

# Great Falls CONNECTION

At the California home of David Karpeles, who owns the largest private manuscript library, Reston author Margaret Rodenberg reads the original handwritten manuscript of "Clisson et Eugénie" by Napoleon Bonaparte. Rodenberg will share her research and the editing and publishing process with the Great Falls Writer's Group on April 8.

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MARCH 31 - APRIL 6, 2021

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# Local Author Finds Napoleon on St. Helena

**Margaret Rodenberg launches a new book of historical fiction.**

BY CHRISTINA TYLER WENKS

**Y**ears of research and travel culminate in an adaptation of a romantic novel started by a young Napoleon Bonaparte. “Finding Napoleon” is not a war story, but a glimpse into the mind of the military leader as a writer and father as well as a few of the strong women he loved.

Creating Reston resident Margaret Rodenberg’s work of historical fiction is a lifelong story in itself. A childhood in France cultivated a curiosity that led to travel throughout Europe to learn histories, working with the Napoleonic Historical Society, and visiting the California home of David Karpeles, who owns the world’s largest private manuscript library, and reading an original copy of “Clisson et Eugénie,” written by 26-year-old Napoleon.

In the semi-autobiographical “Clisson et Eugénie,” Napoleon illustrates Clisson as an idealistic man who grew into his potential and during his last years reflects on his acts of genius and mistakes. After being stripped

of power and exiled, Clisson must accept what he was and who he is.

RODENBERG set out to finish the love story that Napoleon started, which meant she had to learn how Napoleon would have finished the tale himself.

In 2011, Rodenberg traveled from Cape Town, South Africa, via a British mail-transport ship to the South Atlantic’s St. Helena Island where Napoleon lived before he died. The remote volcanic island had no airport at that time and required a five-day journey, providing fertile territory for the novelist’s imagination.

“I was quite surprised to feel a presence there ... that I could not have found in Paris or Corsica or his school,” said the first-time novelist about being alone in the house where Napoleon lived and among his belongings. “I could feel what it was like and the great sad spirit of what this person was at the end of his life.”

Napoleon’s years on St. Helena provided time for introspection and reversing wrongs. The twice-exiled emperor wrote



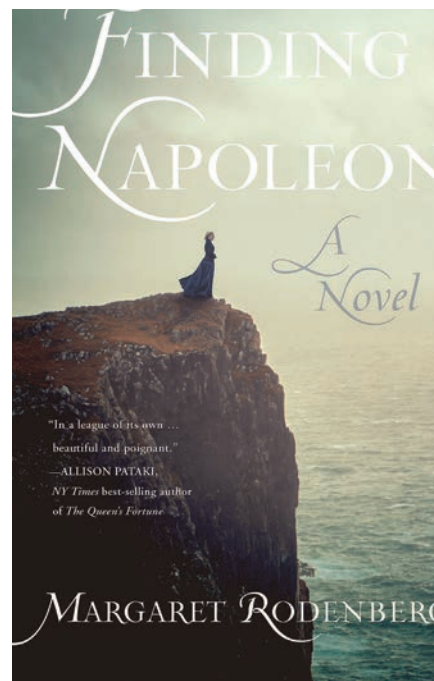
PHOTO BY BERT HELFSTEIN

**Margaret Rodenberg will share her research and the editing and publishing process with the Great Falls Writer’s Group on April 8.**

his memoirs, which Rodenberg considers a cathartic attempt at rehabilitating his reputation. His writings helped Rodenberg see the military leader’s personality strengths, flaws, and contradictions.

Rodenberg researched characters of the people around Napoleon, such as merchants Saul Solomon and William Balcombe, as well as Napoleon’s last lover, Albine de Montholon, whose husband betrayed the exiled leader.

“I was very fond of the character, Albine, who bore him a child,” said Rodenberg. Albine’s husband is suspected to have poisoned Napoleon. “I filled in motivation and



**The book will be released on April 6 — a month before the 200th anniversary of the emperor’s death.**

created action within holes where there is no historical validity,” said Rodenberg.

Another historical character is Toby, a slave gardener with whom Napoleon spoke often on the Balcombe’s property. Rodenberg’s research found that Napoleon gave Toby 20 gold coins and tried to set him free.

“I hope in some small way my novel gives voice to St. Helena’s enslaved population who are too often forgotten in Napoleonic stories,” said Rodenberg.

