

Great Falls CONNECTION

Bluebells and Bald Eagles Take Center Stage

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Ticket holders for the Virginia Bluebells & Bald Eagle Tour produced by the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Philanthropy Group stop to admire the perennials' blossoms on the morning of April 7.



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From left (top) Julia Toloczko, Scarlett Spano, Keya Umesh, Erin Young (middle) Tess Jannery-Barney, Catherine Knecht, Abhaya Tyrka, Sarah Hilton (bottom) Talia-Rose Diorio, Katie Murchison

In Search of the First Kiss

Langley High School's production of 'The Party Hop.'

BY CAROLYN SAXE **CAPPIES REVIEW**
THOMAS WOOTTON HIGH SCHOOL

Unfortunately, things don't seem to have changed much two years in the future. Quarantine and all its struggles were still very present, or at least they were in the universe of "The Party Hop," a one-act play recently written by Natalie Margolin.

Langley High School's production of this play brings eerie nostalgia to a familiar situation. Friends Ava, Emma, and (unexpectedly) Nancy got ready to attend a few parties one night, and it was revealed that Ava had never kissed anyone. Nancy declared that this was the night Ava would get her first kiss! Ava was convinced by the other two to hold onto this dream as they traveled through parties, each one revealing different ways people try and sometimes succeed to connect while distanced. In the final party, Ava's chance finally came along, and she took it. Immediate regret followed with the realization that she just kissed a camera, not a person, and her crush was weirded out. The three friends returned to their own meeting and Ava spoke her thoughts to both friends, frustrated, but ultimately they forgave and felt more connected than when the night began.

All actors involved gave extremely natural performances, to the point that it appeared to be just a recording of a normal Zoom call. Nancy's (Talia-Rose Diorio) extroverted extra-ness filled her little box, even when she wasn't speaking, and the small moments of quiet

vulnerability were moving. In stark contrast was Ava (Tess Jannery-Barney) with subtle yet very relatable reactions. You had to cringe when something awkward happened. Emma (Abhaya Tyrka) was always present and smiling as the mediator between the other two, able to finish Ava's sentences despite lag and share a happy moment with Nancy.

The supporting cast all brought strong, diverse characters to the screen. All the adults at the cocktail party were astoundingly adult. The combo of Nathan and Nora, played by Gunnar Peacock and Gabriella Sanchez respectively, had excellent chemistry (or anti-chemistry, looking at their muted heated arguments). Nora's exaggerated eye rolls added levity, especially making use of the limited framing. At Mary's birthday party, Mary herself (played by Katie Murchison) displayed the strangeness of emotions online with her mostly stoic face describing her emotions.

Impressively, there were zero technical issues. The audio was perfectly clear, the editing was very subtle and well-timed, and the lighting was natural. All the costumes fit the characters, especially Nancy's bright orange party attire. The sets for every character were carefully chosen and perfectly framed, such as the very accurate way Grandma (Erin Young) seemed even smaller in frame with too much distance. The production also made use of Zoom itself, including personalized name tags and somehow making lag nostalgic. The direction of each scene, by Elizabeth Tippens, kept everyone extremely authentic and in character.

Perhaps the world isn't as far away as it would seem in this quarantine. As Nancy pointed out, physical distance doesn't matter online. You could even throw your own Zoom party. Maybe even have your first kiss (in a year at least).

Ticket holders for the Virginia Bluebells & Bald Eagle Tour produced by the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Philanthropy Group stop to admire the perennials' blossoms on the morning of April 7.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Bluebells and Bald Eagle Nestlings

Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Philanthropy Group holds the tour.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Tucked away in a remote setting of the floodplains along the Potomac River, Virginia bluebells made their ephemeral appearance just in time for the Bluebells & Bald Eagle Tour organized by Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Philanthropy Group. Held at Riverbend Park in Great Falls, the April 7 event benefited Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB).

"We're sold out already," said June Kelly, Vice-President of GFFN Philanthropy, a half-hour before the tour started. Kelly said proceeds generated from ticket sales along with donations totaled \$4,000 as of that morning. Kelly called out the generous \$500 sponsor of the event, Roy Melloni, Vice President of TTR Sotheby's International Realty based in McLean.

