans hoping to slash the number of Asian-American students will fix the overdue school problem."

SEE TJ ADMISSIONS, PAGE 11

VIENNA/OAKTON / MCLEAN CONNECTION ♦ MARCH 17-23, 2021 ♦ 3

Law and Order and Justice

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



COMMENTARY

There is no more important function of government than ensuring public safety. The challenge in a constitutional form of government is achieving safety for the public without jeopardizing the rights and freedom of some to protect others. Public safety has been like a political football with some raising fears about crime and perceived threats to the community. Few is the number of politicians who until recently have been willing to suggest that our laws and institutions of justice require a review of the balance of public safety, the application of laws, and justice.

Over the last several decades there have been many political campaigns built around a suggestion of increasing crime rates and simplistic solutions to keep everyone safe. California started the trend with legislation with the slogan "Three Strikes and You're Out" that increased penalties for repeated offenses. A governor's race in Virginia was won by an underdog candidate with a slogan of "no more pa-

role." Legislative sessions during an election year would see more ideas about expanding the list of crimes for which the state could put someone to death, and the list lengthened of crimes for which mandatory minimum sentences were prescribed. At the same time guns became easier to purchase and own, and every mass shooting was followed by more gun purchases.

Capital punishment, extending the time prisoners were held, and arming more citizens resulted in Virginia being the number one state in putting people to death (first with an electric chair and more recently with lethal injections), increased prison construction, severe over-crowding of prisons, and protests at the state capitol in Richmond of more than 22,000 armed persons.

The disproportionate impact on people of color and in minority communities has become glaringly clear as the videos of body-cam and other devices show us the unfair way some laws have been administered. The slogan "Black

Lives Matter" hit a responsive chord as the inequities in administering laws became obvious.

With the outcome of the elections of 2019 and the election of more progressive members in the House of Delegates, Virginia has become more realistic in its dealing with criminal justice and law and order issues. Abolishing the death penalty was one of the first among many reforms taken. A recognition of the connection between Jim Crow laws of the past and current policing resulted in the repeal of laws that were most strongly felt in the Black community. No-knock warrants were eliminated as were minor offenses that resulted in Black persons being stopped regularly by the police. A bill for the expungement of records of convictions for several misdemeanor crimes passed as did a bill to establish a process for seeking expungement through the courts for other crimes. Major progress was made in the discussion of eliminating mandatory minimum sentences with the likelihood that a bill will be passed in future sessions.

Some will call the actions of the legislature being soft on crime. I believe that a more realistic view is that the state has become less political and more balanced on ways to keep the community safe and to realize justice for more of our citizens. You will hear more of these opposing views in the campaigns coming up this fall.

Celebrate International Women's Month. And then Keep Going

BY KATE VIGGIANO JANICH

If nothing else, the past few years have taught us this: It's International Women's Month 2021 — and we still have a lot of work to do to achieve equality for women in our country.

Only last year in 2020 did Virginia become the 38th state to ratify the long-contested Equal Rights Amendment (the ERA). The ERA is an addition to the US Constitution that would prohibit discrimination based on sex.

Only last year did we elect our first woman Vice President — a leadership position higher than any woman ever before her. Yet, while we celebrated this incredible achievement, we wonder — why is this incredible at all? Should it not be the norm?

And, as we watched Vice President Kamala Harris step up on this platform, the women on the ground around us took significant steps down. Women's progress in the workplace rolled back with alarming speed. Because when

the chips fell and families were forced to make tough choices due to COVID, the women were the ones who took a step back. They left their jobs (that still paid less than men's roles), cut their time down, or put aside their fledgling businesses to care for their families.

Let us be clear.

We are thankful for the women who helped us get where we are today. Our ancestors fought for our right to speak up with a vote. For protecting our bodies, for using our brains and creativity in new ways, for exploring the world's possibilities.

We are thankful for the groups of women and advocacy coalitions who remind us every day the importance and power of #womensupportingwomen.

And yet. We have a lot to do so all the work doesn't go to waste. We must keep moving so that when a woman steps into power, it's considered part of the norm. So that working mothers aren't the ones who step down in their

careers by default.

For our part at Rowan Tree, we are committing to supporting women business owners. We are fighting on behalf of minority groups to achieve equity. We are fostering collaboration and learning opportunities, because we all know that we are #strongertogether. Let's keep going.

