



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

Supervisor Dan Storck talked about the efforts to save River Farm. Fairfax County created history overlay zoning for the property. From left, Attorney General Mark Herring, Storck, Sen. Surovell and Del. Krizek.

River Farm Preservation Efforts Gather Momentum

NOVA Parks and Northern Virginia Conservation Trust hope to purchase River Farm to keep it open to the public.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Supporters to protect River Farm gathered around the gate of the property on May 12 to reiterate the desire to preserve the historic property, citing the intentions of the original donor, the current laws, and recent accomplishments on the national, state and local level to preserve it as an open space, open to the public.

"We definitely are for a positive resolve, we don't want it to be sold to a developer," said Aaron Kershaw, a representative from the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, who held his homemade sign alongside fellow conservation trust representative Greg Meyer. They were among a crowd of about 50 people at the gate who had fond memories of the farm, including nearby residents Neal

and Soraya Bambha. "When our kids were little, we took them to programs at the farm," said Soraya Bambha. "Our daughter learned to garden there, she has fond memories," she said.

Stating their support for the farm were Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring, Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon), Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36) and Del. Paul Krizek (D-44). Each had a turn at the podium, but there didn't seem to be an inkling of compromise with the current owner, the American Horticultural Society, who have been there since 1973, after purchasing the property with a donation from a donor who specified the property must remain open to the public.

"They've always used the word 'hope,'" said Storck, "hope is not enough."

In April, Senator Adam Ebbin (D-Alexandria) and Krizek worked

with the Virginia Senate Finance and Appropriations and House Appropriations Committees to raise funds to save the farm. Another chunk of money was identified by the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee to be allocated to Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust to assist in the purchase of the multi-million-dollar property.

Herring looked at the terms the donor put forth years ago, and noted that the AHS should "honor the intention of the donor," he said. Surovell looked at the efforts from the various levels of government. "The collaboration between the federal, state and local governments sends a signal that they just can't do anything they want with this property," he said.

The American Horticultural Society is made up of individuals from all over the area.

"The [American Horticultural Society] board doesn't seem to understand that we have laws in this state that pertain to them," Surovell said.

Krizek called the property a "jewel," and noted that they "don't want to see paradise paved over,"

SEE RIVER FARM, ON PAGE 8

Community Presses New Police Chief and Chairman for Answers

Residents call for starting over on police chief, not being part of Davis' "redemptive" career journey.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On day four in his new position as Chief of Police Fairfax County, the ghosts of Kevin Davis' law enforcement past clung heavily in the County's public arena of the May 6 virtual Community Input Session hosted by Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D-At-large), Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Lee). The problem was the community's concerns were no longer confined to the Board's hiring process and appointment of Davis as chief of police. While the non-disclosure of decades-old civil lawsuits with judgments entered against Davis from incidents as a young sworn law enforcement officer, including use-of-force and ruling of violation of constitutional rights, old news community concerns escalated with new findings and reactions the week of May 3.

County residents questioned a litany of recent incidents, 2016-2018, that came to light, this time with Davis employed

not as a young cop in 1993 and 1999 but in high-ranking law enforcement leadership roles. These and other matters shook the trust and unhinged for many faith in Davis's ability and transparency as Police Chief of Fairfax County.

Davis shared at the forum three words that held meaning for him-transformation, accountability, and transparency. "I'm all about accountability, both for police officers [and] myself; and people who commit crimes. There has to be a pathway back to success," he said. "My track record of nearly three decades is a journey," Davis said. As reported May 7 by FCPD: "I think 2021 is the perfect opportunity for me to return to what I love."

The two-hour virtual engagement on May 6 provided a platform for Davis to share his track record, lay out his vision for policing in Fairfax County, and community speakers to comment and question him and Chairman McKay with immediate response.

McKay said they were aware of Davis' incidents that caused SEE COMMUNITY, ON PAGE 12



SCREENSHOT

Kevin Davis, new Fairfax County Police Chief at the Community Input Session on May 6.

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NEWS



During the closing minutes at the farmer's market, Rich Keil collects the remaining food for the United Community pantry.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Helen Walutes of the Rotary Club of Mount Vernon, awards Rich Keil of the Mount Vernon Kiwanis Club for his work on many area projects.

Dedication to Recognized by Local Rotary Club

Mount Vernon Kiwanis Club member makes a difference.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Rich Keil of the Mount Vernon Kiwanis Club doesn't shy away from anything. He's been an energetic participant in the local food drives, Christmas tree sale fundraisers and working with the United Community to help the less fortunate. He even gets out the toolbox when fellow club members have a car problem or a mechanical issue at home.

It is this spirit that makes Keil the winner of the Rotary Club's very first "You Make a Difference," award in Mount Vernon.

Dan Rinzel is a co-president at the Kiwanis and has worked with Keil over the years, pointing out that after the Christmas tree sales each winter, Keil's job is not done. He then stores all the equipment at his house, and for the food drives, he puts in a lot of time to make it happen. Through it all, Rinzel noted that Keil stays low key, and doesn't seek credit for all that he's done. "We had to push him to accept this award," Rinzel said. "Rich Keil is well deserving of this," he added.

Each food drive gets between 900 to

2,000 pounds of food, and Keil makes sure it's delivered to the United Community Food Pantry after each drive. "Without his dedicated efforts, these food drives would not occur," it said on the nomination form.

Keil appreciates the efforts all the members of the Kiwanis Club put in, and does feel a personal sense of responsibility for the community he lives in. "It's rewarding personally to help those less fortunate," Keil said.