“Finding Napoleon” is written from three perspectives — Napoleon, Albine, and Clisson.

Rodenberg said that Napoleon took “Clisson et Eugénie” to St. Helena and intended to finish his novel, but did not. The original manuscript ends with Clisson’s death. In Rodenberg’s novel, Napoleon rewrites the ending to the book.

**THE BOOK** will be released on April 6 — a month before the 200th anniversary of the emperor’s death.

Rodenberg will share her research and the editing and publishing process with the Great Falls Writer’s Group on April 8.

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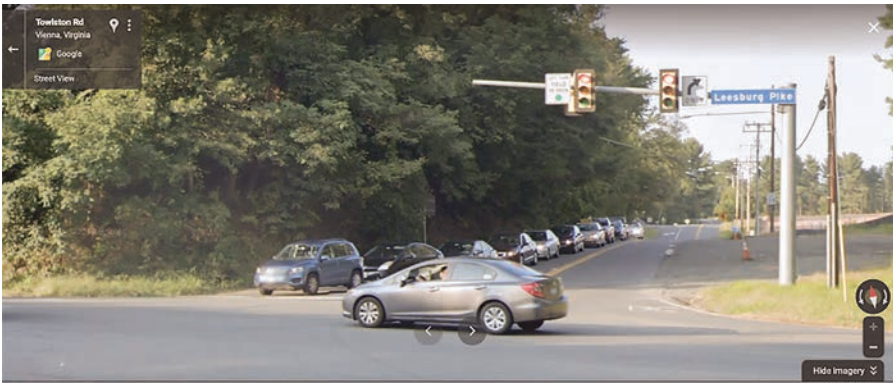
## Great Falls Scouts Help Clean-up Lake Fairfax Trails

Cub Scouts from Wolf Den No 7 in Pack 673 of Great Falls cleaned up a portion of the trails at Lake Fairfax Park on March 11. They collected 7 bags of trash. Den Chief Anna T, from Boy Scout Troop 7, led the younger scouts in this effort. Pictured: Yianni L, Jaxon P, Nathan S, Dominick C, Henry A, Obidiah C, Sebastian G, Paul J, Erickson W, Albert L, Henry B, Anna T.



Traffic backed up attempting to turn onto VA-7 off Towlston Road.

IMAGE CONTRIBUTED



## Intersection Under Scrutiny

**GFCA holds Town Hall on Rt. 7 and Towlston Road Intersection, McLean and Great Falls residents invited.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Following a fatal December crash at the Towlston Road intersection with Leesburg Pike (VA-7) and mounting safety concerns, local community members requested that the Great Falls Citizens Association host a virtual Town Hall Meeting. On Wednesday, March 31, officials with the Virginia Department of Transportation including Bill Cutler, Northern Virginia District engineer for the Virginia Department of Transportation overseeing the Route 7 Corridor Improvements, will address traffic operation and safety improvement concerns voiced by attendees. The meeting is open to community members in McLean and Great Falls.

"A lot of issues have come up and have to do with safety and intersection design, and whether they're going to be adequate to protect people," said Michael Barclay, Transportation Committee co-chair for GFCA.

Barclay said one of the first issues is when VDOT completes the intersection, will there be an adequate sight line for vehicles turning left from southbound Towlston Road onto eastbound VA-7 towards Tysons.

