

# The Arlington Connection

## ‘Sunrise Happens Every Day’

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Woojung Lee's Sunrise sculpture located at Long Bridge Park at National Landing in Arlington

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## News

### Knife Wielding Man in Assault At Dar al Hijrah Mosque

**Man is charged with  
hate crime after  
lunging at guard.**

By EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

Shortly before Monday's afternoon prayer at the Dar al Hirjah Islamic Center near Seven Corners in Fairfax County, a man who was not part of the muslim community began harassing those outside the entrance of the mosque waiting to pray. When the security guard at the mosque approached the man to ask him to leave the area, he pulled out a knife and lunged at the guard, then threatened others, before running away. The Fairfax County police posted a picture to help identify him. According to Fairfax County Police spokeswoman Sgt. Tara Gerhard, detectives later identified the man as Jonathan Lincoln, 41, of Falls Church. He was arrested that night for two counts of assault and disorderly conduct. Gerhard said those charges were further defined on Monday night as he was charged with two counts of 18.2-57(A) which is assault, hate crime and disorderly conduct, both classified as misdemeanors.



FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE

Fairfax County Police identify this as  
Jonathan Lincoln, 41, of Falls Church.

Many of the muslims gathering at the mosque expressed their appreciation for the guard, who is well known to the congregants there, and for the Fairfax County police quick response and efforts to find the man. One girl scout troop leader who had been preparing Eid al fitr gifts with her scouts at the mosque earlier was grateful the girls had not been there to witness the frightening assault.

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## Ramadan Warms a Chilly May in McLean and Arlington

**A Ramadan Primer: different traditions, but a unifying month.**

By EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

According to what country you are from, Ramadan traditions vary, and sometimes, it's just family preference. In one house, breaking the fast with a glass of milk to "line the stomach" is militantly adhered to. In another, it's just water and the ubiquitous date. In some families, getting up at 4 a.m. to pray and have the morning Suhoor meal is the way it's done; in other homes, the morning meal is skipped because "it just makes you hungrier."

But some things never change: Ramadan is a time of kindness and charity. It is important to give "Zakat" (alms) to organizations in need of support, especially for the poor and sick. Some families decide to perform an act of kindness for every day in the month-long fasting period. It takes their minds off the hunger and allows more people to share in the spirit of Ramadan.

The idea of Ramadan is to go without eating or drinking all day so the person who rarely goes hungry can understand the person who often goes hungry. In addition, Ramadan is a time of self-reflection and focus on correcting one's outlook. The very practice of blocking out food for 13 or more hours encourages a spiritual take on the day and many use the time to keep a journal or read the Koran in its entirety. Muslims rarely complain about going without food and water all day; it's part of the challenge of Ramadan to do the fast without getting "hangry" or vocalizing to others how hard it is.

Until a person has fasted for Ramadan and joined others in Iftar,



Another Ramadan spread on the first night of Ramadan, with traditional Arab dishes like Kibbeh, and eggplant.

the meal which breaks the fast, it is hard to understand how unifying and powerful the month is. The community of "brothers and sisters" who sacrifice together and then seek each other out to end that day-long ache in the stomach is somewhat like Easter after Lent, or Yom Kippur, but neither is as intense as Ramadan.

In Morocco, the entire country fasts and at sundown, everyone rushes out the door to get home for Iftar, ignoring the stop signs so they won't be late. In Sri Lanka, sunset prayers are held on a vast "maidan" near the sea, and thousands of men are seen gathering there to pray every evening as the sun sets in the Indian Ocean.

Since 2001, imams in most mosques have gone out of their way to welcome non-Muslims in the mosque during Ramadan, and to interpret Islam for non-Muslims so misconceptions that circulate in the U.S. can be addressed.

The atmosphere of a mosque serving Iftar is joyous and warm; the diversity of the muslim population in Northern Virginia is immense and many wear traditional dress during events at the mosque. But don't expect to get a place in the mosque during the Eid al Fitr, the day when the fast ends. Like Easter, it's a time when the mosques are more full than usual. Many congregants have to use the sidewalk and street to pray, and come prepared with mats.