The purpose of the Mount Vernon Rotary "You Make A Difference" award is to recognize those who perform support service to others, consistent with the Rotary International motto "Service Above Self." The prize is a \$1,000 cash grant for organizations in the Mount Vernon area. It is an award that is just gaining traction in the area and the local Rotary hopes it will grow in the future. "We think this is going to grow," said Rotary member Helen Walutes.

The International Rotary Club dates back to 1905, and have now grown to 35,000+ clubs that work together to promote peace, fight disease, provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene, save mothers and children, support education and grow local economies.



Some produce of the leftover produce from the local farmer's market, like these watermelons for United Community.

Treasury Launches State and Local Covid Relief Funds

U.S. Senators Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine applauded the Treasury Department's launch of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, established by the American Rescue Plan Act.

"We welcome the \$7.2 billion in relief for Virginia and are pleased the Biden Administration has listened to our calls to give states, localities, and tribes significant flexibility in determining how best

to use these emergency funds," said the Senators. "These funds will allow the Commonwealth and localities to recover from the economic harm of COVID, promote public health, invest in broadband, make up for lost revenue, and address many of the other impacts of the pandemic. We will keep working with the Commonwealth and local governments to ensure Virginians receive this much-needed relief."

The Virginia state government will re-

ceive nearly \$4.3 billion from these funds. An additional amount of approximately \$2.9 billion will be allocated to municipalities the following way for local areas:

Alexandria: \$59,633,833

Arlington County: \$46,003,782

Fairfax County: \$222,894,638

Fairfax City: \$4,665,409

Falls Church: \$2,839,181

Non-entitlement funds: approximately \$633,000,000

Allocations for non-entitlement local governments will soon be released and will provide an additional \$633 million in relief to Virginia cities and towns. Tribal governments will receive their allocation amounts after submitting their requests for funding to the Treasury.

Eligible state, metropolitan city, and county governments may now request their allocation through the Treasury Submission Portal.

Alexandria Old Town Springtime Art festival

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NPS Shares Road Diet Plan for GW Parkway

Virtual meeting on
May 10 gives road
users a voice; more
than 700 people have
commented.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

When the National Park Service announced the road diet plan for the George Washington Memorial Parkway earlier this spring, many were left with questions. Park officials addressed the questions with a web page and online conferences, where the plan was discussed.

Through mail, email and online meetings, the National Park Service has heard over 700 comments about their parkway plans. They did not specify if the comments were positive or negative.

On May 10, they discussed the plan in a virtual meeting, and many joined in to voice their opinions. Their plan, the "George Washington Memorial Parkway Traffic and Safety Context Sensitive Solutions Assessment," identifies improvements to make the road safer and protect the parkway's scenery and history. The NPS plans to make improvements through education, engineering and enforcement. They will proactively

encourage good driving behavior, make improvements through design, construction and vegetation management and encourage drivers to lower their speed.

There are nine places along the parkway between Old Town Alexandria and the Mount Vernon Plantation where things are going to change, and as indicated on the map. About two thirds of the actual lanes will be impacted. Road diets where two lanes will turn into one lane and a turn lane, and roundabouts, have been eyed as a possible solution at Tulane Drive, though some say more than one roundabout is needed.

At Belle View Boulevard, where many bicyclists and pedestrians sprint across, a median U-turn has been discussed as a partial solution. Adding delineators, which are movable posts between lanes from Belle Haven Boulevard to Belle View Road is on the NPS list for that location.

The Fairfax Alliance on Better Bicycling is also aware of the changes coming to the parkway, and the negative impact excessive speeds have to pedestrians and bicycle traffic, urging cyclists to speak up on the presentations.

"We also strongly recommended road diets and other measures to calm driver speeds," FABB said in their blog.

On Thursday, May 20 at 7 pm. NPS is planning another virtual meeting with GWMP Superintendent Charles Cuvelier, who will give a presentation on the study.

<https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/management/south-parkway-safety-study.htm>



This park service map shows the areas of concern on the lower George Washington Parkway.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



Alexandria and Northern Virginia elected officials help Inova President and CEO Dr. J. Stephen Jones, fifth from right, cut the ribbon to officially open the Inova Cares Clinic for Women May 8 in Alexandria.

Women's Clinic Opens in West End

Inova expands women's health, sexual assault and trafficking services.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
THE GAZETTE

Elected officials from throughout the region gathered in Alexandria's West End May 8 to celebrate the opening of two new Inova Health System community health clinics that will focus on women's health and medical evaluations for sexual assault and human trafficking survivors.

"We are honored to be able to expand into the Alexandria community," said Inova Health System CEO Dr. J. Stephen Jones. "Our presence here will allow us to serve the greater population of the entire region regardless of anyone's need or ability to pay for their health care."

The new Inova Cares Clinic for Women will provide obstetrics and gynecological services for uninsured women. Additionally, a new Inova Ewing Forensic Assessment and Consultation Teams department (FACT) will provide expert medical evaluations and forensic evidence collection for survivors of human trafficking, sexual assault, child abuse and domestic violence. Both clinics are located next to the current Inova Cares Clinic for Families and Inova Transitional Services at 4700 King Street.

"I am proud of the services Inova is providing because they are so comprehensive," said state Sen. Barbara Favola (D-31). "A patient who comes here will get a complete evaluation and comprehensive array of services, which is just what we need for the most vulnerable in our community."

Clinical technician Dana Ismail, WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Dr. Rolel Mbaidjol with former Inova clinic patient Dana Ismail and Ismail's mother Nejia Kamaraki at the May 8 opening of the Inova Cares Clinic for Women in Alexandria.

who was born and raised in Libya, became a patient of the Inova Cares Clinic for Women when she was diagnosed with endometriosis and subsequently needed surgery.