"In a COVID year, GFFN Philanthropy has far exceeded our expectations in generating funds for all of our chosen charities," Kelly said.

The branched and arching stems of the native *Mertensia virginica* (Virginia bluebells) bore distinctive terminal clusters of blue, bell-shaped flowers. They carpeted en masse, wandering the shaded, moist woodland floodplains of the Potomac River, much to the delight of tour participants.

Julie Casso, the President of GFFN, learned that Virginia bluebells die off in the early summer, leaving blank garden spaces when dormant. Not deterred, Casso and tour participants made their way to the



Bluebells, also known as Virginia cowslip, emerge a dusky-rose color and turn blue as they open in the floodplain forest along the Potomac River at Riverbend Park, Great Falls.

Bluebell plant sale table. It proved a hit. The vendor-grown *Mertensia virginica* plants quickly sold out.

Tom Blackburn is a Fairfax County Park Authority volunteer. He said that tour participants could hopefully enjoy a view of the Bald Eagles' nest on Minnehaha Island in the Potomac River. Two young eagle nestlings hatched approximately four weeks ago.

"We'll set up telescopes so tour participants can view (parents) Abe and Abby. I could see the two eaglets last week even with binoculars," Blackburn said.

Riverbend Park is located at 8700 Potomac Hill Street, Great Falls. It is a natural resources park, first established in 1975 along the Potomac River in Great Falls, Virginia. The park encompasses over 400 acres of woodlands, trails, riverfront, and wildlife.

BULLETIN BOARD

SATURDAY/APRIL 17

Author Shabnam Curtis. 2-3 p.m. at Patrick Henry Library, 101 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. Shabnam Curtis will read from her memoir, *My Persian Paradox*, and discuss her journey to freedom and how women have to live under Sharia Law in Iran. Streaming through Fairfax County Public Library. Visit the website: <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/7330067>

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

MONDAY/APRIL 19

Virtual Kindergarten Orientation. 2-3 p.m. For Great Falls Elementary School. Parents will receive registration information, as well as required health information such as immunizations and physical examinations. A classroom teacher will also present information on the kindergarten curriculum and the daily schedule. To receive an email with the link, visit greatfalls.fcps.edu and complete the Google form.

TUESDAY/APRIL 20

Caregivers Support Group: Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia (SCNOVA). Virtual via Zoom. SCNOVA hosts a support group for caregivers of adult family members with dementia the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Their virtual, facilitated meetings are from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Contact facilitator, Jack Tarr, at jtarr5@verizon.net for details on joining the meeting via zoom or to see the SC web site flyer: <https://www.scnova.org/announcements>.

FCPS To Offer Four Days a Week In-school

Phased plan to start April 20 for most vulnerable students.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Some students in the Fairfax County Public Schools system could be poised to clean off the family dining room table by April 20.

Fairfax County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Scott Brabrand, in a phone interview the morning of April 6, said that FCPS will offer four days a week in-person school instruction to some students beginning April 20.

"This expansion to four days is really the next to the last step before returning kids to five days of instruction in the fall," said Brabrand. "It will help us get additional experience with more students that are in buildings and making sure we're doing our safety measures well."

FCPS is mindful of the CDC's most recent guidance related to physical distancing in schools and other measures, Brabrand said. The division will continue to implement mitigation strategies such as monitoring disease data and it will be expanding vaccination opportunities for students and staff.

FCPS will extend the first opportunity to return to four days of in-person learning to its

most vulnerable children. Any student struggling now, virtual or in-person as determined by school officials, will be offered four days a week of in-person instruction. Brabrand said that school staff is looking through students' academics, especially third-quarter progress, IEPs, and the 504 processes. That is happening this week and next week.

"By April 20, kids that had selected two days of in-person will have, as school staffing and capacity allow, the opportunity to do four days of in-person. ... All of that will help prepare us to have five days of in-person instruction in the fall," said Brabrand.

BRABRAND said the expansion is not a pilot program with small numbers of students but a significant expansion across all its schools. "We're going to have tens of thousands of additional students receiving in-person instruction. This is a major step forward and the last step before going to five days of in-person instruction."