Even Ramadan is prone to extreme interpretation. One on-line thread asked if it was okay to have a COVID-19 vaccine during Ramadan.

"Of course it is," said Fayhaa. "God gives us the means to maintain our health and we have to take those gifts of medicine." And cooking during Ramadan is tough because some believe you can't taste while you are cooking. Others say the Koran allows for food to touch the tongue as long as it



McLean residents Ahmed and Fayhaa prepare to eat an elaborate Iftar dinner with their host's tagines on the special "Night of Destiny."

is not swallowed. Most muslims start fasting at the age of 10 or 11, anxious to join the family in their tradition. Some fast for only half a day to enable them to manage the first three days of Ramadan difficult, but quickly acclimate to the new pattern of not eating or drinking water. Some even welcome it as "intermittent fasting" and hope to slim down. Ramadan traditions of special cookies, nutty sweets like

"Sfouf" and gifts make it festive and fun, make slimming down harder.

Most importantly, families come together as they do for Thanksgiving, and those without families nearby are invited for Iftar so they won't be alone. The Eid celebration is an important one, and it is entirely appropriate to wish a muslim "Eid Mubarak" on that evening, which this year will fall on May 12 if the new moon is sighted... "inshallah."

## Suspected Rabid Fox Reported Near Lacey Woods Park

A fox exhibiting signs of rabies has been reported near Lacey Woods Park.

Monday, May 10, between the hours of 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., Arlington County Animal Control and the Arlington County Police Department received complaints about a fox aggressively approaching people and dogs around the 1100 block of N George Mason Drive, the 900 block of N Frederick Street, and on the Custis Trail between N George Mason Drive

and N Harrison Street. The incidents are believed to involve the same fox.

The fox had potential contact with two domestic pets and bit two humans unprovoked causing injury.

The fox was exhibiting signs and symptoms consistent with rabies. The suspect aggressive fox has not been located or captured.

Rabies is a disease that people and animals can catch from the bite or scratch of infected animals. It is fatal if medical care is not given promptly.

en promptly.

Arlington County Animal Control and the Arlington County Department of Human Services are urging anyone who may have been bitten or scratched by any wild animal, including a fox, to reach out immediately. If you, your children, or your pets had any potential contact with this animal, please call Arlington County Animal Control promptly at 703-931-9241.

All residents are encouraged to:

Ensure pets are up to date on their rabies and distemper vaccines

Keep dogs on a leash at all times and keep cats inside

Do not approach or feed any wild animals

Feed pets inside

Remove wildlife attractants, such as unsecured garbage cans, open containers of food and compost, from yards.

Arlington County Animal Control is also urging residents to remain vigilant, and if they see a fox that appears sick, lethargic, disoriented, or aggressive to stay away from the animal and call Animal

Control immediately at 703-931-9241. Do not attempt to haze or make loud sounds at the animal. Back away slowly while facing the animal at all times.

The County asks that pets and children are not outside unsupervised at this time.

If you come across a deceased rabies vector animal, including cats, dogs, foxes, raccoons, or groundhogs, in your yard or a public space, contact Animal Control promptly and do not handle the animal.



# Hope of Sunrise Inspires Sculpture

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE CONNECTION

**W**oojung Lee screamed. “I called everyone I knew in Korea and in Fairfax,” where she lives, when she found out she was chosen among 139 artists to paint a giant cherry blossom sculpture as part of this year’s Cherry Blossom Festival. Her sculpture is located at Long Bridge Park at National Landing in Arlington.

She said, “I knew the dimensions but when I actually saw the sculpture it was a challenge. It was bigger than I thought. I’m 5-foot-1-inch, and the sculpture is as high as I am.”

Lee found out about the Cherry Blossom Art in Bloom competition on a bulletin board where her professor had posted the opportunity. But she found out about the competition on the last day and had four hours to explain her idea and submit a design. “I thought I’d give it a shot.”

Lee’s idea to paint a sunrise originated from her experience last year with the pandemic.