Kate Viggiano Janich, Co-Founder, Rowan Tree, a coworking + cogrowth community focused on women, open to all.
www.workrowan.com

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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

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Normandy D. Piccolo, author of the award-winning book, 'Why is Kristyn A. Kutter?'

Madison Alumna Publishes Award-winning Book

Normandy D. Piccolo, James Madison High alumna, is author of 'Why is Kristyn A. Kutter?'

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Normandy D. Piccolo, James Madison High alumna, published writer, book reviewer, advertising copywriter, and freelance journalist, is the author of a book selected for the 2021 In the Margins Book Award: School Library Journal Top 10 Fiction/Non-Fiction and the Fiction Recommendation List for 2021. In an interview with The Connection, asked if the book was a reflection of her life, Piccolo said, "Briefly, yes...but for me, personally, it just hurt." Piccolo authored the award-winning book, "Why is Kristyn A. Kutter?"

Originally published June 2019 and recommended for ages 16+, the 318-page book begins with a trigger warning. It discusses serious and difficult issues regarding self-harm, depression, and suicide. "Some people who are self-harmers can sometimes get triggered by reading other stories about self-harm. It's a negative coping mechanism," Piccolo said.

As the author, Piccolo said, she felt due diligence to warn readers that if they were sensitive to the topic and didn't feel they could handle reading it, then the book was not for them. "You're not ready for it yet," she said.

THE BOOK also arms the reader with resources for crisis intervention through www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

tional centers and online support. In the text, the author notes that self-harmers are not weak people who can't deal with life. They need guidance, reassurance, and support as they learn how to manage better. "There is no shame in reaching out for help, nor is there shame for being a self-harmer," writes

the author.

"Why is Kristyn A. Kutter?" delves quickly into bullying, shame, and how social media, while a good thing most of the time, is "really a bad thing because it can get ugly." Piccolo said she is thankful she went to Madison and became a Warhawk because as hard as it was going through high school and being bullied, going through self-hate, self-harm, and negatives, it helps her now to reach out and help others.

Piccolo's book is real, truthful, and deals with self-harm, depression, and suicide told in a manner where the author does not inject her personal story. The reader can put themselves in a position that is relatable without interference. Piccolo achieves this by writing the content in a Q & A dialogue format and italics telling the actions and thoughts, similar to a theatre script with stage directions.

Piccolo said the way she writes is that she sees a movie screen in front of her, actions happening with the characters, and hears what they say. For her character Kristyn, it downloaded instantly for Piccolo - a girl sitting in a red chair going on a self-discovery journey, having a conversation with herself. "At some point we all find ourselves having conversations with ourselves, whether people will admit it or not, and whether you have it in your head, or have it out loud, sooner or later, as issues start to mount in

SEE PICCOLO, PAGE 8

Let us know about an upcoming event
www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

Fill Us In!

Virtual Public Hearing on the McLean Community Center's FY 2023 Programs

Wednesday, March 24, 2021, 7:30 p.m.

The governing board and staff of the McLean Community Center seek **input from residents** of Dranesville Small District 1A at a Virtual Public Hearing on Programs for FY 2023 (which runs July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023).

This is an opportunity for residents to suggest class offerings, community events, theater programs, art exhibits, youth events and teen activities that are meaningful to the community.

If you would like to speak at the hearing, call the Center to have your name placed on the speakers' list. You may also submit comments to holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov.



www.zoom.us



ZOOM meeting ID: 817 619 39845
Password: 559547



McLean Community Center
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101
703-790-0123, TTY: 711
www.mcleancenter.org

Fairfax Water

Notice of Public Hearing

Resolution Authorizing Acquisition of Property Necessary for Public Purposes by Condemnation or Other Means
April 1, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

The Fairfax County Water Authority ("Fairfax Water") will hold a public hearing pursuant to Va. Code Ann. § 15.2-1903(B) at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 1, 2021, to receive and consider public comments on the proposed acquisition, by condemnation or other means, of the following: a temporary construction easement on a portion of certain real property located at 8435 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031; a temporary construction easement on a portion of certain real property located at 8439 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031; a public street dedication, sight distance and temporary construction easements on a portion of certain real property located at 8501 Lee Highway; and stormwater and temporary construction easements on a portion of certain real property located at 8523A Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031. The subject properties are more particularly described as Fairfax County Tax Map Parcel Nos. 049-3-((1))-0046, 049-3-((1))-0047, 049-3-((1))-0049 and 049-3-((1))-0050C (the "Properties"). Fairfax Water seeks to acquire these easements and this public street dedication on portions of the Properties for public use in order to construct a maintenance facility to serve as a base of operations for water distribution system crews and other staff responsible for water main repair, water system flushing, and other water distribution system maintenance activities.