Brabrand said that the in-person acceptance rates per school have varied from 20



PHOTO BY FCPS
Dr. Scott Brabrand

"We're going to have tens of thousands of additional students receiving in-person instruction. This is a major step forward and the last step before going to five days of in-person instruction."

— Scott Brabrand, superintendent

percent of students being in-person to 80 percent. That variability means in-person learning will look different at each school. Variability is one of the nuances in the expansion. The plan, though, is dependent upon staff availability. Staff "really stepped up," according to Brabrand.

Meanwhile, FCPS is working closely with the health department and monitoring additional opportunities for younger students to get access to the vaccine. Currently no one younger than 16 can be vaccinated but trials are underway for younger children, and vaccination could be expanded before the start of school in the fall.

"We may get authorization for kids even younger than 16, to have an aggressive campaign ... to vaccinate as many of our kids

who are eligible to receive the vaccine before school starts in the fall. That'll be another layer of safety and security for students and staff."

LOOKING BACK on the past 13 months of the pandemic, Brabrand said he would have appreciated receiving CDC guidance "sooner and clearer." "The confusion at the beginning of the pandemic set the course for a lot of confusion and mixed messages throughout the pandemic. Our first priority was keeping students and staff safe. We've gotten more clarity. We've gotten the guidance we've needed. And we're using that guidance to move our schools back to normal operations as quickly as possible and as safely as possible."

Hot Market in McLean, Great Falls

Market Comparison: First Quarter 2021 to 2020 and 2011 for McLean and Great Falls.

BY KAREN
BRISCOE



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
Karen Briscoe

REAL ESTATE

market in McLean and Great Falls has rebounded a whopping 75.9 percent.

Drilling down, one of the segments that experienced strong improvement with over double the number of sales is

the \$1 to \$1.25 m price point inside the Beltway McLean 22101. Low inventory for below \$1 m single family homes is due to strong competition between entry level home buyers and builders pursuing in-fill lots. Home buyers in many cases are electing to "buy up" due to greater affordability with low interest rates. Compared to one decade ago in 2011, there is nearly four times the number of sales.

The \$2 to \$3 m home also ex-

perienced a "hot" market in first quarter 2021 with 40 sales in McLean and Great Falls compared to 13 in 2020 and only 5 a decade ago in 2011. These homes are most typically estate type properties which allow for natural physical distancing and outdoor living amenities, features highly sought after as the nation enters the post pandemic phase.

There is an abundance of buyers ready willing and able to purchase a home in Northern Virginia in 2021 and they are finding that there is considerably less supply than in previous years. Since the three month-stay-at-home orders in Spring 2020, inventory levels remain at all-time lows. As homeowners recognize appreciation not experienced in over 15 years and want to take advantage of an UBER sellers' market, predictions are that more homes will come available.

Today, people are seeking out the security of home as a safe haven. Strong indicators are that even

McLean & Great Falls Quarterly Market Analysis of Home Sales (Based on List Price):

2021 Sales Compared to 2020 and 2011						
2021 Total Sales: 292						
	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
Zip Code						
22101	7	21	34	23	29	15
22102	5	7	13	5	9	55
22066	4	12	31	9	12	1
Total: 16	Total: 40	Total: 78	Total: 37	Total: 50	Total: 71	
Combined Total Upper Brackets: 134			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 158			
2020 Total Sales: 257						
	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
Zip Code						
22101	7	9	40	11	31	2
22102	1	2	14	11	9	57
22066	1	2	21	13	24	2
Total: 9	Total: 13	Total: 75	Total: 35	Total: 64	Total: 61	
Combined Total Upper Brackets: 97			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 160			
2011 Total Sales: 166						
	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
Zip Code						
22101	1	2	11	6	21	25
22102	2	2	6	3	8	42
22066	2	1	14	6	8	6
Total: 5	Total: 5	Total: 31	Total: 15	Total: 37	Total: 73	
Combined Total Upper Brackets: 41			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 125			

as more people are vaccinated, home will continue to represent the central place where people live, work, play, educate their children and enjoy physical activity and entertainment.

The traditional spring season is opening with a strong start in 2021 and market indicators show that real estate sales in McLean and Great Falls will experience another banner year. As homeowners find themselves in situations where they have a need to make a move,

this could be the year to take advantage of considerable pent-up buyer demand!