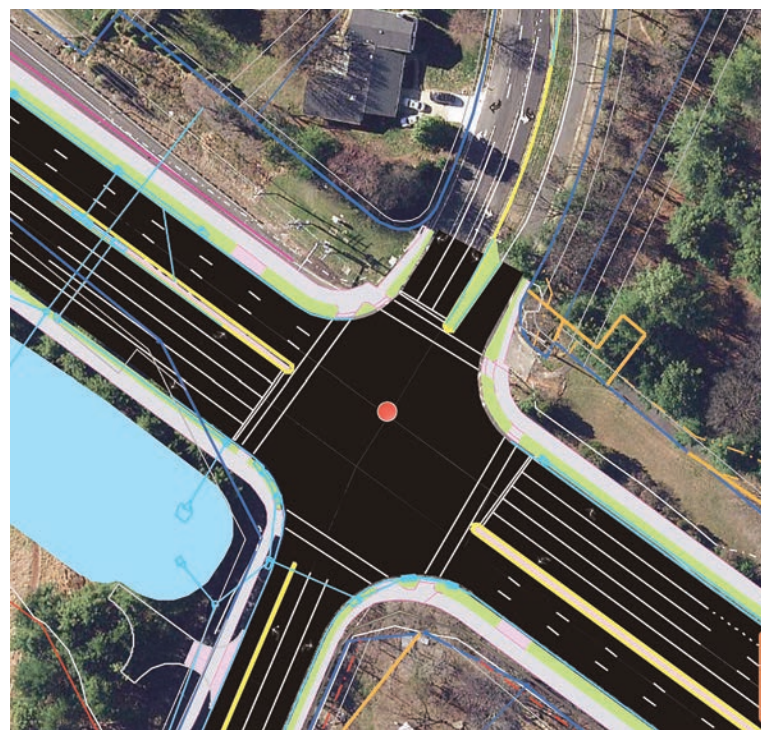
**VEHICLE TURNING PATHS** and encroachment into the adjacent lane, especially for larger vehicles, is a second concern. Trucks and buses on VA-7 heading west turning onto Towlston Road northbound towards the Arden development may be a safety concern. "That lane doesn't really have enough clearance for larger trucks and buses to clear the turn safely. They have to swing over into the other lane," Barclay said.

A third issue is the VA-7 queue length for the signalized intersection approaching Towlston seems too short to handle the traffic volume.



IMAGE CONTRIBUTED

VA-7 and Towlston Road pre-construction



SCREENSHOT

VA-7 and Towlston Road post-construction

Compounding concerns are the excessive delays on Towlston Road at the traffic signal light. According to Barclay, vehicles are backed up, particularly in the morning, waiting to turn left onto VA-7 toward Tysons. "And a really bad problem is going to get worse," he said.

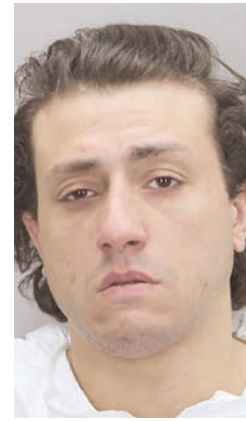
According to Barclay, one hundred twenty-four residences are being completed in the new Arden community by Toll Brothers. Its single entrance at Tate Modern Lane feeds onto Towlston Road, feet from the intersection, which bottle-necks and leads to greater congestion. That will create a growing assault on Georgetown Pike, particularly given its status

as a historic and scenic byway. Each person must register to attend the Town Hall Meeting. To register for the event, click on the URL: GFCA Town Hall Registration - Route 7/Towlston Rd Intersection or log onto gfca.org and click on the registration link under Upcoming Events.

The VDOT January 2020 improvement description for Towlston Road states: "Shift Route 7 away from Andrew Chapel Cemetery (located at the southwest corner of Trap Road and Route 7). Install retaining wall and new sidewalk along southbound Towlston Road. Add right turn and left-turn lanes on southbound Towlston

Road. Upgrade existing signal and optimize signal timing. Lengthen left and right turn lanes on Route 7. Allow U-turns on Route 7 in both directions. Construct ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps and mark pedestrian crosswalks at the intersection."

**THE INTERSECTION PROJECT** is part of the larger Route 7 Corridor Improvements between Reston Avenue and Jarrett Valley Drive in Fairfax County. It includes widening the road from four to six lanes, adding 10-foot wide shared-use paths on both sides and making major intersection improvements along the corridor.



The suspect is being held at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center without bond.

POLICE PHOTO

## Detectives Make Arrest in Tysons Sexual Assault

**Investigation continues, detectives seek witnesses.**

A 27-year-old man is facing charges after sexually assaulting a woman who was sitting on a bench near a shopping center in Tysons. Officers were called to the 1500 block of Cornerside Boulevard for a report of a sexual assault on Mar. 4. The victim was sitting on a bench around 4 p.m. the day prior when the unknown man approached her, engaged her in conversation then sexually assaulted her. The woman screamed and was able to leave. As she walked away, the man continued to follow her. A bystander saw the man following her and escorted her inside a business.