Following the public hearing, Fairfax Water's Board may vote on or after April 1, 2021, to adopt a Resolution approving the proposed public use and authorizing and directing the acquisition of such dedication and easements on portions of the Properties for the public use by condemnation or other means.

A proposed Resolution and other related information will be made available for public review prior to the public hearing on Fairfax Water's website at www.fairfaxwater.org.

The public hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA 22031. The meeting will be accessible online for remote attendance. To attend remotely, visit fairfaxwater.org/meeting-schedule for more information.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing (in person or remotely) or desiring a copy of the proposed Resolution when it becomes available should call Karen Barnette at (703) 289-6029. Interested parties also may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, to be included in the record of the public hearing.

County Highlights

Actions and words by Fairfax County leadership and citizens.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

In our new series, County Highlights, the Connection spotlights actions and comments by Fairfax County officials, public servants, and local citizens who call the County's 406 square miles home. Interesting fact: If Fairfax County were a city, its population of 1.46 million residents would rank it as the 10th largest city in the United States. The County has more residents than six states—Montana, Alaska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Delaware, Wyoming, and Vermont.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Meeting of March 9, 2021

Zoning Ordinance Modification (zMOD)-Approved to Postpone Decision- 10-0

Following five hours of public testimony on March 9 and action by the Fairfax County Planning Commission the week before, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved to defer its decision on the Zoning Ordinance Modification (zMOD) draft until March 23. Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D-At-Large) said the Board postponed the decision “to make sure we get it right.”

Among those testifying, Jeffrey Landon representing the Fairfax National Estates Homeowners Association in Centreville, said, “Do it honestly with full citizen participation. The scope of zMOD, from the scope of the project statement, does not appear to align with what has been tucked inside the several hundred-page document.” Debbie Smith, Chair of the Mason District Council Board, expressed concern about the more substantive proposals in zMOD that could potentially impact single-family neighborhoods by removing public notice, engagement, and land use matters for Accessory Living Units (ALUs) as well as home-based businesses. She said, “Sensitive ordinance changes like ALUs and home-based businesses should not be casually slipped into the massive zMOD project.” Holly DePaul of Vienna said, “I’m against any regulation on the size, quantity, or content of flags flown.”

Supervisor Pat Herryty (R-Springfield) said that he did not think in his 13 years on the Board, he had ever heard such opposition to proposed changes from as broad a group. “I certainly couldn’t support what’s on the table right now, either the Planning Commission or the staff recommendation,” he said. The zMOD advertised options for consideration can be found on the County website.

Solar Panels-Approved 10-0

The Board approved the motion to lease County-owned property to Sigora Solar, LLC



zMOD - accessory living unit for illustration purposes

to install, operate, and maintain solar photovoltaic panels for on-site electric generation on 22 County locations. It did not represent a complete list of the sites at which Sigora Solar will install solar facilities. Electricity costs for facilities at which PPA solar projects are installed are expected to decrease as soon as the panels are activated. Under its contract with Fairfax County, Sigora Solar offered a fixed rate of \$0.069 per kWh delivered for a 25-year contract term. “This will help in our environmental sustainability and also save County funds on utility bills,” said McKay.

Advertised Tax Rate and Tax Assessments - Approved 9-1, Herryty opposed

The Board approved to authorize advertisement of a brief synopsis of the FY 2022 Budget and a real estate tax rate for FY 2022 of \$1.15 per \$100 of assessed value. “This represents no change from the current real estate tax rate,” said McKay. It was one cent higher though, than County Executive Bryan Hill’s proposed budget plan for FY 2022.

“I think we should be doing what our struggling residents are doing, finding ways to work within our means,” said Herryty. The Board may lower any advertised tax rate, but higher tax rates cannot be imposed without advertising such rates. The approval set the cap at \$1.15.

Tax assessments in the County are rising, leading to a \$224 increase in the average home. The Department of Taxation assesses

tax bills based on the real estate market by analyzing sales of homes of comparable value in comparable neighborhoods.

2021 Forest Pest Management System and Disease Carrying Insect Program- Approved 10-0

The Board approved the County Executive’s recommendation that the Board of Supervisors direct staff take action concerning Fairfax County’s Calendar Year 2021 Forest Pest Management Program. Supervisor Dan Stork (D-Mount Vernon) said, “It’s essential that we manage, not only pests that can impact and severely denude out forests, but also that we look overall at forestry management.”