“I had to stay home. I was depressed and frustrated.” Then one day she noticed some light and “I started to notice more. I realized the sun would rise no matter what happens. So are our hopes.” So she decided to paint a sunrise on her cherry blossom sculpture. She says it took her one week to complete the project.

She says the painting was not without its challenges. “We used exterior paint, and I had never experienced it before. It dried so fast that trying to make the graduations of the sunrise with all of the colors was difficult. I was panicking.” She said that color-wise she isn’t 100 percent satisfied. “I wanted more colors; there aren’t a lot to choose from with exterior paint. I had to mix them to get my color choice.”

Lee arrived in the U.S. four years ago to explore a new world. “I’d never been to America. I came to learn a new language and culture.” Lee was planning to go back in a year.

But the longer she lives here the more she realizes she wants to stay. “The cultures are so different.” She explains the instruction methods are one of the things where she finds a big contrast. “In Korea there are so many restrictions that you can’t be creative. There is a way they want you to do it.” But she says here it is more open and you can create whatever you want.

There are other differences such as a lot more freedom for women



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY GLEN GORDON OF ARENA SOCIAL ARTS CLUB  
**Woojung Lee paints her sunrise-themed Cherry blossom sculpture entitled “2021.”**



**Woojung Lee, Fairfax resident and winner of Art in Bloom sculpture contest**

here, she said. In Korea women who get married are expected to have a baby and devote themselves to their family. She says it is not possible to also have a career. And as an aside she adds they don’t snack in Korea. “When I moved to America, I gained 20 pounds.”

Lee has finished her graphics design studies at NOVA and plans to go to New York City in July for 2-1/2 years to finish her course of study. Her goal in five years is to have a job as a graphic designer in New York City.

She thought when she came to America that everyone had an opportunity for a good education. But she saw a lot of documentaries, including one about Baltimore, where she discovered that all children, especially in Black communities, don’t have access. “I would like to teach art to children who don’t have access to a proper education.”

Diana Mayhew, President and CEO of the Cherry Blossom Festival, said this was the first year for the Art in Bloom competition at the Cherry Blossom Festival. She has been in charge of the Cherry Blossom festivities for the last 21 years but explained recently the festival has been particularly challenging due to the coronavirus.

“We wanted to make sure we didn’t just put together a virtual celebration. The City was glum.” She says last year the pandemic hit just nine days before the Cherry Blossom Festival was due to begin. But this year there was time to plan so they came up with three scenarios.

One of the highlights of this year’s festival was the sculpture competition announced in January and attracting 139 entries. In the first phase, a panel of judges pared the group back to 75 and finally after some agonizing, they chose the final 26. “There were some amazing submissions. This was our way of taking the festival to the community. There was joy; it was uplifting.”

They found the festival spread to neighborhoods with buildings lit up in pink and hundreds of people decorating their houses. They moved the blossom kite festival to “your backyard” with 19 percent of the registrations outside D.C. Nine countries were represented in the kite festival. “People wanted to be represented. The Cherry Blossom Festival spread around the world.”

The sculptures are located around the metropolitan area including each ward in D.C., National Harbor in Maryland and Aurora



**Woojung Lee’s Sunrise sculpture located at Long Bridge Park at National Landing in Arlington.**

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY NATIONAL CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

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Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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# Foster Parents of the Year Encourage Fostering Teens

Teens need guidance, are fun — mostly — and the impact is huge.

By EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

**Jump ahead: May is Foster Care Month**

**I** think it was when our first foster kid came back to see us, and she told us about a big decision she had made and laughed, saying, ‘And all I could hear was Nathan’s voice in the back of my head, saying have you thought about this, have you thought about that?’ That was so important to me, that she had actually taken on board what I’d been saying.”

Nathan Wiehe and Cassie Ravo love fostering teens. Ravo caught the fostering bug in graduate school when she did an internship working with a foster care program for unaccompanied refugee minors, overseen by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Although her work was limited to finding a good fit for the kids once the referral came in, the foster care seed was planted. She graduated, married Nathan, they bought a house, and then, thought: we both have really flexible jobs, we want to connect to our community, and we have a big empty house ... why not foster? Nathan wasn’t sure, he’d never given it any thought, but he agreed to go to the information session.