"The doctors went above and beyond to manage my health and to ensure I had a strong support system to help with the recovery process," said Ismail, who was a guest speaker at the event. "The experience changed my life, leading me to a career in healthcare and now as a volunteer at the clinic in Falls Church. I gained a unique perspective into the field of women's health and the need for services for our underserved populations."

Other Inova Cares Clinics for Women are located in Falls Church, Herndon and the Mount Vernon area of Fairfax County.

"We are lucky to have Inova in this region," said Virginia State Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw (D-35). "These clinics will provide a lot more facilities than we already have in this area."



Inova President and CEO Dr. J. Stephen Jones speaks at the opening of the Inova Cares Clinic for Women May 8 in Alexandria.



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Respecting the Feelings of ‘Other’

BY FARAH AHMAD

When I was in elementary school back in the '80s, I came to school after celebrating Eid and closed my sweaty hands into fists. I was trying to hide the henna designs on my hand.

But a girl noticed, scrunched up her nose in disgust, and asked me. “What is that orange stuff on your hand?” “Is that a disease or something?” I shook my head and muttered under my breath, “not unless a disease forms pretty flower and teardrop designs.”

Back then, knowledge of Islam was minimal. Teachers were unaware of Ramadan or Eid. It got tiring explaining to kids why I was fasting and that, no, I could not even drink water.

Then September 11th happened. Islam became the new headline. People swarmed bookstores looking for Qur’anic sources about terrorism or jihad. They pointed to the oppression of women in hijabs. They misquoted and misled. Anyone brown or “Middle-Eastern” looking became a suspicious person who might be carrying a bomb inside their jacket.

I bought into the negative hype

myself, becoming defensive, and internalizing the responsibility of being the sole representative of my faith everywhere I went. As an American-born and raised girl, I was suddenly being treated like an “other.”

I began learning my civil rights and advocating for myself. I trained FBI agents and police officers on Islam. I spoke up at schools, to educate teachers about the Islamic faith and make teachers and coaches aware of students who were fasting during classes, exams, track meets, and games. Some educators listened and others shook their heads meaning, “this is not my problem.”

I hoped my children would have it better than I did. But as students at Fairfax County Public Schools, they still feel like they have to hide who they are or choose between spiritually significant days and tests and schoolwork. Standardized tests, like the SOEs are still scheduled during the month of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid. Children are still receiving the message that their religious needs are, “not my problem” by school leaders.

In an effort to advocate for my son and other Muslim kids, I

joined the board-appointed Fairfax County Public School’s religious task force committee. I hoped that FCPS administrators and board members would find just and equitable solutions for the many Muslims across our county.

But my experience trying to represent a minority community within the school system left me feeling appalled and heartbroken. I felt I was again the “other” in our public school community.

I was disheartened watching the FCPS board debate and decision against closing school on four days coinciding with major faith groups in our community. Seemingly educated people displayed a complete lack of understanding about the people of diverse faiths in our community.

Muslims shouldn’t be measured by our absences during Ramadan or Eid. We should be recognized as people who give back in charity during this time and ask our children to do the same. On these days, we reflect, rejuvenate and model for our children the importance of gratitude, forgiveness, and a connection with something greater than ourselves—lessons that are as valuable as the ones

they learn inside the classroom. We aren’t statistics in a database: We are Muslim families, who like our Christian friends would like to spend time with our loved ones on our most holy days, especially after a tumultuous year of losses.

Honoring the holy days of diverse faith communities provides an opportunity to create awareness and cultural sensitivity. Maybe teachers or students who have never met a Muslim, or who don’t know about Islam, will pause and ask, why are all these friends gone today? Perhaps students will learn to respect a classmate who is fasting, or not to pull off a hijab. Maybe it will teach someone that Islam is more than just a headline or a stereotype.

FCPS prides itself on being diverse, but diversity is more than a bullet point on letterhead. In Islam, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says that our words and actions should be the same. FCPS needs to heed these words and truly listen to the soul and the needs of their faith-based communities.

Farah Ahmad is a Fairfax County parent and a member of leadership at the McLean Islamic Center.

New Charitable Event Kicked Off Mental Health Awareness Month

Kicking off Mental Health Awareness Month, a new golf tournament hosted by Alliance Executive Search and CBRE on May 3 raised more than \$26,000 to benefit PRS, a leading behavioral health nonprofit serving Northern Virginia.

“In our new normal, it was great to be outside meeting new people and introducing them to PRS. We appreciate Alliance and CBRE’s generosity in hosting this great tournament that benefited those we serve,” said Joseph Getch, CEO, PRS. “Bringing business executives and community leaders together to show support for those experiencing mental health issues was the perfect way to kick off Mental Health Awareness Month.”

PRS received \$26K from golf tournament to support mental health and suicide prevention.

More than 72 golfers participated in the tournament. Held at Westwood Golf Club in Vienna, the event featured 18 holes, a cocktail reception, and speakers, including a PRS client, who discussed his struggle and recovery. Alliance and CBRE plan to make this an annu-

al event that supports PRS. As a nonprofit providing mental health, crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to thousands across Northern Virginia, PRS and its services are needed more than ever during this period.

“Breaking the stigma around mental health issues is the way forward. By hosting this tournament, we were able to introduce more business leaders to PRS and the critical issues they are solving in our community,” said Brian Mead-

ows, Partner, Alliance Executive Search, and PRS Board Member.