The Board also approved the annual submission of the Disease Carrying Insect Program, including the continuation of the county-wide mosquito surveillance program, testing mosquitoes for West Nile virus (WNV), Zika virus, and other pathogens, larviciding of mosquito breeding areas, and aggressive community outreach and education program to increase County residents’ awareness of mosquitoes, West Nile virus, Zika virus, and other mosquito-borne diseases, as well as personal protection and prevention methods.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority - No Shutdown Letter - Approved 10-0

The Board approved in a vote a letter con-

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Silver Line Reston Metro Station

veying Fairfax County Board of Supervisors’ Comments on WMATA’s FY 2022 Operating Budget and FY 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Program to WMATA. McKay said there were “a lot of troubling things in the budget proposal.” “You don’t get people back into the system by cutting service and closing stations.”

Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) said the proposal in Metro’s budget to shut down stations in January generated much attention and concern. “The impacts...would be just horrible for our residents and our businesses... Specific to the Silver Line...it would be doubling down on the pain again given that residents and folks that use the Dulles Toll Road are paying for and have been paying for several years the construction of that line.” Alcorn said he was optimistic that with federal help, that “terrible outcome” can be avoided.

News From School Board Member, Rachna Sizemore Heizer Member-at-Large

Prom and Graduation for FCPS Seniors: In her newsletter to County students, families, and staff, School Board Member Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Member-at-Large) said she promised plans were being made for some form of in-person prom and graduation. “Exactly what it will look like depends on the Governor’s restrictions, but everyone is committed to at least giving you those two seminal events despite all you have lost,” Sizemore Heizer said.

Creating Healthy Mother-Daughter Relationships

Local authors and therapists offer thoughts and guidance.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

As a middle school student, Sofie Jacobs was at times mocked by other girls for her fastidious study habits and the good grades she received as a result. She joined an after-school cheerleading and dance class, but was taunted because of her lack of talent. At the time she didn't want to discuss the pain she felt from the rejection by peers, who she now labels as "mean girls." Initially, Sofie rebuffed her mother Meredith's efforts to console her. There was one place, however, where she felt comfortable expressing her feelings without the shame or humiliation: her journals.

"I remember so clearly the night she came home, ran to her room, and slammed the door," said her mother, Meredith. "I could hear her crying, but she didn't want to open the door or talk to me. Finally, she opened the door and handed me the journal where she had poured everything onto the page. After I read it, we were able to talk about it."

"Writing in my journal took away any worries about my mom's immediate reactions," said Sofie, now 24. "It also let me work out my thoughts and have space for myself. I've always thought the most important thing in writing is the eraser. You rarely risk saying something you wish you hadn't said when you're writing."

Journaling became part of the foundation of Meredith's relationship with Sofie. To help others, they created an interactive journal called, "Just Between Us: Mother & Daughter Journal" that is designed to inspire conversations and healthy communication. It will be released next month and is an updated version of their first book, which they published ten years ago.

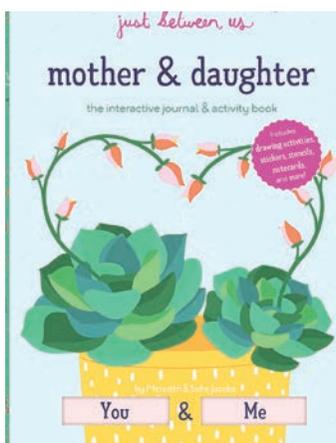
MOTHER-DAUGHTER relationships can be among the most difficult to navigate and maintain, say mental health professionals. Patterns range from an unhealthy closeness to a distant connection that is devoid of emotional intimacy, affecting mental and emotional health.

Enmeshed, is the way that Springfield psychotherapist Joyce Marter describes relationships that lack boundaries. "This is when the mother and daughter have a symbiotic relationship that doesn't allow for healthy separation and independence," she said. "They simply are too close. This can make it difficult for the daughter to develop a healthy sense of self as her own individual person or to separate and individuate into an independent adult."

At the opposite end of the relationship spectrum is a relationship that is characterized by control and disconnection. "The mother and daughter are not emotionally close," said Marter. "This can happen when they haven't had a proper bonding experience, haven't spent enough time together, or don't relate or connect



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MEREDITH AND SOFIE JACOBS
Meredith and Sofie Jacobs of North Potomac use journaling as a way to maintain a healthy relationship.



