

The Arlington Connection

Ramy Benmessaoub chooses his free books carefully at the APAH Parade of Animals book event on June 2.



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JUNE 9-15, 2021

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PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



From left, Senator Adam Ebbin, Diana Mayhew, Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, Rob Pulciani.



From left, Diana Mayhew, Senator Adam Ebbin, Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, Rob Pulciani.

Amazon Plants Cherry Trees in National Landing

Amazon planted 12 cherry trees in National Landing to honor its partnership with the National Cherry Blossom Festival. Amazon served as a lead sponsor for the 2021 Festival, which was held March 20-April 11.

The 12 trees are located at 1201 South Hayes Street -- between 12th and 15th Streets, across from California Pizza Kitchen. A tree planting ceremony was held on Tuesday, May 25. In attendance were: Rob

Pulciani, vice president for Alexa International at Amazon; Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, president and executive director for National Landing Business Improvement District; Diana Mayhew, president & CEO for the National Cherry Blossom Festival; Senator Adam Ebbin (D-Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax); Vincent Verweij, urban forest manager for the Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation; and Carol Herwig, a certified arborist.

"Amazon is proud to call Arlington home and to be part of the fabric of the community as we continue to sustainably grow and build here," said Rob Pulciani, Vice President, Alexa International, Amazon.

"We are excited to continue our partnership with the National Cherry Blossom Festival by bringing the beauty of this regional celebration into the lives and homes of our community."

"As part of our strategic partnership

with the National Cherry Blossom Festival, we're thrilled to be planting a dozen Japanese Cherry trees in National Landing, that are a perfect complement to our work in creating a vibrant and green destination and celebrating our area's connection to the Tidal Basin and festivals for generations to come," said Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, President and Executive Director, National Landing Business Improvement District.



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Living Donor Liver Transplant Saves a Life

Doug Post of Arlington donates 65 percent of liver to his uncle.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Doug Post from Arlington flew to Seattle in early March and returned home with only 35 percent of his liver. His uncle, Tim Seafler, who lived in Alaska, had nonalcoholic fatty liver disease that seriously affected his quality of life. But Seafler's score on the calculation that determined eligibility for a deceased-donor organ was too low to make him eligible.

So when Post's mother decided to order a blood test for herself to determine whether she was a viable candidate to donate a liver to her brother, Post decided to get his tested as well. He flew to the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle to do the full testing. It turned out he was the perfect candidate and his mother might not have been.

"I am the right age, size and blood type. My uncle is 6'2" and I am 6 feet tall. A bigger person has a bigger liver so you can take a larger portion of the liver and it will grow back 100 percent." Transplant surgeons took 65 percent of Post's liver and told him it would grow back in three weeks and would be fully functioning in two-to-three months.

"For someone my age it was a low risk procedure," Post said. The surgeon at the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle talked him through it, "and I had a lot of confidence in the doctor that he could do the operation safely. I was convinced the chances of serious complications were really low."

Although the University of Washington team has performed 13 living-donor transplants, this



University of Washington Medical team who performed the liver transplant, the first for a resident of Alaska.



Doug Post, Arlington, and his uncle from Alaska who received a living donor liver transplant from Post pictured two days before the transplant in March.

was the first patient from Alaska to receive a living-donor transplant.

It wasn't an easy decision. "For me after seeing the state

my uncle was in and that he was unlikely to get a deceased liver donation, it seemed like the right thing for me to do." Many people put the organ-donor designation on their driver's license to offer an organ after they die. But most people don't decide to donate an organ while they are living. His uncle's nonalcoholic fatty liver disease was a progressive disease that took a turn for the worse in March 2020, with increasing brain fog. Seafler reported that simple conversation had become like solving a puzzle.

Despite Post's decision to go forward, the experience was more nerve wracking during a pandemic. He had to fly out two days early to get a negative COVID test. And Post explains, "I didn't want to fly out and get sick and bring it back or get sick coming back." But he

knew other people who had travelled during COVID. He wore two masks and used hand sanitizer. "I'm young in a healthy demographic. It wasn't holding me back."

After his surgery he says it was the trickiest.