Along with Alliance and CBRE, nearly 20 organizations sponsored the event, including Cassidy & Company, Sage, Intacct, McGriff, IntelliBridge, TriNet, SpeedPro Northern Virginia and Ridgeline International. Hole sponsors included: DPR, OTJ Architects, Hungry, AB, Bognet, Estatespace, WashREIT, SemiFin, GradFin, Rob Sturm, and the PRS Board of Directors.

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TUESDAY/MAY 18

Stroke Awareness Lecture. Noon to 1

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10

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

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River Farm Preservation Efforts Gather Momentum



The future of River Farm in Mount Vernon has been a topic of discussion for many with links to this area.



Many if not most Mount Vernon residents are against any development plan at River Farm.



FROM PAGE 1

he said.

In August 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, the AHS announced their intent to sell the property on the open real estate market. The price was reportedly somewhere around \$60 million. But that number has been in question. In the latest talks, they were offered between \$14-16 million, said Allen Rowsome, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust executive director, which he called “a good, generous offer,” but the situation still remains deadlocked.

On the AHS website, there is a class schedule, information about the features of the farm, history, gardening, and a link to the latest copy of “The American Gardener,” but it takes some digging to find any mention of the sale. On their release, they state their latest reaction to an offer made in March. “The American Horticultural Society board of directors has voted to decline a proposal submitted by NOVA Parks, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and their partners to purchase an option to acquire AHS’s headquarters property, River Farm, on the banks of the Potomac River,” it read.

Surovell tweeted after: “The @AHS_Gardening Board meets on Friday. The community, 2 Attorneys General & three governments wait to see if they do the right thing and start working with @NOVA_Parks to @SaveRiverFarm — the clock is ticking.”

The saga continues.

Colonial Days at the Farm

The 25-acre River Farm has a long history, starting with Giles Brent Jr., and his wife, a princess of the Piscataway tribe, who owned it in 1653 or 1654, the listing states. Then George Washington bought it and made it part of his plantation. Malcolm Matheson bought the property in 1919 and remodeled the home, and in 1973, American Horticultural Society (AHS) board member and philanthropist Enid Annenberg Haupt provided funds for the AHS to purchase the property, the listing states.

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust representatives Aaron Kershaw, left, and Greg Meyer made signs to let their feelings be known.



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

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.

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.

Snakes — Misunderstood and Mistreated All Too Often

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Working diligently in her home office recently, Anita Drummond was jolted from her project when she spotted an eastern ratsnake slithering down a nearby tree and through the leaf litter in her Tauxemont backyard. A few blocks away in Hollin Hall that same week, Theresa Hillian happened upon a Dekay's brownsnake under some empty mulch bags. Dekay's brownsnakes are often misidentified as baby copperheads, so she was relieved to learn that it was not venomous.

As temperatures warm, snakes leave their winter hibernacula and become more active. Snakes can range from five inches long to 30-feet. Think Burmese pythons. Legless reptiles with many joints, snakes can crawl, climb and swim. Their forked tongue is a sensory organ that helps them smell.

Snakes' "paired organs are staggered to fit inside their long bodies and most lack a working left lung," wrote Alonso Abugattas in *The Reptiles and Amphibians* of the



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Herpetologist Caroline Seitz with KidsNature-Shows.com holds an eastern gartersnake in Dyke Marsh. She advises people not to handle snakes.

Washington, D. C. Metropolitan Area. "All are carnivorous or eat eggs and they swallow their prey whole." A May 2 Washington Post article reported that Jennifer Riley, a Blue Ridge Wildlife Center veterinarian, surgically removed an indigestible golf ball from a snake's gastrointestinal area.

Local Snakes

Fairfax County has around 20 snake species, according to county Wildlife Biologist Katherine Edwards, most of which are non-venomous and pose no threat to people, she says. The only venomous snake typically seen in Fairfax County is the eastern cop-

perhead. Adult copperheads usually have a bronze-colored, triangular head, hour-glass-shaped bands and cat-like vertical pupils. Non-venomous snakes have round pupils.

Snakes get a bum rap. In the Bible, a serpent in the Garden of Eden convinced Eve to eat forbidden fruit. Adam tried it too, triggering God to expel them from the garden. Folklorists have used snakes as a metaphor for evil. Medusa of Greek mythology had a head of venomous snakes. If you stared into her eyes, you would turn to stone.

Reframing

One traditional medical symbol, including the U.S. Army Medical Corps, has traditionally been a winged staff with two entwined snakes. Snake venom has potential therapeutic properties, according to National Institute of Health experts.

Snakes are a natural part of our environment. "Snakes play an integral role in maintaining balance in the ecosystem by serving as both predators and prey," Edwards explains. "Snakes provide a valuable service helping keep insect and rodent populations in check. Snakes should be respected and not feared." Snakes can be a sign of a healthy environment.

In the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, eastern ratsnakes bask in the trees on sunny days. Adults are shiny black with a white throat and a partially checkerboard-pat-

Humans and Wildlife

Supervisor Daniel Storck will host an online meeting on May 19, 7 p.m., at which county animal protection and wildlife staff will discuss human interaction with wildlife. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/>.

Virginia Herpetology Society, <http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com>

terned belly. They eat white-footed mice, primary hosts for ticks that carry Lyme's disease, for example.

In Huntley Meadows Park, northern water snakes, eastern garter snakes and rough green snakes are the most common species, reports Cathy Ledec, president of the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park.

With 30 known species, Virginia's official state snake is the eastern garter snake. It's widespread and survives well in human-disturbed habitats.