"Just Between Us: Mother & Daughter Journal" will be released next month and is designed to strengthen mother-daughter relationships.

ly age.

"Try to be emotionally present when you are with your daughter and listen when she is ready to talk," she said. "Resist the impulse to provide advice or solutions. You can ask, 'Is there anything I can do to help?'"

During teen and preteen years, mother-daughter relationships can be difficult to navigate. "Give choices whenever possible. Set expectations [and] reasonable limits that have reasonable end dates," said Stone. "Let your daughter know the consequence in advance. For example, cell phones are a privilege, if you do not follow through on responsibilities, you will lose your phone privilege."

Securing and harmonious relationships requires parental guidance, but also space to flourish, says Stone. "Detaching with love does not mean we don't care about our loved ones," she said. "Rather, it means having a healthy separation in relationships where you do not try and control. We must separate enough to allow them to make their own mistakes so they can learn. They need to be free to be their authentic selves instead of living as we hope or expect them to be."

Infusing an element of light-heartedness into a mother-daughter relationship is an important element that the Jacobs express in their books.

"We thought we could help other mothers and daughters have the kind of conversations we had through our journal, but insert the humor that Sofie and I share to make it fun," said Meredith. "There is a lot of trust that is built through those silly moments that help form the foundation for when it's time to have harder conversations."

CALENDAR

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Virginia Journalist of the Year

Marina Qu of McLean High School wins top state honor.

McLean High School senior Marina Qu has been named the 2021 Virginia Journalist of the Year by the Virginia Association of Journalism Teachers and Advisers. Qu serves as editor-in-chief of The Highlander newsmagazine and The Tartan literary magazine; she has been on both publications' staff for three years.

In her Journalist of the Year portfolio, Qu wrote, "Our role as student-journalists did not diminish in spite of the global emergency that was unfolding—our responsibilities were heightened. We overcame challenges that we didn't know we would ever face. And we did it against all odds."

Qu will compete for the Journalism Education Association's national Journalist of the Year award, to be announced in April.

According to her profile in The Highlander online, "Marina Qu enjoys writing about local news relevant to the community and collaborating with other reporters. Outside of journalism, she loves to spend time with her little sister Regina and taste food from around the world!"

Pratika Katiyar, the editor-in-chief of tjToday at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, came in second in the Virginia competition.



Marina Qu
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HIGHLANDER

Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Welcomes New Executive Director

The Shepherd's Center Northern Virginia (SCNOVA) Board of Directors has named Wendy Finn as the nonprofit's new Executive Director.



Wendy Finn,
Executive Director, SCNOVA

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCNOVA

"The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia has grown substantially over the past two years, expanding into Reston and Herndon and then merging with the Shepherd's Center of Great Falls. We knew that we needed an experienced leader with very strong non-profit management credentials and a commitment to serving seniors. Ms. Finn checked all our 'boxes' and she brings warmth and considerable talent to our administrative team and dedicated corps of volunteers," said Scott Schroth, Chair of the Board of Directors.

Finn joined the Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia as Executive Director in March 2021. She also serves as a board member for Empowering the Ages, which nurtures intergenerational relationships. She was previously the Executive Direc-

tor of a Village, one of the many villages across the country providing services to seniors to help them successfully age in place.

Finn earned a Bachelor's Degree from Brandeis University and a Nonprofit Management Executive Certificate at Georgetown University.

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

Piccolo

FROM PAGE 5

your life, there's just no getting around it." Piccolo's character Kristyn records the conversations with herself.

"Kristyn takes a sip of soda.

A. "Cutting was something Maddison, and I did in private. We never really talked 'bout it."

Q. "What happened that pushed you to self-harm for the first time?"

Kristyn remains silent.

Q. "Was it your break-up with Jamey?"

Kristyn's palms begin to sweat. She wipes them on her jeans to hide her nervousness.

A. "It's complicated."

According to Piccolo, she wanted Kristyn to be real in a way that a teenager or an adult who was a cutter still dealing with hurt could put themselves in that red chair and relate to Kristyn but at the same time relate to their personal issues, things going on with them and their hurts.

Piccolo acknowledged she has no method to her writing; she never does outlines. She sits down and bangs it out, rarely going back, maybe an edit or two tweaking a word here and there. Sometimes she uses an old typewriter. Other times, she sits outside up against a tree and writes the words in a notebook.