“That session was so good, we decided to go ahead,” he said. “It is important that you don’t commit until you are ready. You can even do the training and decide not to foster.” But part way through the training of six weeks, they decided they were going to do it.

In the training, which takes place at night from 6-9 pm, they were given instruction on parenting kids who have had trauma, how to understand the foster care system, the rules, how to interact with the first family, working with the social workers, the attorneys, etc. “The County does a good job with this; they don’t sugar coat, but it’s not doom and gloom.”

Ravo and Wiehe got licensed in about 6 months. Some people take a while longer. And because on their form they had said the age group they were interested in working with was teenagers, it didn’t take long to get the call. “Six weeks after getting licensed, we had our first youth join us, a teen of 17 and a half. That was a steep learning curve. ... Parenting for the first time a young woman who was almost an adult. She was with us for 14 months.”



Nathan Wiehe and Cassie Ravo, Arlington’s Foster Parents of the Year. They love fostering teens because they are growing so much emotionally and are fun to do things with.

**“We’ve loved fostering teens. Sure, they are teens and present challenges, but they are so cool. There is a lot of personal growth going on. You can have real conversations with them, learn from them, learn with them. And you can relive your glory days of go-karting and laser tag!”**

—Nathan Wiehe, Foster Parent of the Year 2021

“After she joined our family we converted one of the spaces in our house to a bedroom and upped our license to two youths,” they said. “A second youth joined us two days before the last home inspection — they needed someone right away. Now we have had five longterm kids. The shortest has been ten months, the longest was 20 months. Just depends on the youth and their case. Sometimes they can go home, and sometimes they transition into an independent living program.”

Ravo and Wiehe specialized in teens who weren’t going to be able to go back home, or were planning to transition to independent living. Between 18-21 there is a program called Fostering Futures, and they can go into that.

Was the COVID-19 pandemic dif-

ficult as foster parents? Yes, but not that difficult. “Talking with friends and telling them it was tough, they said, yes, but it’s not like they are three year olds, unable to sit still, so how hard could it be? But it was hard because teens feel invincible, and the last thing they want to hear is they can’t see their friends. We had to make sure they were safe, set up frameworks for them, mandate curfew. And if they missed the curfew, then we had to pull back some of their free time outside of the house. We got to spend a lot of time in the same house with each other. Our youngest youth so far was 13 - they are much more willing to do schoolwork. It’s harder to keep the older ones interested in school and focused.”

The Ravo-Wiehe family had other learning curves to absorb.

They quickly became a multi-ethnic combined family. “None of our kids would have been mistaken as our biological children, so we got some sideways looks in the grocery store.” They said being in the greater DC area gave them many opportunities. “One of the kids had friends who were DACA recipients. We went to rallies and talked about the politics around DACA. One youth was with us during the BLM movement demonstrations.” For one of their foster gender non-conforming kids they had to learn a different set of pronouns, one set for inside the house, one set for outside. “We wanted to support them in any way we could, and sometimes that just meant making sure we had the right barber, the right shoes, and the right pupuseria.”

How do they handle the increased workload of kids as parents with two jobs?

“We just as a habit do meal planning. We work out of a couple cookbooks, plan the week, the kids pick out a meal and prepare it. The 13 year old needed a lot of supervision, but the 19 year old just did it. This way, they got a life skill too. They had to clean their own bathrooms and spaces. Sometimes they need more structure. For one, doing laundry regularly was a challenge, it just wasn’t on their radar, they didn’t wash a shirt every time they wore it. So we set up a date when they did their laundry.”

Will they keep fostering?

“We’ve been at this for four years. We have always had one or two kids. One of our current kids is enlisting in the Marines soon, and we might go down to one instead of two while we renovate our house a bit. But we will definitely keep fostering over the long term. The County is so wonderful. You can say, ‘don’t call me right now’.