Karen Briscoe, Lizzy Conroy, and Jenny McClintock with HBC Group at Keller Williams are active and experienced Realtors® in the Northern Virginia marketplace. They work with sellers, buyers, investors, and builders in all price ranges and are available to assist with your real estate needs! www.HBCGroupKW.com, 703-734-0192, Homes@HBCGroupKW.com.

Earth Day – Then and Now

BY PAUL GILBERT
NOVA PARKS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fifty-one years ago, in 1970, the first Earth Day took place on April 22. The issues of that time were quite different than what we face today. In 1970 our nation was awash in pollution. In 1969 the Cuyahoga River in Ohio caught fire due to so much oil and chemicals on the surface. The same year a large oil rig spill off the coast of California happened. A new report at the time documented the endangered Bald Eagle and the impact of DDT pesticide on the eagle and other species. American cities were choked with high levels of lead smog from cars and trucks, and litter was everywhere.

Today, we have addressed many of these issues, and new ones face us. The EPA was established in 1969, and pollution has decreased dramatically. DDT was banned, and species like the Bald Eagle have recovered. Lead was removed from gasoline, and our air is much cleaner, and litter is not the problem it was decades ago. All of this has meant better health for people and nature. So, let's take a moment and appreciate the great work that has been accomplished!

Today, while our rivers are not on fire, and we breathe and eat fewer toxins, our challenges are still great. Global warming is the central environmental issue of our generation. The global average temperature in March 2020 was over 2 degrees higher than the average for the 20th Century, and this trend is growing. The results are more extreme storms, wildfires, hurricanes, and more. And the cause is too much carbon in the atmosphere. The solution has two sides: reducing the use of fossil fuels and the expansion of natural areas that absorb carbon.

At NOVA Parks, we have been doing what we can to address both sides of the carbon issue for



New parkland at Pohick Bay.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NOVA PARKS

some time. Since 2007 NOVA Parks has tracked every gallon of gas and kilowatt of electricity consumed and converted it to carbon. Many investments have been made to improve energy efficiency. In 2018 NOVA Parks completed its second new building with a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification. The new Jean R. Packard Building features recycled building materials, cutting edge stormwater, HVAC, and lighting, and even has solar panels on the roof.

But the most significant contribution the regional park system has made to address the causes of global warming is the expansion of protected forested parkland. As the region's original conservation organization, by 1970, NOVA Parks had already assembled 3,600 acres of parkland. With new parkland acquisitions almost every year, the Regional Park system is currently up to 12,200 acres, including 37 acres of waterfront land in Fairfax County added over just the last year and 600 acres of managed parkland added in Loudoun County in 2018. Over 85 percent of the Regional park system is in a natural, mostly forested condition. This level of forested land absorbs 15,000 tons of carbon from our air per year! Forests are the air filters of our region, absorbing carbon and releasing fresh oxygen.

Environmental leaders fifty years ago did a remarkable job of cleaning up pollution and toxins in our environment, making the world a healthier place to be today. Our collective job



Students blossom in parks
Twice every week, during the summer months, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and the Fairfax County Park Authority are working on special projects in the Regional Parks, and have put them to good use. Darrell Winkler, left, and Dodi Miller, right, show a water sample which they will test for solid waste and chemical pollution.

Students in '70s doing water quality testing: the first Earth Day took place on April 22, 1970.

moving forward is to address the carbon in our atmosphere that is driving global warming. We must all look for ways to use fewer fossil fuels, and at the same time, recognize that parkland is more than just a fun place to visit, but is actually vitally important to absorbing the carbon in our air. The progress of yesterday gives hope that the challenges of today can be addressed with focused effort.