PICCOLO said a lot of people had given her controversy because of the negative

topic. People will not interview her about self-harm or talk about it because it is a negative topic.

As a freshman at James Madison High School, Piccolo said she spent a lot of time huddled in a library's back corner. She would stare up at all the books around her and say to herself, "One day, I'm going to write something that's going to help somebody not feel the way I feel right now. It took me a long time to get to that point...through my early twenties. It was really rough, very rough...If I had read something like Kristyn, maybe know things, I wouldn't have looked at those years so negatively."

A. "Sometimes I get a rush from cutting, and it's the best feeling in the world when it happens. But..."

Q. "But?"

A. "Coming down can feel even worse."

"My hope is that people, no matter what age, will be able to look in the mirror and see themselves the way God sees them. Beautiful. Unique. Strong. Stop seeing themselves the way the bullies may have convinced them to believe they are. In today's world of cancel culture, I believe it is time to cancel 'negativity' and bring back a 'positive outlook' in one's onward movement through life," Piccolo says.

"Why is Kristyn A. Kutter?" is available on Amazon in paperback and on Kindle.

WEEK IN MCLEAN

McLean Community Center Holds a Virtual Public Hearing

The McLean Community Center (MCC) is asking residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville, who pay a real estate tax surcharge to support the center, to "Fill Us In" on what kinds of new programs and services they would like to see offered and/or improved upon in the planning for the center's FY2023 fiscal year. Residents can access an online survey to submit their ideas, here: <https://conta.cc/3ckvdsU>.

In addition, MCC is holding a Virtual Public Hearing on FY 2023 Programs at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, over Zoom (ZOOM Meeting ID: 817 619 39845; Password: 559547). The hearing is the first step in planning for the FY2023 budget cycle, which begins July 1, 2022 and ends June 30, 2023.

Tax district residents who plan to log in to the hearing and wish to speak are asked to call the Center at 703-744-9348, TTY: 711, to have their names placed on the speakers' list; however, speakers are not required to sign up in order to speak. Residents also may submit comments by mail, email (holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov) or in person up to seven days after the hearing.

For more information, call the Center at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, or visit: www.mcleancenter.org.

McLean Community Foundation Announces Grant Request Deadline

The McLean Community Foundation is accepting grant requests for its current grants cycle until April 1, 2021. Applications can be found on the MCF's website at mcfonline.org.

The McLean Community Foundation awarded \$105,950 in grants that benefitted the McLean Community in 2020. SHARE, Inc of McLean received \$25,000 to help those with food insecurity. McLean Cares, a new organization designed to not only provide meals to those less fortunate but to also purchase these meals from local McLean restaurants that are struggling to survive was awarded \$15,000. Additionally, The Women's Center that has seen a 25 percent increase in new patients as well as a 40 percent increase in need among patients who were there prior to the pandemic received a \$25,000 grant. Additionally grantees include Capital Caring Health, Clemyjontri Park, Our Minds Matter and several area schools.

PHOTOS BY WILL PALENSCAR/THE CONNECTION



Mikal Legall #28 tries to evade Madison's John Hurley #22.



Barry Connor and Madison defeated the Westfield Bulldogs for the first time in school history.



Westfield QB Toviel Jung #12 avoids the tackle of Madison's Dylan Wilkinson #7.

Madison Beats Westfield, Improves to 3-0

The Westfield Bulldogs traveled to Vienna for a conference football game with the Madison Warhawks on March 12. Early in the first quarter Mikal Legall would run in from 2 yards out to give Westfield a 7-0 advantage. Later in the second quarter, Westfield would take a 14-0 advantage when quarterback Toviel Jung ran in from 7 yards on a quarterback keeper. However 6 minutes later Madison would get on the board when Connor Sevy kicked a field goal. With Madison trailing 14-3 and Westfield driving on the ensuing series, Westfield QB Toviel Jung

was intercepted by Justin Williams after Jung's pass was tipped at the line of scrimmage and Williams would take the ball 65 yards for a Warhawks score with 2:34 to play in the first half. After a scoreless third quarter Connor Sevy would kick his second field goal of the game pulling Madison to within a point, 14-13 with 8:28 to play in the game. Madison QB Connor Barry would score from 1 yard out with 1:35 to play in the game. Madison would opt for a two point conversion which was successful and the Warhawks would hold on for a 21-14 win, the school's first against Westfield in school history.