There are no visitors in the hospital due to COVID restrictions "and post surgery you are on painkillers and not all the way there. There was nobody there for me to talk to and trying to use the phone to tell people I was alright when I was groggy was a tough thing to do."

Unexpected things can happen, and there were a couple of things they had to figure out after Seafler's surgery such as a blood infection and a bile duct that didn't repair correctly.

Seafler was hospitalized there three months but just flew back home to Eagle River Alaska in early June.

"He is doing a lot better," Post said.

Seafler said, "As soon as I woke up after surgery, I felt focused." He added, "When someone said something, the meaning of the words registered right away. I didn't have to think about it." Seafler was surprised and grateful that his nephew would donate an organ for him. "But he's the reason I'm still here."

Post was required to stay in Seattle for two weeks after the surgery before returning to resume his job in data science at Georgetown where he does technical research projects.

But it was only two weeks of his life, he said. That and not being able to drink alcohol for three months. But Post suddenly realized that the three months has just ended.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Audrey Clement, a candidate for Arlington County Board in November, stands alone outside the Central Library waiting for the occasional voter to walk by.

Slow Going for Primary Election



Mallory McPherson and Andrew Harrod, behind plexiglass shields, man the polls at the Arlington County Central library on June 8 for the Democratic primary election. Voting was slow with 42 in person voters tabulated at 8 a.m. An election official guessed they may have 100 voters recorded by day's end.



PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Spring Cleaning for Your Chemicals at E-CARE



The final destination of the journey is the “hot zone” where the flammable solvents, batteries, mercury, pesticides, fluorescent tubes and other hazardous products are packed according to U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations. The area had been staged the night before with semi trucks, and the crew set up at 7 a.m. Saturday morning. “We opened up fifteen minutes early at 8:15 a.m. because there was already a backup waiting.”



Cars are wedged between orange warning cones in two rows “so we can move them along faster.” The right lane of cars is for electronics, with hazardous household wastes on the left. One driver near the beginning of the line estimates he has been waiting from the end of the line for about 10 minutes. “It’s moving along fast.” Nearing one o’clock is one of the three rush hours—when they open, the lunch hour and at 3:30 p.m. right at the end.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



Forty five cars are lined up on Quincy Road from Washington Boulevard to the turn into the collection site at the biannual Arlington Environmental Collection and Recycling Event (E-CARE) on Saturday, May 22. Emmanuel Nocon, Solid Waste Bureau Hazardous Household Waste Coordinator, checks his phone. It is 12:50 p.m., and he has recorded 1,253 cars so far. “We are in line to reach the 1,800 we recorded last year.”



A county employee unloads a car trunk full of hazardous wastes including cans of paint. Nocon says every year there is a lot of paint. Nocon adds, “It is hot and it takes a toll on the guys working in the trenches but they are working hard.”

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Arlington Guitar Maker Launching First All-wood Modular Guitar

Kickstarter launch date of June 15 is fast approaching.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

Aaron Maisler visited the House of Musical Traditions in Takoma Park last year to check out the market for making a new kind of guitar. The store manager, Brennan Kuhns, told him, probably with one skeptical eyebrow raised, “If you can bring me a guitar I’ve never seen before, then I’ll definitely buy you a cup of coffee.”

Maisler will be stopping by to get his cup of coffee any day now. This young musician is launching a Kickstarter campaign on June 15 to put his modular guitar into production. After a year in active development, his start up, Fern Guitars, will take the first step toward putting the instrument in the hands of guitarists in the United States and around the world. And people are waiting.

“The Phoenix’s design and function is like no other currently on the market,” said inventor and founder Maisler. “Throughout the development process, we’ve received extremely positive feedback from musicians across the board.”

The Phoenix is the only modular guitar that offers multiple pickup and control configurations while



Aaron Maisler sitting outside Northside Social in Clarendon, talking about his Kickstarter campaign launch for the first all wood modular guitar.



PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

Clarendon start-up needs 20 orders to begin production

still keeping the traditional feel of an electric guitar. Modules can be swapped in seconds, without the need to disassemble or change strings. And it’s made entirely of wood.