Great Falls Girl Scout Honored

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Penelope "Penny" Walke, a 14-year-old Freshman at Langley High, received the Girl Scouts of the USA Lifesaving Medal of Honor for her role in saving her father's life in June 2021. Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton bestowed the honor, a national award granted to Girl Scouts who have shown the presence of mind and true Girl Scout spirit in saving life. Penny's father suffered a near-fatal cardiac arrest event in June 2021 as a result of an undiagnosed, rare genetic condition. Penny's quick thinking, maturity, and grace under pressure enabled her to take the necessary steps to assist her mother in starting and continuing CPR until the arrival of the paramedics. Penny has been a Girl Scout for 10 years, has earned two of the highest awards in Girl Scouting, the Bronze and Silver Awards, and is working on her Girl Scout Gold Award by starting a non-profit organization to collect, donate, and recycle shoes to local communities in need.



From left: Carol Blackwell, Belle Walke, Thomas Walke, Jennifer Blackwell, Penny Walke, Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton.



Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton presented the honor to Penelope "Penny" Walke, a 14-year-old Freshman at Langley High.

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GFCA Elects New Leaders

At the elections held on March 6, Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) members re-elected two officers and five board members and voted in a new vice president and one new board member. As a result of the election, Peter Falcone assumed the duties of association vice president and Suzanne Black joined the board for the first time.

Peter Falcone has recently retired from Federal service during which time he operated in the fields of law enforcement, security, and aviation security intelligence. Prior to his Federal career he was a law enforcement officer in Connecticut and Florida and was Deputy Director for a municipal community action agency administering programs for youth, the aging, and disadvantaged persons in areas of education, job training, and housing. After college he served as a City Councilman in Norwalk, Conn. He has a master's degree in management. Peter and his wife, Jennifer, have been renovating their 1925 home and barn since they moved to Great Falls twenty-three years ago. Elected to the GFCA board in February 2020, he also chairs the Communications Committee.

Suzanne Black spent a career with the U.S. Government in intelligence. She served overseas for more than 15 years, primarily



Peter Falcone



Suzanne Black

ly in Africa and western Europe. She has a BA in International Affairs and an MA in Journalism. Suzanne lives on a dirt road in Great Falls with her husband and two Jack Russell Terriers. She enjoys travel, gardening, and yoga. Suzanne has already focused on the wide variety of environmental issues confronting the Great Falls community and has assumed a seat on the Environment and Parks Committee.

Other officers re-elected are: Bill Canis (president) and James Trent (treasurer); board members re-elected are Ruth Carver, Jennifer Falcone, Gordon Harris, Scott Knight, and Ed Phillips.

Residents are encouraged to volunteer with GFCA on community issues; most of its work is accomplished through its committees. Visit gfca.org for more information.

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TWO WAYS TO VOTE: 1. in person (fill out a ballot at McLean Community Center) or 2. by mail. If you prefer to vote by mail, simply phone, send an e-mail, or fill out an online request form to request ballots for members of your household. The requested ballots will be mailed to your home.

DEADLINE: Completed ballots must be received at MCC by 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 15.



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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

Obituary

John C. Dibble, age 74, passed away on March 29, 2021. Born on May 29, 1946 in Washington, D.C. he grew up in Connecticut and West Lafayette, Indiana. After graduating from Columbia University in 1968, John enlisted in the U.S. Navy, was commissioned as a Lt.jg., and served a tour of duty in Vietnam from 1969-1970. Post Navy, John enrolled in Indiana University Law School, graduating in 1973, and practiced general law in Lafayette until 1985. He then moved to Washington, D.C. and practiced International law for the rest of his career. Always politically active, as a student at Columbia, he worked as a special assistant to Indiana Senator Birch Bayh on the 26th Amendment to the Constitution. Later he managed the Philadelphia office for Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign. At the time of his death he was Chairman of the Board for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund where he had served for many years. His time in Vietnam gave him a profound respect for American Veterans and he worked tirelessly for many years to make sure that those who had given their lives for their country would not be forgotten. <https://www.pbs.org/video/conversations-jeff-weeks-conversations-jeff-weeks-john-dibble/> While practicing law in Indiana he met and married Nicolette Comsa in 1982. They moved to Great Falls, Virginia in 1985 and purchased a farm house where they raised their two daughters, and joined Great Falls United Methodist Church where John later served on the vestry. He never forgot those who needed a helping hand and gave generously of his time and efforts on their behalf. As a Great Falls resident, he loved history and the parks. One of his favorite things was to walk with his dog for miles along the Potomac river trails. Those two interests lead him down another path and he wrote two mystery novels, both set on the Potomac River trails. John will be greatly missed by his many friends and family. He is survived by his wife Nicolette (Nikki), daughter Ann V. Logan (Annie) of Fredericksburg, Virginia, brother Jerry A. Dibble of Santa Rosa, California, son-in-law Jeff Logan, sister-in-law Victoria Comsa of Alexandria, Virginia, 3 nephews, 2 grand-nephews, and 2 grand-nieces. In lieu of flowers please donate to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, 1235 S. Clark Street, Arlington, Virginia, 22202.