Snake-People Interactions

Snakes do not bite people unless provoked. Most snake bites occur when someone deliberately threatens, handles or harms the snake, causing it to become defensive. "The key to being safe around snakes is to give them their space and simply leave them alone," says Edwards. "When they encounter people, their usual reaction is to flee and seek refuge."

So, what should we do about snakes? Admire their silent, slithery movements and let them be.

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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
GAZETTE PACKET

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 years. Most muslims find 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."

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

p.m. Zoom webinar. In honor of stroke awareness month, join the stroke-trained specialists for an interactive, virtual talk and Q&A session on stroke prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. Visit the website: <https://www.inovaevents.org/CREG/ClassDetails.aspx?sid=40&ClassID=34693>

TUESDAY/MAY 18

Mount Vernon Genealogical Meeting. 1-3 p.m. Via Zoom. Federal court records merit a close look by those putting together their genealogical puzzle. And there is no better guide than attorney, genealogist and acclaimed lecturer, Judy G. Russell. Nonmembers are welcome

to attend one free event each year. Register by May 12. Visit the website: <https://mvgenealogy.org>

ONGOING

Local, farm-fresh produce – including strawberries and asparagus – and more will be featured at the now-opened McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon Farmers Market. From 8 a.m. to noon every Wednesday (through December 22), 16 local farmers and food producers will sell fresh, locally grown vegetables and fruits; meats; Chesapeake Bay seafood; breads and pastries; honey, jams and jellies; milk, cheese and eggs; herbs and plants; and more. The market is located at the Sherwood Hall Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. All of the items sold at the market are grown or

produced by the vendors and come from within a radius of 125 miles. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT cards can be used. As a bonus, the market will match up to \$20 per market visit in SNAP dollars for fruits and vegetables.

This year's vendors are: Arnest Seafood – crab cakes, scallops, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and more Grace's Pastries - cakes, pastries and breads, with a Caribbean touch Great Harvest Bread - breads and pastries Honey Brook Farms - meats and vegetables raised with no chemicals, gluten-free baked goods House of Empanadas –variety of empanadas King Mushrooms –variety of locally grown mushrooms Locust Grove Farm - vegetables and herbs Misty Meadow Farm Creamery - milk,

ice cream, cheese and eggs No. 1 Sons– pickles, kimchi, sauerkraut and kombucha teas Ochoa Produce - vegetables, herbs and flowers Traveling Shepherd Coffee Co. – variety of freshly roasted coffee Twin Springs Orchard - fruits, vegetables, cheese and more Valentine's Bakery & Meats - meats and baked goods.

COVID UPDATES

Quick Facts for Older Adults about COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments Vaccine eligibility is occurring in phases per the CDC and Virginia Department of Health. More information about vaccine rollout in Fairfax can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19. As more vaccine becomes available, there will be more options where

to access it. In the future, you will likely be able to access vaccine via your doctor, a health clinic or pharmacy. It takes two doses. Follow the directions of your vaccine provider to schedule your second dose. One caregiver can attend a vaccine appointment with their loved one. Vaccine-eligible people can register for appointments online or over the phone (no need to do both). Online: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19. Click on "Vaccination" at the top of the page and you will see registration information. After your registration is accepted, a scheduling link will be sent to you as vaccine becomes available. Call: 703-324-7404 to register for a vaccine via phone.

Off the Menu: Restaurant News and Notes

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Closures and openings – sometimes with one restaurant over the course of several days! – is the theme of the moment in the Alexandria food scene. Let's dig in.

Ernie's Original Crab House closes

After four decades, the venerable crab shack on King Street in Old Town closed its doors for good at the end of April. Representatives from the business wrote on social media: "It's been one long crazy ride, but the time has come for a new chapter. We want to thank everyone that's come thru and especially our regulars! We'll miss you! Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you. It's been our most sincere pleasure! Please stay safe in this crazy world that we live in."

Days later, a Bob and Edith's Diner T-shirt appeared in the window of the former Ernie's, portending new life for the old space in the coming months.

Goodies Frozen Custard and Treats to open in old ice house

The summer heat is about to cool off a few notches when Goodies opens its doors at 200 Commerce St., in the well-known "ice house" building on the corner. Already owner Brandon Byrd is doling out plenty of custardy goodness from his vintage Goodies truck in front of the former Mutual Ice Company building, but within a few weeks the indoor shop will be up and running. Looking for your next custard fix? Keep an eye on Goodies' social media for the latest truck hours in the meantime.

Blue and White Closes, Reopens

The Blue and White Carryout, a mainstay for to-go breakfast and lunch at 1024 Wythe Street, on the corner of Route 1, has had an

eventful few weeks. At the end of April, customers got word that the deli, which has been open since 1942, was closing. But lo! The story didn't end there. After much public outcry from faithful customers, the Blue and White reopened shortly thereafter and has once again begun serving breakfast and lunch to the community. Customers posted this week on Facebook from the carryout spot to prove it was open. "Blue & white is open, I repeat blue & white is still open ... bean soup, bologna n egg," posted one customer.

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

Ernie's Crab House from a March 2018 photo. Read on for possible future plans for the space on King Street.



GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

CALENDAR

NOW THRU JUNE 21

Taste of Old Town North. At various locations throughout Old Town North, Alexandria. Enjoy a stroll through the neighborhood with this year's reimagined Taste of Old Town North. Passport holders will be able to use their Passport to receive discounts at small businesses throughout Old Town North: The Arts and Cultural District, Parker-Gray and Braddock Road West. Passports may only be used once at each participating business; if 75% of a Passport has been used by June 21, the Passport holder will be entered into a drawing to receive prizes. Passports may be purchased online at oldtownnorth.org or at the Community Table at the Old Town North Thursday Farmer's Market. Proceeds will support the work of the Old Town North Community Partnership and ALIVE-inc.org. Visit www.oldtownnorth.org.