As Major Crimes Bureau detectives were working on the case, the man was seen in the area again on Mar. 12. Officers responded and took Mohamed Souidi, no fixed address, into custody. He was charged with object sexual penetration and abduction. He is being held at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center without bond.

Detectives continue to investigate this case and are asking for

your help. Considering the time and location of the assault, detectives believe there may have been people in the area who unknowingly witnessed this crime. If you have any information about this case, or you recognize this man and believe you may have been assaulted by him, please call detectives at 703-246-7800, option 3. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone - 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477), by text - Type "FCCS" plus tip to 847411, and by web - Click HERE. Download our Mobile tip411 App "Fairfax Co Crime Solvers". If you would like to be contacted, please leave your name and phone number in the comment section when submitting a tip. Tipsters are eligible for cash rewards of \$100 to \$1,000 if their information leads to an arrest.

Victim specialists from Major Crimes Bureau's Victim Services Division have been assigned to this case to ensure the victim is receiving appropriate resources and assistance - FCPD Public Affairs Bureau says in a press release.



# Fairfax Supervisors Condemn Anti-Asian Racism

**A**cknowledging the large and vibrant Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community in Fairfax County, Chairman Jeff McKay introduced a resolution on March 23, passed unanimously by the Board of Supervisors, condemning violence and discrimination against AAPIs.

The resolution requires that the County and schools intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services. The Chairman acknowledged that as Covid-19 spread this past year, reports of anti-Asian discrimination, racism, hate crimes, violence, and scapegoating, sadly, increased nation-wide. McKay, speaking to his resolution, said "We hear your concern and anxieties and believe any acts of racism against Asian Americans are unacceptable. In Fairfax County, no matter where you are from, you are welcome in our community."

Fairfax County counts nearly 20 percent of its population as AAPI, with Korean and Vietnamese as two of its five most spoken languages. Heritage from the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, India and other AAPI origins add richly to the blended Fairfax County symbolized by the commemoration Korean Bell Garden at Meadowlark Gardens, the Asian American Festival in Fairfax City, and many other cultural events.

— SUSAN LAUME



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION  
**Bell of Peace & Harmony, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, installed in 2011 to commemorate the equality, opportunity, and freedom Koreans once found in the United States**

# Joining Forces Against Hate

Local legislators part of newly formed Asian American and Pacific Islanders Caucus.

By SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

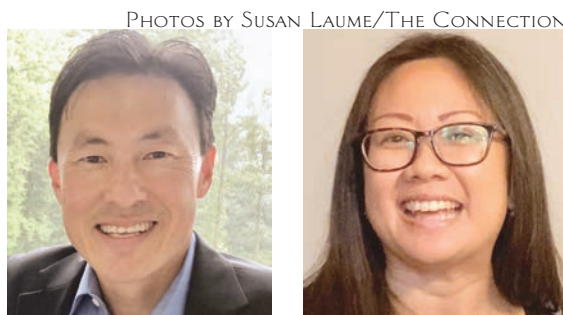
**L**ast week local delegates Mark L. Keam (D-35) and Kathy KL Tran (D-42), joined other Virginia General Assembly members with Asian American heritage to speak out against violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

This week they announced the formation of the General Assembly's Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) and their participation as "founding members."

The formation of the caucus follows the March 16 mass shootings in Georgia that targeted Asian American women and businesses, and the increase of reports of assaults against Asian Americans across the country over the past year. In the Georgia spa shootings, six of the eight killed were Asian American women. The advocacy group, "Stop AAPI Hate" reports 3,795 hate incidents targeting AAPIs in all 50 states and Washington DC between March 2020 and February 2021; including 49 reports of assault in Virginia.

Del. Keam indicated they expect their developing caucus to assure that AAPI voices are heard in the policy and lawmaking process. Legislators will hold virtual "listening sessions" in Northern Virginia, central Virginia, and the Hampton Roads areas in April to hear from citizens on the support needed, on dates to be announced. Future legislation could address equality in the justice system, government contracting, and language support.

In an emotional response, Del. Tran spoke of the



**Delegate Mark Keam, born in South Korea, spent childhood in Vietnam and Australia, coming to California as a teenager; attended the University of California; earned a law degree from the Hastings College of the Law. Virginia delegate since 2009.**

sadness she felt that her young son, at age eight, already understands the meaning of racism, experiencing taunting in school due to his Asian appearance. She spoke of her father's caution to her, that no matter what she accomplishes, she will always be seen first as an Asian; just as others in black and brown communities are seen first for their appearance. She looks to the Caucus and all Virginians to stand up against racism and violence.