“Our vision is for a one-of-a-kind guitar that provides maximum utility to musicians everywhere,” Maisler said. “Now we’re taking our final step to bring the Phoenix from a prototype to a full-fledged instrument people can get in their hands.”

Maisler’s idea was born the day he was packing for Japan to spend two years teaching English and learning Japanese. Which guitar of his collection of ten or so guitars should he take? As a guitarist, he often needed more than one. He

bought three used guitars in Japan.

A musician since the age of 7, Maisler grew up with a peripatetic father: elementary school in Gaithersburg, more schooling in Ohio, and college in Florida. After graduating with a degree in Journalism, Maisler decided to learn Japanese with the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET) and ended up living in Japan for two years.

Back in the US, fluent in Japanese, he stayed with a sister in Washington, D.C. while he figured out what to do next, and found a job as a journalist with Fuji TV’s Washington bureau covering the news out of DC. “I love an adventure. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have started my own business,” said



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Aaron Maisler playing the modular guitar he invented and will soon produce at his Upperville factory.

Maisler. He got restless after two years. The job of a journalist was 24/7. Maisler missed music, and wondered how he could be a musician and manage to send (future) kids to college. He set up “Fern Guitars” and started designing the Phoenix.

Maisler had saved enough money, and done enough research, that he was able to set up a factory in Upperville, Va, to begin producing prototype guitars out of local ash and cherry wood, treading carefully around the pandemic.

The Phoenix is a hit on social media. Fern Guitars has more than 16,000 TikTok followers, 2,100 Instagram followers (@Ferguitars) and has accumulated over a million views across multiple platforms. Now all he needs is the first 20 orders.

Sitting outside Northside Social, looking a little like a young Bob Dylan, Maisler was excited about

the launch. “Our specialized manufacturing process allows us to create a guitar that’s never been made before.”

The Kickstarter campaign will offer multiple pricing tiers, with priority given to early adopters. The first ten backers will secure the guitar for \$999, with the next tier being \$1200. All pre-order options for the Phoenix include one module.

Additional modules in most popular configurations, such as humbucker, SSH, P90 and two different types of single coil configurations, will be \$425 each for the first 10 modules sold, then \$445 afterward.

To learn more about Fern Guitars and the Phoenix, see: <https://kickstarter.fernguitars.com> <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/682955555/the-phoenix-fern-guitars-an-all-wood-modular-guitar>

Make Friends with a Chameleon in a Book ... or in Person

APAH hosts Parade Of Animals book event.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

A colorful converted school bus emblazoned with R.E.A.D. sits by the First Presbyterian Church on N. Vermont Street Wednesday, June 2. During normal times this book-mobile serves as a mobile library for children without books in their homes. Today the books are spread out on tables in the church yard as part of the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH) Parade of Animals activities held just across the street from their Springs



A young reader, her balloon sword by her side, is absorbed in her book.



Ramy Benmessaoub chooses his free books carefully at the APAH Parade of Animals book event on June 2.



PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

Carol Dawson sits on a lawn pad reading a Mother Bruce book at the Parade of Animals book event. She has chosen her animal-themed stories to fit today’s theme.

Apts. property.

Jennifer Sauter-Price, Founder and Executive Director of R.E.A.D., says this non-profit organization provides free new books to children 0-5 years old. The project is funded by raising money through

pop-ups, book fairs and on-line appeals.

“We gave out over 6,000 books last year.”

Ramy Benmessaoub stands by the table picking up each book carefully and browsing through

the pages. He knows he wants an Elephant and Piggie book but the question is which one. A few minutes later they are all gone. The Elephant and Piggie books are snatched up fast.

Carol Dawson sits on a lawn pad

nearby reading a Mother Bruce book. “This is a riot.”

She begins, “She was a grumpy bear and she loved to eat eggs...”

Meanwhile a line forms at the stand where the balloon artist pro-

SEE MAKE FRIENDS, PAGE 7

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Make Friends with a Chameleon In a Book ... or in Person

FROM PAGE 5

duces colorful balloon creations. A tiny girl requests a unicorn. "Those are the most popular. But, sure I can do a butterfly." Another young warrior requests a sword which is a complicated creation with a balloon belt sporting a loop for inserting the balloon sword.