NOW THRU MAY 23

Those Spaces Between Us. At Target Gallery, Studio 2 of the Art Center, 105 N. Union Street, in Alexandria. The show is a hybrid digital and in-person exhibition that explores transition, ambiguity, and being on the threshold of change. Those Spaces Between Us considers the distances between people and their surroundings and how that divide becomes its own character in art, history, memories, and the stories people tell about themselves. Virtual Reception: Friday, May 14, 2021 at 7 p.m. Visit facebook.com/torpedofactory

NOW THRU MAY 16

Trees/Humans: Life in the Balance.

By Patricia Underwood. At the Athenaeum. In this exhibition Patricia Underwood employs photo images of ancient trees taken on her travels. Stop in the gallery for socially-distanced 'meet and greets' with Patricia Underwood on Saturday, April 10th, 2 — 4 p.m. Visit www.nvfaa.org.

MAY 2 TO MAY 31

The Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House announces the 58th Annual Needlework Show, Café, & Sale - a month-long event 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. where needlework pieces are submitted and displayed throughout the mansion at the Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House historic site. This year, the theme "Hindsight 2020: Needlework Expressions of a Historic Year" reflects the flow of emotions, observations, and reactions of this unprecedented time. The Show will run from May 2nd to May 31st, 2021 (except Tuesdays). This year the Show will culminate with a Needlework Tent Sale on May 31st, with a bounty of high-quality needlework pieces available for purchase!

WEDNESDAY/MAY 12

Birth of a Wetland. 9 - 10:30 a.m.

At Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Many factors combined to form the beautiful wetland habitat at Huntley Meadows Park. Adults can learn about the process during the "Birth of a Wetland" program. Discover how geology, human land use and wildlife worked together to create the central wetland at Huntley Meadows. Then, go on a naturalist-led walk to the wetlands to witness the results. See the plants and



Alexandria Old Town Spring Time Art Festival May 15-16

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At 300 John Carlyle Street, Alexandria. Visitors to the free, outdoor event in John Carlyle Square will see thousands of handmade, exquisite pieces of art from every medium. Masks are mandatory, social distancing will be enforced to maintain the comfort and safety of artists and guests during this artistic affair. Visit the website: <http://www.artfestival.com/festivals/alexandria-king-street-art-festival>

animals that call this habitat home. The program runs from 9 to 10:30 a.m., and the cost is \$9 per person. Bring binoculars if you have them. Call 703-768-2525.

THURSDAY/MAY 13

"Esperanza y Armonía." 5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. At The Rectory, 711 Princess Street, Alexandria. The Choir of Hope & Harmony | Dr. Diana Sáez. Classical Movements' Choir of Hope & Harmony returns for a dynamic showcase of songs from Latin America about romance, nostalgia and reminiscence. Conduct-

ed by leading specialist Dr. Diana Sáez, the program features repertoire from Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Venezuela, by composers Astor Piazzolla, Rafael Hernández, Inocente Carreño and others. Visit the website: <https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgardenconcerts/>

FRIDAY, MAY 14

Gadsby's Trivia Night. 7 p.m. Grab your favorite beverage and settle down for some trivia fun (with prizes) that will test your knowledge of history,

Alexandria, and American war heroes in honor of Memorial Day. Whether you're a single, a couple, or a couple of friends, this is a perfect way to spend a Friday evening. The questions are targeted for adults, but family teams are welcome. Tickets are \$20 per household, with all proceeds benefitting Gadsby's Tavern Museum. To register, visit www.gadsbystavernmuseum.us/. Cost: \$20 per household.

FRIDAY/MAY 14

Watercolor Painting Leaves workshop. 6 p.m. Learn to use watercolor techniques such as wet in wet, salt texture, lifting, and scratching to paint beautiful leaves. After painting leaves you will add realistic dew drops. Cost: \$50 Del Ray Artisans member / \$55 Non-member; plus supplies. Demonstration and hands-on activity, suitable for high school age and adults. For details and to register, see: <https://delrayartisans.org/event/dewy-leaves/>

SATURDAY/MAY 15

Write Like a Woman Networking Workshop. 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Facilitated by poet, author, and Poet Laureate of Alexandria, KaNikki Jakarta, this workshop welcomes amateur to professional women writers ages 18-100. Each workshop centers on uplifting and inspiring through writing and allows participants to enhance their writing styles. Visit nvfaa.org.

Community Presses New Police Chief and Chairman for Answers

FROM PAGE 1

community concern. “We believe in Fairfax County and community engagement, not one session, not one meeting, not one phone call, not one testimony,” He added, “No one is perfect. No agency is perfect. We always strive to improve.”

Davis opened by saying that he learned the importance and value of community early in his police career, to hear the voices of those telling how they want to be protected. “We cannot be successful without a diverse and engaged community. And neighborhoods cannot be safe without a police department that serves and protects with integrity and trust,” he said.

Davis provided background information by listing accomplishments as police chief in Prince George’s and Anne Arundel counties, Police Commissioner Baltimore City, and recipient of a 2019 fellowship award. Davis said he was the first police chief in the region to insist police officers carry Naloxone. He helped negotiate the terms of the consent decree for the Baltimore Police. The Open Society Foundations announced him as one of its 2019 recipients of its Leadership in Government Fellowships. According to Davis, he was the fifth police chief in the country to implement Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, “an immediate opportunity for police officers to offer those suffering from drug addictions to break the pipeline to prison.”