**Delegate Kathy KL Tran, born in Vietnam, at 2 years old fled with her parents as boat refugees. A two-term Virginia Delegate running for her third term this year; graduate of Duke University; Masters degree in social work from the U of Michigan.**

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCC

**A new Father-Daughter Silent Disco Dance will be held from 7-8:30 p.m. on Friday, April 30.**

## McLean Father-Daughter Dance Reimagined

The program staffers at McLean Community Center have reimagined the center's popular Father-Daughter Dance that was held in 2019 but was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic. This year, a new Father-Daughter Silent Disco Dance will be held from 7-8:30 p.m. on Friday, April 30, in the center's parking lot. Admission is \$25 per participant; \$15 for MCC district residents. Preregistration is required. The center is located at 1234 Ingleside Avenue.

The dance is for fathers and daughters of all ages. Parti-

cipants will be required to wear masks and social distancing will be enforced. Each couple or group will be assigned to their own dedicated spaces and will be given headphones with a choice of three, family friendly music genres. DJ Big-Court will provide music and entertainment and participants will receive snack bags and glow products to help get the party started.

For more information or to register, call 703-390-0123, TTY: 711, or visit, [www.mclean-center.org](http://www.mclean-center.org).



**Yuriko Yamaguchi, A new heaven and a new earth, 2017**



**Alonzo Davis, Navigating Climate Change**

## McLean Project for the Arts to Open Two New Exhibitions

McLean Project for the Arts (MPA) will open its two newest exhibitions on April 1, 2021. Navigating Climate Change, Extended by Alonzo Davis (Atrium Gallery) and Intium Novum: Humanity's End As A New Beginning featuring artist Yuriko Yamaguchi and writer Mineke Schipper (Emerson Gallery) run through June 10, 2021. A Virtual Opening Exhibition Reception and Artist Talk will take place on April 8, 2021 at 7 p.m. Both exhibitions were underwritten by Donna and Bruce Berlage.

"These two exhibitions both bring a focus to our larger world, as Alonzo Davis is an artist who successfully brings a wide angle, panoramic view of the world to all the work he creates," said MPA Director of Exhibitions Nancy Sausser. "Organized around a concern about climate change and the future of our planet, our second exhibit is inspired

by end of the world mythologies from around the world, in a collaboration between artist Yuriko Yamaguchi and writer Mineke Schipper."

Images of both Navigating Climate Change, Extended and Intium Novum will be available on the MPA website beginning April 1. The Atrium Gallery Exhibition (Navigating Climate Change, Extended) will be available for viewing during McLean Community Center operating hours. The Emerson Gallery exhibit (Intium Novum) will be open for visitors with timed passes on Thursdays from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Visit [mpaart.org](http://mpaart.org) to reserve your timed pass.

To register for the April 8 Virtual Opening Exhibition Reception and Artist Talk please visit <https://tinyurl.com/mpaspringexhibits>.

For more information, visit [www.mpaart.org](http://www.mpaart.org).

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# BULLETIN BOARD

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

## MARCH 31 TO APRIL 4

Holy Week in Vienna. 10 a.m. to noon. At The Church of the Good Shepherd (United Methodist), 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. A special "Holy Week Experience" will be held indoors, marking the first time this year the church building has been open to the public. Good Friday and Easter services will online only. Visit the website [https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/goodshepherdva/files/holy\\_week\\_2021\\_announcement\\_revised.pdf](https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/goodshepherdva/files/holy_week_2021_announcement_revised.pdf).

## APRIL 4, 2021

Live Online Easter Service. 9-10 a.m. Online. Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Lewinsville Presbyterian Church invites the community to join its Live, Online Easter Worship. You may access the service on the website, YouTube Channel, or Vimeo Channel (search "Lewinsville Presbyterian"). After the service ends, the video will be archived and available on each of these platforms. Visit the website: <https://www.lewinsville.org/live>

## GOLDEN GIRLS SEEKS PLAYERS

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna.

For more information, visit the website [www.goldengirls.org](http://www.goldengirls.org).