Westfield falls to (1-2) (0-1), while Madison improves to (3-0) (2-0). Madison will host Marshall on March 19, and Westfield will host Centreville. Chantilly sits atop the conference at (4-0)(1-0), Centreville (4-1)(2-1), and Oakton is (1-3) (0-2).

— WILL PALENSCAR



Barry Connor #5 passes the ball to Madison receiver Jackson DeSimone #10.



Justin Williams #8 intercepts the pass of Westfield's Toviel Jung and returns it for a touchdown.



Braden Holt #32 is in motion before Madison's QB snaps the ball.

Toviel Jung passes the ball to a Westfield receiver.



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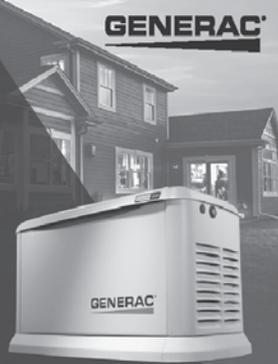
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CALENDAR

FRIDAY/MARCH 19

The Old Firehouse 5th and 6th Grader Party. Virtual: The Glow Party. 7-9 p.m. Gather your family and dance the night away with the Old Firehouse with our virtual dance party. Request some of your favorite songs, dance along with us and the music and stay for some games and surprises along the way. To register, visit: www.oldfirehouse.org or call 703-448-8336, TTY: 711.

MARCH 20 TO APRIL 11

Fairfax County's Festival Central at the Fairfax County Visitor Center. The official Fairfax County Visitor Center in Tysons Corner Center (on 2nd level outside Nordstrom) is "Festival Central" in Fairfax County. The public is invited to stop in for free souvenirs, Festival schedules and the latest information on activities throughout the region. On March 27, the Center will host its annual National Cherry Blossom Festival Day with a special event from 1-3 p.m. with craft demonstrations, free gifts, and more. (<http://www.fxva.com/plan-your-trip/visitor-center>; 703-752-9500)

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.

MARCH 20-APRIL 17

The 2021 Vienna Photo Show will be on display at the Vienna Community Center March 20 through April 17. The exhibit will be open 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays. Applications to the annual photo show will be accepted 3-8 p.m. Thursday,

March 18, and 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday, March 19. The entrance fee is \$5. Assigned drop-off times will be staged in 10-minute intervals to allow for social distancing and to keep the number of people in the Vienna Community Center at one time to a minimum. Visit viennava.gov/photo to register and for additional instructions and details.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 24

The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. Sponsored by The Alden. Join us for (the) Unruly Theatre Project's virtual improv shows from the comfort of your couch! Register online and a Zoom link and password for the show will be emailed to you. Participants must register two hours in advance of showtime. Register online at www.aldentheatre.org. <call> Wednesday/March 24

MARCH 26-28

"Dear Elizabeth." Presented by The Vienna Theatre Company. The play by Sarah Ruhl is drawn from one of the greatest correspondences in literary history between two of the 20th century's most brilliant American poets, Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell. Sarah Ruhl adapts more than 400 published letters spanning decades, continents and political eras, tells the tale of an unconventional friendship and intimacy both platonic and romantic, and brings it all to life on the stage. This moving, innovative play starts in 1947, ends in 1977 and describes a love that resists easy definition. The performance will be filmed live and aired online as follows: Friday and Saturday - March 26 and 27, April 2 and 3 evenings at 7:30 p.m. Ticket Prices: \$15. Purchase online at <https://vtc.booktix.com>.

FRIDAY/MARCH 26

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

SATURDAY/MARCH 27

GMU School of Dance. Gala Concert. 8 p.m. George Mason University's School of Dance announced its 2021 Mason Dance Company Gala Concert, featuring Sunlit Song by choreographer and longtime Mason Faculty Susan Shields and a world premiere by legendary choreographer Hope Boykin. Visit: <https://dance.gmu.edu/mason-dance-fete>.

TJ Admissions Challenged by Lawsuit

FROM PAGE 3

Asra Nomani, a cofounder of Coalition for TJ and parent of a senior at TJ, said during the press conference that she came to the United States at age four from India. Nomani said she was proud to be working the past nine months with families who came to the United States from communist China and eastern Europe, India, and other places where they faced injustice. "They never could have imagined that they would face injustice in America," she said.

A Fairfax County Public Schools spokesperson provided a statement saying, "The process continues to be race-neutral and merit-based... As a Governor's school, we value diversity and believe that it contributes to the richness of the education at TJHSST."