Obituary

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Announcements

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Announcements

CALENDAR

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upcoming event**

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Senior Living, fourth week of every month.

Questions?

E-mail sales@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9431

**THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS**

CALENDAR

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.

NOW THRU APRIL 17

Bluebells at Riverbend Park. At 8700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls. Celebrate the wildflowers with a week of fun, family-friendly, safe activities. Join them for hikes to learn more about all the wildflowers that make their home along the floodplains of the park and see the eagle's nest. Also visit the learning tables to create a bluebell craft, meet some exhibit animals, and learn about volunteer and camp opportunities at the park. Preregistration is required for all hikes and numbers will be limited to follow safe social distancing guidelines. Call 703-759-9018.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 14

(The) Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. Sponsored by The Alden. Join in (the) Unruly Theatre Project's virtual improv shows from the comfort of your couch. You can register for one show or as many as you like, but participants need to register at least two hours in advance of a show to see it. A Zoom link and password for the show will be emailed to registrants. For more information or to register, visit: www.aldentheatre.org.

THURSDAY/APRIL 15

Virtual '80s Music Drag Bingo (Virtual). 7 p.m. Sponsored by The Alden Theater, McLean with Miss Fluffy Soufflé. Fluffy Soufflé takes you back to the '80s! Part bingo, part drag show, your music bingo card is made up of songs, and instead of calling out numbers, Fluffy plays music clips! Singing along and '80s-themed costumes encouraged. \$10/\$5 MCC tax district residents. One ticket per bingo card. Zoom link and bingo cards will be emailed separately.

FRIDAY/APRIL 16

Campfire Fridays. 7:30-9 p.m. At Lake Accotink Park, 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield. Bring the whole family for an evening devoted to the wonders of the natural world. "Campfire Fridays" may include nature walks, interactive activities, animal presentations or other opportunities to learn about nature and our place in it. Topics vary, but all the programs include s'mores. These Friday night programs are designed for participants age 3 to adult. Cost is \$12 per person. Call 703-569-3464.

FRIDAY/APRIL 16

Musical Road Trip. 2-3 p.m. Via Zoom. Zoom off



Miss Fluffy Soufflé will perform Virtual '80s Music Drag Bingo on Thursday, April 15 at the Alden.

to revisit classic songs and guess trivia about different USA destinations with Benjamin Pernick, Music Therapist, Musical Comedy Actor, and Award-Winning Comedy Film Director. Funded by the Friends of Burke Centre Library. Register at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library to receive Zoom link.

APRIL 16-17

Spring Nesting. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Spring has sprung and the birds are singing! Spruce up your house décor with an egg-cellent art idea. Register your family for the "Spring Nesting" program and learn how to create colorful birds' eggs using the wet felting technique. Place them in a natural nest to bring a little springtime into your home. This program is for a family or pod of up to four people, ages 5 to adult. The 45-minute programs at Sully Historic Site run at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. on Friday, April 16, and at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 17, 2021. The cost is \$20 per family. Call 703-437-1794.