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

## ONGOING

1 Million Cups. Wednesdays, 8:30 a.m. networking; 9-10 a.m. program at Make Offices at Tysons, 1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 600, McLean. Each week a different business owner gives a brief six-minute presentation about where they are in their business. They then offer up a challenge question about a new idea, product, expansion or something they are facing in their business. The group then masterminds solutions. Free and open to the public. Visit [www.1millioncups.com/](http://www.1millioncups.com/).

Great Falls Friends and Neighbors (GFFN) invites women living in the Langley High School District or

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

## Great Falls CONNECTION

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-Werner Heisenberg

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**THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS**



# CALENDAR

## NOW THRU APRIL 17

The 2021 Vienna Photo Show will be on display at the Vienna Community Center now through April 17. The exhibit will be open 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays. The entrance fee is \$5. Ribbons will be awarded in seven categories: animals, architecture, nature, pictorial, photojournalism, portraiture, and scenic. Visit [viennava.gov/photo](http://viennava.gov/photo).

## NOW THRU APRIL 18

Blossoms Galore at Mosaic Gallery. A new exhibit at the Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic gallery in Fairfax offers its own interpretation of the beauty of nature in a show titled "Art Blossoms 2021", featuring artists from the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association. Additionally, there's a special cherry-blossom themed gift for purchasers spending \$200 or more. The Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic is a satellite gallery sponsored by the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association, and is located at 2905 District Avenue, #105, Fairfax.

## WEDNESDAY/MARCH 31

The Old Firehouse School Break Trip. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Visit to Dave & Buster's. Eat, drink, and play games! Dave and Buster's offers one of the best dining and entertainment experiences around. Buffet lunch and a \$25 game card with unlimited arcade gameplay are included. Cost is \$70/\$60 MCC district residents. To register, visit: [www.oldfirehouse.org](http://www.oldfirehouse.org) or call 703-448-8336, TTY: 711.

## APRIL 2-3

"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, April 2 and 3 at 7:30 p.m. Ticket Prices: \$15. Purchase online at <https://vtc.booktix.com>

## SATURDAY/APRIL 3

It's mini golf and an egg hunt all in one. 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Play a round of "Rabbit Hole-in-One" at Burke Lake Park. Bring your group of up to five players and enjoy a socially distanced mini golf and egg hunt experience at the mini golf course at Burke Lake. Play your way through the specially decorated course to reach the 18th hole. The park's Spring Bunny will be busy hiding eggs for each group (three per registered participant), so be sure to keep an eye out to see what you can find. The cost is \$10 per person for 18 holes. Call 703-323-6600.

## MONDAY/APRIL 5

Insights on Final Four. 3-4:30 p.m. Encore Learning presents: History and Governance of College Basketball, Insights on 2021 Final Four. Accomplished lawyer, author, athlete, and coach Craig Esherrick is an Associate Professor in the Sport Management program at

George Mason University. He will also speak to us about the NCAA, the history and governance of the organization, the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, and this year's Men's Basketball field. Visit the website: <https://encorelearning.net>

## TUESDAY/APRIL 6

Talk on Decomposers. At Hidden Pond Nature Center, 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield. Explore Fishing at the Hidden Pond Nature Center. Call 703-451-9588.

## SUNDAY/APRIL 11

Atomic Spy's Son. 2-3:30 p.m. Online. At The Cold War Museum, 1734 Farm Station Road, Warrenton. What's life like in a Cold War U.S. family when Dad is an atomic spy for the Soviets? Cost: \$20. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/atomic-spys-son-discovering-the-reality-of-your-fathers-secret-life-tickets-137043377431>

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia announced it has awarded grants totaling \$43,000 to five area Chambers of Commerce: Northern Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce, Asian American Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Hispanic Chamber, NOVA Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Virginia Asian American Chamber of Commerce.

The grants, which come from Community Foundation's Build Back - Dream Forward Fund will help support programs and services each Chamber of Commerce offers to the minority-owned business community still grappling with the pandemic's negative impact on local businesses.

List of organizations receiving grants:  
Northern Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce - \$10,000.

Asian American Chamber of Commerce - \$10,000.

Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce - \$10,000.

NOVA Hispanic Chamber of Commerce - \$6,500.  
Virginia Asian American Chamber of Commerce - \$6,500.