Parents of 17 middle school students filed the initial lawsuit in November 2020 to overturn the School Board's decision to eliminate the standardized admission test for TJ and the \$100 application fee. On Feb. 2, a Fairfax Circuit Court Judge John M. Tran denied the parents' request to require mandatory standardized testing in the admissions process. Tran said, "The debate over standardized testing belongs to educational professionals."

On Friday, March 12, Wilcox said that the next step would be the defendants' response, either an Answer or a Motion to Dismiss, in approximately 60 days. "I've seen in various news articles that FCPS issued a statement on Wednesday. Their legal response to our complaint will be one of the documents mentioned," Wilcox said.

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A Shot in the Arm



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Literally and figuratively. After a year or so living the pandemic life; staying at home/quarantining, wearing a mask, social distancing, washing my hands and watching the death toll from covid-19 top 500,000 - in the United States alone, I recently became of the lucky ones to have been injected with a vaccine. I have to wait another two weeks to get my second shot. No worries. I have some protection now, but according to Dr. Fauci, the second/follow up shot increases one's protection "tenfold." It wouldn't exactly be foolish to throw caution to the wind - and reintegrate back into society (depending upon where you live), but it seems premature and irresponsible to risk being stupid when in another two weeks, I could be smart.

My wife, Dina, also recently shot, has been very smart all along, especially as it concerns my actual standing in the world. (Moreover, she has no plans to step out until she receives her second shot.) Belonging in the special comorbidity group; presumably, a 66-year old with cancer/weakened immune system, I presented a very appealing target for the virus. I mean, my immune system is already compromised and with occasional breathing problems side-effected by my thyroid cancer medication, I was potentially easy pickings. As such, Dina refused to give me passage out of our house. Victor Laszlow had a better chance of leaving Casablanca than I did of leaving Burtonsville.

But soon it appears I will have my own "letters of transit." However, Dina has already informed me that I won't be returning to my former errand-running ways. She intends to continue ordering food online from the grocery store - and then drive to pick it up contact-less in their parking lot. Actually, I might be allowed to go that far since I'd be remaining in the car and still wearing a mask while popping the trunk and keeping my distance as the groceries are loaded into the boot. We'll see; we're still negotiating. But definitely not until I receive my second shot. In the interim, I imagine our lives will change very little. Thanks to the vaccine though, there is hope that once again, I'll be able to interact with people, places and things.

But return I shall and relieved I will be. However, having lung cancer, and/or thyroid cancer which has metastasized to the lungs, in the midst of a pandemic with a virus that often locates in the lungs and creates breathing/pulmonary problems - even with the two shots, is still as scary and risky as it gets, especially if you're of a certain age as I am. In two weeks, I'll have received my booster shot, and I'll have a lot less to worry about, thankfully. And for a cancer patient still undergoing treatment with a less than a "normal" life expectancy anticipated, being fully vaccinated is as good as it gets. And I suppose I can live with that, live being the operative word.

Having cancer, irrespective of the type, your diagnosis/prognosis, is pretty damn difficult. It impacts every facet of your life. The thought (your reality) is never far from your conscious mind. And once you become a member of this less than exclusive club (more every day, unfortunately), a club that nobody wants to join, there are more risks to your life than you ever imagined, and many more for which you have absolutely no awareness. Having an external complication, like a virus, with variants that seem to spread rapidly; which have now infected over 30,000,000 Americans, and an infection for which there's no specific cure, and seems to have its greatest negative impact on people exactly like me (age and disease) is about as foreboding as it could possibly be. And with no place to hide, other than in your own home - with no visitors allowed, a precaution most recommended (to invoke the syntax of Hercule Poirot, "the greatest detective in the world") has made many of us impatient and perhaps a bit tense. I can, as many healthcare professionals have said, almost see the light. Hopefully, it will be July 4th of this year as the President has suggested and not July 4th of next year.

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



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***FABULOUS* 4BR/4.5 BA** colonial home on 3 levels with a loft in sought-after **Hunting Ridge** location! This beautiful home includes wonderful gourmet kitchen with brand new stainless steel appliances; freshly painted; refinished hardwood floors; lovely deck off the kitchen - perfect for entertaining; large LL rec room with new carpeting, plus guest room, full bath and storage; gorgeous owner's suite with luxury bath featuring quartz counters, separate shower and soaking tub; upper level laundry; 2-car garage; super location - **McLean HS pyramid!**

809 Balls Hill Road, McLean

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