SATURDAY/APRIL 17

Spring Fling Fundraiser. 1 p.m. Shu-Chen Cuff, choreographer and artistic director, will be the guest speaker at the Springfield-Annan-dale Virtual Spring Fling fundraiser. Ms Cuff is a ballet teacher, performer, and owner of the Gin Dance Company. She will discuss her background as well as the style of ballet and modern dance used by her company. There will be some video of performances. Tickets are through Eventbrite at the following link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/spring-fling-enriching-lives-through-dance-tickets-144259729735> To obtain tickets by check, send an e-mail to aaauwingspringfieldannandale@gmail.com

SATURDAY/APRIL 17

Earth Day McLean—Act Locally. 9 a.m.—noon. This drive-through, outdoor, environmental action event provides a convenient way for McLean residents to better the planet. Several local community businesses and organizations will provide four key facets of environmental health in the spirit of shredding, reusing, recycling and planting. Visit: www.mcleancenter.org/special-events or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

Senior Center Announces April Event

On Tuesday, April 20, at 11 a.m. the Great Falls Senior Center will host its monthly event via ZOOM: Historian Karen Washburn will present "Collateral Damage," sharing what life was like along the Georgetown Pike corridor during the Civil War. If you would like a link to the Tuesday, April 20 Event at 11 a.m. via Zoom, contact Mary Jo Fox, by April 15 at mjwfx1491@gmail.com. The link will be sent two days before the Event.

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Hitting The Nail On the Head



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

What are all these "Toe Nail Clipper" emails I receive nearly every day? And how do these senders know that I'm actually the perfect recipient. Toe nail clippers and cuticle trimmers have been the bane of my existence going back as far as I can remember. And as recently as I care to mention, these two accessories have been front and center on my bedside table, in a drawer in my living room coffee table, in my car's console/glove box and in any suitcase/overnight bag I take with me out of town. The fact of what has been the matter with me is that I bit my nails and trimmed my cuticles constantly, not out of appearance but due apparently, to some undiagnosed mental condition, according to family and friends who were subjected to my relentless pursuit of whatever ailed me.

The constant gnawing and "cuticizing" of my nails drove my parents nearly around the bend. Whatever they tried, which was not professional help, couldn't stop the train, so to speak. Unfortunately, they weren't alive to see me stop. What joy they would have felt for this change. Exultation. Unfortunately, the change occurred quite by accident and with no intent of mine. What happened was that I was diagnosed with cancer, rather than make me a nervous wreck about my original "terminal" diagnosis, and bite my nails for a good reason, I just stopped, and it's been over twelve years now. I still haven't been to a manicurist, but I no longer scoff at the suggestion. And though neither of my parents lived to see me stop biting my nails, they also both died before learning about my lung cancer diagnosis, for which I was extremely grateful.

Aside from the obvious reason why my mother would have been upset about her "baby" being diagnosed with lung cancer was the fact that throughout my childhood, my mother smoked four packs of Chesterfield Kings every day. Then suddenly, she stopped, cold turkey, the coldest you can imagine. It happened in the early 60s when the anti-smoking campaign about the association between smoking cigarettes and lung cancer began in earnest in this country. From that point forward, my mother never wavered in her commitment. There were no more cigarettes and she lived to age 87, almost, when she died from natural causes, not cancer.

Oddly enough, it was her non-smoking son, yours truly, who was diagnosed with lung cancer, part of an ever increasing percentage (upwards of 25% most recently) of non-smokers so diagnosed. Whether second hand smoke or environmental exposure to certain chemicals, the numbers of lung cancer patients who were non-smokers has been steadily increasing. And in a fortuitous twist of fate, it was this increase specifically in the number of non-smokers being diagnosed with cancer which led to a huge increase in research funding. Funding which has spawned an increase in the numbers of drugs approved by the FDA which have directly affected my treatment and subsequent survival. Now what percentage of nail-biters are diagnosed with cancer, I can't say.

But this hyper-targeted email campaign - which features almost daily emails from people who are on a first-name basis with me and I them, according to their sender's name, is remarkable in its having reached a prime candidate, and one with a history of having used imperfect and/or failed implements for this very purpose. If anybody would appreciate the possibilities of this product, the relief it might provide, it would be me. If my mother were alive today, I'm sure she'd agree, nobody ever bit their nails more than I did. That's how I learned the meaning of the word "quick": "the soft-tender flesh below the growing part of a fingernail or toenail."

With all the self-consciousness I endured while nail-biting (and the visual condition of my fingers as a result), I wish I could take credit for having figured out the underlying cause, or had found a topical solution and/or a hypnotic suggestion that would help me stop. But I didn't. Apparently, the cancer made me stop, and not even consciously. To quote the late B.B.King: "The thrill is gone."

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



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