## GOLDEN GIRLS SEEKS PLAYERS

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna. For more information, visit the website [www.golden-girls.org](http://www.golden-girls.org).

## GOVERNOR UNVEILS COVID-19 VACCINE PRE-REGISTRATION SYSTEM

Gov. Ralph Northam invited Virginians to pre-register for the COVID-19 vaccine online at [vaccinate.virginia.gov](http://vaccinate.virginia.gov) or by calling 877-VAX-IN-VA. The Commonwealth's new, centralized system allows individuals to easily pre-register for the free vaccine, confirm that they are on the wait list, and learn more about Virginia's vaccination program.

Virginia is also launching a new call center for those who prefer to pre-register by phone. The call center is open seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. It is staffed by 750 live operators who can answer questions about the COVID-19 vaccine and help people get pre-registered.

contacts through social, educational and cultural activities. In addition, the club provides service, support and donations to philanthropic and civic organizations in and around the Great Falls community. Email [info@gffnva.org](mailto:info@gffnva.org) or visit [www.gffnva.org](http://www.gffnva.org).

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

The Estates of Lowes Island to learn more about the group. The purpose of GFFN is to establish and foster an atmosphere in which new and current residents can develop new friendships and community

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## Good News Travels Slowly



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Sure enough, the email from my oncologist didn't arrive in my inbox before we left for the weekend away on Friday. It wasn't ideal, but as a long time cancer patient, I've learned to make the best of a bad/potentially bad situation. As it turned out, the time away was invigorating, and there was very little mention of the elephant in the room: Kenny's cancer. Friends can be good like that. Once we got home on Sunday, after a two-hour wait at Six Flags to get my second covid-19 shot, I was rewarded. The email from the radiologist had arrived and the news was good, or so it seemed.

What it is that I typically receive is an automated release of the radiologist's report which is likewise forwarded to my oncologist. Granted, I can only understand half of the words, and those are generally the prepositions; much of the report is written by a doctor for a doctor, not for the doctor's patient. Nevertheless, the process is what it is. It's rare anymore that one receives a call from their doctor with scan-type results. Usually, my oncologist amends this first email with a simplified interpretation of the report: "scan looks good," as a hopeful example. So far, and this is Tuesday afternoon after the Wednesday scan, I've not yet received an amended report, the one where the oncologist offers his summary/opinion. We do have a follow-up video appointment with him on Thursday so perhaps he's saving himself/his comments until that meeting. Perhaps not. Regardless, I should have heard something more definitive by now. Presuming I can figure out the true meaning of the radiologist's report is a bit presumptuous. As a cancer patient, I don't want to have to figure anything out. I want to be told. I shouldn't have to live with any unnecessary uncertainty. I have more than enough uncertainty already. And in case anybody can't guess: uncertainty does not improve my quality of life, one that's already fragile. A "terminal" diagnosis will do that and tends to put a patient ill at ease, morning, noon and night. That's what I call a "post-diagnosis existing condition."

That reaction/disappointment being expressed, from what few words and meanings I could grasp from the report: "no new lesions," no significant change," "stable disease," I can say with all the limited knowledge at my disposal, that I'm probably OKAY. In fact, I would say that my warranty has been extended for another three months, until we wash, rinse and repeat in another three months, per the cycle I've mostly been on since 2009 when I was first diagnosed.

However, I'd be foolish to fuss too much because if my interpretation of the radiologist's report is correct, I really can't complain about good news. I mean, what goes around, comes around, and I'm not about to tempt fate and ruffle karma's feathers. These reports, which typically are the first and surest indication that the patient is in trouble - or not, are a lifeline as patients cling to. A good/stable disease report is sort of like a "life preserver" until you actually talk with the oncologist and get a more official interpretation. Of course, to receive good news earlier would be a lot better. But when the news is good, as this report was, anytime you receive it: "it's all good," as so many say.

Naturally, I'd rather hear it directly from the oncologist. Moreover, given that not all the words written in this report are familiar/known to me, especially in the context in which they're written ("medicalese"); obviously, I'd rather hear the assessment of the scan from the oncologist in person/so to speak, and not leave anything to chance - or misinterpretation by yours truly. In spite of these irregularities, which I can't do anything about (I've tried), my modus has been to roll with the punches and take the good, bad and ugly in stride. So I'm not mad. I'm glad. Life goes on. Thank God!

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





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