You really can say no when you need to.”

The joy that comes from fostering was never more real than on a special graduation day last year. “One of our kids wasn’t necessarily on track to graduate, but then he put in so much work and graduated against all odds. He invited us to the graduation and we stood there, along with his other family, like the proud (foster) parents we were.”

“We’ve loved fostering teens. Sure, they are teens and present challenges, but they are so cool. There is a lot of personal growth going on. You can have real conversations with them, learn from them, learn with them. And,” says Wiehe with a grin, “you can relive your glory days of go-karting and laser tag!”

Foster care becomes important when teachers or counselors report a situation where children are at risk, or a family is for some reason, unable to parent effectively. “There are currently 82 children in foster care in Arlington, said Erica Serrano, Outreach and Recruitment Specialist for the Arlington County Department of Human Services.

“Summer is always a high call month. As children resume in person activities such as school, camps, and extra-curricular activities we expect to get referrals to foster care from the mandated reporters who up to now haven’t had much direct contact with children. We need to be ready for those calls,”

For more information about fostering in Arlington, see: [Openheartsopenhomes@arlingtonva.us](mailto:Openheartsopenhomes@arlingtonva.us) or visit

[www.arlingtonva.us/fostercare](http://www.arlingtonva.us/fostercare)

The dates of the next Information sessions are:

Tuesday, June 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 18 at 10 a.m.

## 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.

### Basketball League

Summer Youth 3v3 Basketball League. Stay active this summer by playing basketball with friends. Kids in grades 5-12, register for an eight-week, games-only season that starts June 20 for just \$35. Games are played at Drew, Gunston, High View, Thomas Jefferson and Virginia Highlands. Sign up by May 30. The fee reduction

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### Friday/May 14

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SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7





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**Contact: Judy Massabny,**  
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55+ Programs are virtual. A 55+ Membership is required to attend (\$20 annual fee). Learn more at [parks.arlingtonva.us](http://parks.arlingtonva.us), search 55+ member. To join or register, go to [registration.arlingtonva.us](http://registration.arlingtonva.us) or call 703-228-4747.

### VIRTUAL AND OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

Movie discussion about "Rebecca," Thursday, May 13, 3 p.m. Registration # 913402-37.

Travel discussion to focus on favorite meals and culinary treats from around the world, Thursday, May 13, 3 p.m. Registration # 913402-28.

Favorite desserts and memories, Friday, May 14, 3 p.m. Registration # 913501-07.

Explore the art of drawing with community arts programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Friday, May 14, 1 p.m. Hear about various techniques in charcoal, pencil and pastels. Registration # 913301-03.

Fast paced walking group, two to three mile loop, some hills, Friday, May 14, 9 a.m. Leave from Aurora Hills, 55+ Center, 735 S. 18th Street. Registration # 913201-07.

Early morning art activities with materials found at home, Monday, May 24, 7 a.m. Presented by community arts programmer, Jennifer Droblyen. Registration # 913301-08.

Tai Chi in the park with experienced volunteers, Monday, May 24, 10 a.m., Virginia Highlands Park, 1600 S. Hayes Street. Registration # 913105-12.

Monday morning meet-up with fellow 55+ members, May 24, 10 a.m. Registration # 913801-19.

Genealogy 101, led by advanced researcher Eileen Bogdanoff, Tuesday, May 25, 11:30 a.m. Registration # 913400-21.

Yarn creations, crochet and knit with 55+ members, Wednesday, May 26, 1 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center, 2121 N. Culpeper Street. Registration # 913703-24.

Acoustic Hour in the park, live music from the 50s to the present, Wednesday, May 26, 12:30 p.m., Virginia Highlands Park, 1600 S. Highland Street. Registration # 913802-02.

Cold War intelligence in the skies. Scott Willey, senior docent National Air and Space Museum, will discuss the Cold War Aviation exhibit, Wednesday, May 26, 1:30 p.m. Registration # 913400-14.

Sudoku games, beginners and pros welcome, Thursday, May 27, 2 p.m. Registration # 913601-03.