Davis did not refer to negative incidents, such as lawsuits where juries ruled against him in his role as a sworn police officer, incidents 1993 and 1996. He did not disclose the findings of “excessive use of force” by a Police Internal Review Board.

Davis did not disclose when a Cessna with Persistent Surveillance Systems’ cameras secretly flew over the City of Baltimore for eight months in 2016. The Baltimore Police Department, with him as Commissioner, used the plane to investigate crime, sometimes 10 hours a day, and the public did not know. It was only when citizens found out the program stopped. Baltimore Police released logs tracking flights over eight months, taking over 1 million snapshots of the streets below. Davis did not respond to a question during the session about whether he would promise not to use such surveillance here in Fairfax County.

Davis omitted his six-day lockdown of a Black neighborhood in Baltimore in 2017, after African American Baltimore police homicide Detective Sean Suiter was killed with his service revolver.



Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D-At-large) and Supervisor Rodney Lusk hosted the May 6 Community Input Session with Chief Davis.



Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Lee)

PHOTOS
SCREENSHOTS

Davis did not say the detective was set to testify to a grand jury regarding police corruption the day after he died. The neighborhood lockdown resulted in an ACLU lawsuit.

There was no discussion by Davis about his termination as Baltimore Commissioner by Mayor Catherine Pugh, who cited rising crime. Pugh is in jail now after her own scandal.

Davis failed to bring forward the 2018 Independent Review Board report on the death of Baltimore police homicide Detective Sean Suiter. It accuses him as former Baltimore Police commissioner of misleading the public: “The Commissioner repeatedly shared unverified and ultimately inaccurate information with the public, despite the emergence of forensic and other evidence.”

Davis previewed his 100-day plan for Fairfax County. He focused on critical areas the community demanded improvement: use of force reform, particularly, time, distance, and de-escalation; tactical repositioning of police officers in critical situations; implicit bias training and use of CompStat [Computer Statistics] that gathers real-time information and intelligence. Davis said FCPD would realign with One Fairfax. The department’s community-oriented policing strategies meant to reimagine policing would include a strong focus on a co-responder program. “I’m a big believer in that,” said Davis. The model involves police and mental health collaboration.

According to Davis, with his “strong executive experience as a progressive and reform police chief, he understood that police reform could not be punitive, done to police officers. “It must be done with them, and through them, and in collaboration with the community,” he said. “I look forward to meeting you in the days to come and working with you in the years to come as we move Fairfax County forward,” Davis said.

Community Input Session Q & A
Alicia Plerhoples of Dranesville

testified regarding the County’s process in hiring the chief. Addressing the Board of Supervisors, she said they must now do the difficult work to ensure racial justice in County policing. She said, “That begins with acknowledging your mistakes in hiring Chief Davis whose past misconduct was not disclosed to the public and possibly to the Board of Supervisors prior to his appointment.” Plerhoples cited the two civil suits against him [incidents: 1993 Spann v. Davis, 1999 Romjue v. Prince George’s County, Md, et al. Defendants (Davis and others)]: “In which his victims, at least one of whom is black, proved charges against Chief Davis for use-of-force and false imprisonment.” Plerhoples called on the Board “to remove Chief Davis from his position and conduct a transparent and thorough search for a new Chief of Police.”

Jeremy Monat of Burke addressed the Supervisors, saying while they defended their selection of Davis since incidents [1993, 1999] occurred decades ago, “contrary to the thrust of your statement, those are not the end of Davis’s abuses of power.” Monat said that in 2016, Davis, as Commissioner of the Baltimore Police Department, worked secretly with Persistent Surveillance Systems to fly a plane over the city of Baltimore. Referencing a story by Bloomberg BusinessWeek, Monat said, the wide-angle cameras captured an area of roughly 30 square miles. “[It] continuously transmitted real-time images to analysts on the ground...Even the mayor and the city council had not been told. Davis’ response did not take responsibility.” Monat said Davis should not be in another position of authority, this time over the people of Fairfax. Monat asked, “Chief Davis, do you pledge not to use mass surveillance against the people of Fairfax County?”

Davis did not answer yes or no. He said, “I’ve certainly changed, and grown, and learned many lessons throughout the course of my career. ... I have served com-



Bottom, from right, Kevin Davis, Chief of Fairfax County Police, Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Lee), and Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D-At-large) Fairfax County Board of Supervisors at the May 6, Community Input Session with Chief Davis.

munities that not only need public safety, but good public safety, and I look forward to bringing those reform efforts.”

Amanda Andere of Reston is the Executive Director of Funders Together to End Homelessness. She served on Chairman McKay’s Task Force on Equity and Opportunity, leading the Equitable Communities Committee. She said, “We need to start over. We need a process, rooted in equity, equity, that starts and ends with community input.” Andere said that a root problem identified during the task force was that “people of color and people who have lived expertise do not have the power to influence decision making.” She believed then that the Board embraced the essence of the recommendations in decision-making during the task force.

“And so, I felt like my time on the chairman’s committee was in vain and disrespected,” she said. “I hope you understand that how we feel about the process, the result, and your response to our concerns does not build trust in communities where government mistrust has been central to our experiences.”

Vicki Fishman is the Director of Government and Community Relations for Northern Virginia, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. It is the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, representing over 100 synagogues, schools, and institutions throughout the region. “As a community, we expect those empowered to preserve and protect a just society for all its members to conduct themselves in keeping with the law they are charged to uphold, adhering to the highest standards of decency, accountability, and responsibility,” Fishman said.