Return of the cicadas, discover where they went, why they are back and more with Park Naturalist Ken Rosenthal, Thursday, May 27, 6 p.m. Registration # 913400-02.

Copy artworks seen in museum during 55+ Travel excursions, Thursday, May 27, 10 a.m. Registration # 913301-17.

Line dance in the park, watch the teacher demonstrate the steps, Friday, May 28, 10 a.m. Easy for beginners, partner not needed. Registration # 913701-11.



# Arlington Honors Fallen Police Officers

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

**A**cting Arlington County Police Chief Charles Penn stands in front of a plaque "In Valor There Is Hope" in the plaza outside police headquarters reading the names of the seven fallen ACPD officers on Monday, May, 10. ACPD and the Arlington County Sheriff's Office commemorated National Police Week in a virtual ceremony by honoring the lives of the Arlington's seven fallen police officers dating from 1935 to 2016.

"In their unwavering devotion and selfless acts of heroism. We pledge to never forget their sacrifice." Penn continues, "We ask what drew them to their profession—why they did choose law enforcement? To lead, protect, give back. We want to say thank you. We are routinely inspired by your commitment and pledge to never forget your sacrifice."

This last year was an unprecedented challenge with the pandemic. There were 254 deaths from Covid in Arlington; and more than 581,000 deaths from Covid in the US.

Arlington County Board Chair Matthew Di Ferrante attended on behalf of the County Board. He issued a proclamation that allowed the flags to be flown at half staff, proclaiming May 10, 2021 as Police Officer's Day and taking a moment to remember.

As "Amazing Grace" played in the background, the names of Arlington's fallen officers are read aloud.

Special Police Officer Louis Shaw died Dec. 6, 1935 when a gasoline tanker struck his patrol car, pinning him in his vehicle when it burst into flames. His death preceded the creation of the ACPD and nearly 70 years later the Arlington County Board passed a resolution recognizing Officer Shaw's sacrifice.

Detective Russell Pettie was killed in the line of duty on Jan. 20, 1954 as he attempted to serve a sanity warrant at the subject's residence and was hit in the left temple by a shot fired from a .30-30 rifle.

Motorcycle Officer Arthur Chorovich was killed on Dec. 5, 1964 when his motorcycle was struck in an intersection while he was responding to a Code 3 fire in Virginia Square.

Officer Israel Gonzalez was killed on Oct. 25, 1972 during a bank robbery at the Arlington Trust Company in Crystal Plaza. While Gonzalez was on a routine bank check, he encountered suspects inside the bank disguised as telephone workmen. He was shot three times in the groin, once in the left shoulder and once in the right rear shoulder and died from his wounds.

Officer George Pomraning was killed on Sept. 2, 1973 while transporting a prison-



**Detective  
Russell Pettie**



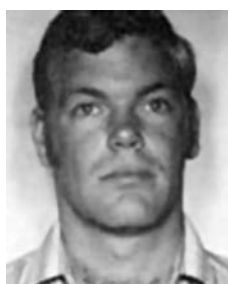
**Corporal  
Harvey Snook III**



**Officer  
George Pomraning**



**Officer  
Israel Gonzalez**



**Officer J  
ohn Buckley**



**Special Police  
Officer Louis Shaw**



**Officer  
Arthur Chorovich**

er in his police car who was unruly and appeared to be under the influence of drugs. The subject pulled out a hidden gun from his boot and shot officer Pomraning three times, mortally wounding him.

Officer John Buckley was shot and killed on April 15, 1977 while responding to a silent alarm at Virginia National Bank. When he confronted the robbers at the bank's entrance, they shot him in the chest, and he later died at Arlington Hospital.

Corporal Harvey Snook III died on January 14, 2016 as a result of the cancer he contracted when he responded to the attack on the Pentagon which was hit by American Airlines Flight 77. He participated in the recovery efforts for the following week collecting evidence and the remains of bodies and was diagnosed with cancer in 2024 related to the recovery efforts. He had served with ACPD for 27 years.