Fishman expressed disappoint-

ment at the lack of transparency by the Board of Supervisors in the hiring process and the need for adequate stakeholder input. “The trust and safety of the Fairfax community should have been the top concern...Soliciting written input from advocacy groups and sponsoring a hastily organized community call-in after the fact are completely insufficient measures.”

Ron Kuley is the president of the local firefighters’ union. He said McKay and Supervisor Lusk conducted countywide meetings to seek community input before the selection. He understood that Lusk put in considerable time meeting with community representatives and employee groups. “As a long-time employee and labor leader, I have faith in Chairman McKay, Supervisor Lusk, and the Board of Supervisors in their process and selection of Chief Davis,” he said

Kuley asked, “How do you, Chief Davis, plan on overcoming the negative comments and feedback that we’ve been hearing this evening and in the last couple of days here in Fairfax?”

Davis responded: “By being the best Chief of Police, you can possibly be. And that’s what I intend to do, and I’m going to put in the work and demonstrate to the entire community that I am the right person to lead this great agency.”

Terry Adams said that hundreds of police officers who served in Prince George’s County never used excessive force during Davis’ years of service. “It is difficult to sue a police officer for the performance of his or her duties... It’s even harder because of qualified immunity to find a police officer liable. Mr. Davis was twice found liable for either excessive force or false imprisonment,” Adams said.

“I am disappointed in the decision of the Board ... So, when

SEE COMMUNITY, PAGE 13
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NEWS

Community

FROM PAGE 12

you are a 21-year-old, you get a badge. You get a gun; you swear to protect and defend the Constitution of your locality, as well as the United States, and you violate that not once but twice there can be personal redemption. Professional redemption cannot be part of that. Not today."

In one of his final statements, Davis said he chooses not to get into public battles about 1993 and 1999 because "the six most important words in the English language are, 'I admit; I made a mistake.'"

"I have learned. I've grown, and I've matured. And I've served elsewhere with distinction," he said.

Davis held his first News Conference the next day, May 7. He retold his background story in its best light. Davis added that the criminal justice system is best when it has a "redemptive mindset" for offenders.

In his first five days as chief, Davis said he participated in several virtual and telephone meetings and stood at a homicide scene. He described seeing the hard work of Fairfax County detectives and crime scene investigators. "They care. This community cares. And I'm not going to let this community down," Chief Davis said.

On Sunday, May 9, Diane Burkley Alejandro, ACLU People Power Fairfax reflected on the Public Input Session. "Virtually everyone who spoke voiced strong opposition to the process used to select Chief Davis and questioned his past misconduct, including the six-day lockdown of a Black Baltimore neighborhood in 2017, which resulted in an ACLU lawsuit. This wasn't a conversation with the community; we were simply allowed to vent. Many specific questions were asked about what happened, but we received no answers at all from Chair McKay and non-responsive ones from Chief Davis. He now says what's past is past, it is time to move on. We will work with him on police reform and intend to hold him to his progressive words. But this process has shaken community trust in Fairfax, including the Board and the Chief. Unanswered questions and a trust deficit is not a good way to start," she said.

Kelly Hebron Chair, Fairfax Democratic Black Caucus started a petition to Chair, Board of Supervisor Jeff McKay and Rodney Lusk Lee District Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisor, and Penny Gross Mason District Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisor to recall Kevin Davis as Fairfax County Police Chief. Petition · Recall Kevin Davis as Fairfax County Police Chief · Change.org.

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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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HOME LIFE STYLE

Elevating the Bathroom

PHOTOS BY STACY ZARIN GOLDBERG

Ideas for budget and luxury bathrooms

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

Sometimes regarded as a strictly functional space, bathrooms might bring to mind brushing and flossing rather than style and comfort. Whether you’re working on a tight budget or creating the bathroom of your dreams, two local designers offer inspiration.

“Even if you’re only able to spend a limited amount of money, creativity is a necessity,” said Marcie Taylor of Marcie Taylor Designs in Alexandria.

Taylor recalls helping a couple who’d grown tired of the outdated master bathroom in their Springfield home, but couldn’t afford a total overhaul.

“I told them that they needed to invest in one statement piece and then add some less expensive accessories,” she said. “We salvaged a crystal chandelier and hung it over the bathtub to create a focal point. We replaced the grout around the tub and sink which looked dingy against the existing white tile. We then added a matte black faucet and found a shower head in the same color.”

When designers at InSite Builders & Remodeling transformed a cramped and outdated Jack and Jill bathroom in Bethesda into a master bath suite befitting a luxury spa, they had to expand the footprint of the bathroom by using square footage from an adjacent bedroom. The additional space was used to add a double sink, a new closet and a large zero-entry glass shower.

Helping to create a sense of tranquility, the design team used materials such as a white countertop, dark wood cabinets, a floating vanity, black fixtures, and a hinged glass shower door. “The shower is a major focal point,” said Stephen Gordon, InSite Builders & Remodeling. “It [has] full-size porcelain slabs which eliminate grout lines.”

“Even if you’re just doing a spruce-up, a bathroom project can seem like a major undertaking,” said Taylor. “But I can’t recall anyone who didn’t think it was worth the effort.”



White countertop, dark wood cabinets, floating vanity, black fixtures create a spa-like atmosphere in this bathroom by InSite Builders & Remodeling.



The hinged glass shower door are consistent with the contemporary design of this bathroom by InSite Builders & Remodeling.



Full-size porcelain slabs make the shower a major focal point in this bathroom by InSite Builders & Remodeling.

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