Road, Suite 6, Alexandria. The Memory Café, a social gathering for individuals living with memory loss and their families, will be held on the first Friday of every month. Registration is free and highly recommended to reserve spots, which are open on a first come first served basis. To reserve a spot, please call 571-210-5551 or email bdesai@seniorhelpers.com. Visit [www.dementiacareconnections.com/memory-cafe](http://www.dementiacareconnections.com/memory-cafe) or [www.seniorhelpers.com/arlington-alexandria-va](http://www.seniorhelpers.com/arlington-alexandria-va) for more.

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

home fruit trees. Speaker Kirsten Conrad, Extension Agent for Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, will explain how to grow a viable fruit crop without the use of pesticides or fungicides. Free. RSVP at <https://mgnv.org/events/> to receive link to participate.

## ONGOING

Monthly Memory Café. 1-3 p.m. at 7910 Andrus

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## A False Sense of Security



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As previously referred to in a recent column, even though I am hardly cancer-free; nonetheless, I am cancer interruptus for the next four weeks. That means I have no cancer-related activities: no lab work, no scans, no infusions, no injections, no appointments, no video visits, no interaction whatsoever. Other than taking my daily thyroid cancer pill (the side effects of which are marginal at worst), with which I ingest another 50-plus pills (supplements and so forth), I am, too quote my late father, "unencumbered" by my less-than-ideal circumstances. I wouldn't say I'm actually on vacation, but I'm certainly willing to say, there's a definite break in the action. It's not exactly a "staycation," nevertheless, it is a positive occasion, and one with which I can live.

Not that being diagnosed with "terminal" (originally) cancer and/or still undergoing active treatment is ever fun; tolerable is as grandiose a description as I'll accept. However, four weeks without any involvement with my oncologist and endocrinologist or with any health care-related staff, puts a real bounce in my step; my neuropathy notwithstanding. Though I have difficulty walking and especially running, I am, for the next four weeks anyway, on easy street, figuratively speaking. The psychological wear and tear us cancer patients (especially the ones characterized as "terminal") endure is ever present and any excuse/opportunity to let one's mind wander to a place other than your presumptive demise, is a mental trip very much worth taking.

Oddly enough, a month of not having anything to do with my cancer team/healthcare facility is hardly the norm. Usually, there's more than enough cancer-related activities to keep me preoccupied. In its own unique way, the nothingness is kind of challenging. I keep looking over my shoulder, almost literally, as the great Satchel Page once said ("to see if anybody's gaining on me"), and flipping the pages on my appointment book to see if I've whiffed somehow on some of my usual and customary obligations. I mean: it is so rare to be so disconnected when you've been diagnosed with a "terminal" disease. As you might imagine, cancer treatment is very hands-on. Not much is left to chance. Moreover, cancer is very unpredictable and insidious. Often it is in control, despite the oncologist's best effort. To be thrown into this cancer-centric world after mostly standing still, healthwise, for 54 and a half years, is a fate not worse than death, but one, depending on the type of cancer you have, which could very well lead to a premature death.

After decades of neglect, the last 15 or so years has seen a huge increase in funding for lung cancer research which in turn has led to more than a dozen new drugs - and an entire new class of drugs: immunotherapy, for the treatment of lung cancer. The result has been increased survivability and quality of life for those of us so diagnosed. And very directly, I have been the beneficiary of some of these drugs: avastin, alimta and tarceva having been my life extenders. Where despair once dominated the initial prognosis, now there is hope. It's not so much a cure as it is a way to make cancer a chronic disease, one which requires a lifetime of monitoring, like diabetes, as an example; but it's potentially for a lifetime, not for a life with very little time.

At this immediate juncture, I am being treated, but still living my life - outside, and rarely ever in a medical facility. Not having to endure the ongoing exposure and reminder that I have cancer and a shortened life expectancy to boot, enables me not only to breathe easier, but also allows me to take an occasional deep breath as well. A deep breath which doesn't lead to a coughing fit, a fit which, for us lung cancer patients is never a good sign.

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





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