Across the street a turtle wanders back and forth across the concrete in the courtyard of Spring Apts. where a petting zoo has been set up as part of the festivities by Ferrets and Friends from Baltimore. A bright red parrot cocks its head as it waits for a treat offered by tentative fingers through the bars of its cage. A multi-colored green chameleon accepts a pat on the back.

Today's event sponsored by APAH for their residents included choices from a wide variety of free books, a balloon artist, story time and a petting zoo. Julene Jarnot, APAH Resident Services Manager, says she likes to organize the events around a theme, this time it was animals.

"Access to and choice of books is a key factor in developing a child's reading skills. Our goal is to help kids discover a love of reading." She adds they will be hosting more of these events during the summer and are



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

It takes a minute to work up the courage but the animals from Ferrets and Friends welcome a gentle investigation.

currently also holding two Encore Stage and Studio classes for children at Gilliam Place Apartments. "Kids are hungry to be together again."

APAH is a nonprofit affordable housing developer with 2,062 rental homes at 18 properties.

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VIRTUAL & OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

Virtual Fitness Challenge begins Tuesday, June 1 and ends Saturday, Nov. 6 at 3 p.m. Run, walk, hike, bike. For more information and to register, call 703-228-4747. Registration # 914899-01.

Scenic bike ride with fellow 55+ members, led by experienced biker, 15-18 miles, average pace 10mph, Thursday, June 10, 10 a.m. Registration # 914100-07.

Favorite vegan dishes, Thursday, June 10, 3 p.m. Registration # 914502.

Movie discussion group to review "Mank," a biographical drama about screenwriter Herman J. Mankiewicz (Citizen Kane), Thursday, June 10, 3 p.m. Registration # 914402-04.

Line dance in the park, easy for beginners, Friday, June 11, 10 a.m., Virginia Highlands Park, 1600 S. Hayes Street. Registration # 914100-01.

Is a walk-in tub right for you? Hear from Katie Holmes, Certified Aging in Place Specialist, discuss pros and cons, Friday, June 11, 1:30 p.m. Registration # 914500-01.

Live virtual tour of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, Friday, June 11, 1:30 p.m. Registration # 902106-04.

Armchair travel, visit The British Museum in London, Friday, June 11, 3 p.m. Registration # 914402-21. Hillwood Estate. Museum and Gardens, Washington, D.C., featuring photos, collection highlights and archival

images, Friday, June 11, 6 p.m. Registration # 902106-03.

Aurora Hills fast paced walking group, Friday, June 11, 8:30 a.m., 735 S. 18th Street. Registration # 914201-01.

Digital escape rooms, games that comprise a series of puzzles to solve, Friday, June 11, 1 p.m., registration # 914601-07; 2nd session, 2 p.m., registration # 914601-08; 3rd session, 3 p.m., registration # 914601-09.

Monday morning coffee break and casual conversation with fellow 55+ members, June 14, 10 a.m. Registration # 914801-02.

Arlington Neighborhood Village (ANV) concept described by ANV executive director Wendy Zenker, Monday, June 14, 1:30 p.m. Registration # 914404-02.

Tai Chi practice with experienced volunteers, Monday, June 14, 10 a.m., Virginia Highlands Plaza, 1600 S. Hayes Street. Registration # 914105-14.

55+ Live! Talk Show with 55+ staff members, preview of upcoming programs and more, Tuesday, June 15, noon. Registration # 914801-14.

Zumba cardio-dance class inspired by Latin and international dance, begins Tuesday, June 15, 2:15 p.m., Lacey Woods Park, 1200 N. George Mason Drive, 11 sessions, \$55. Registration # 914101-01.

Acoustic Café, live music from the 50s to the present, Tuesday, June 15, noon. Registration # 914802-13.

Continuum of care, options of available services, Tuesday, June 15, 1 p.m. Registration # 914500-10.

Chair Hatha Yoga class, increase energy, flexibility, begins Wednesday, June 16, 11:45 a.m., 9 sessions, \$45. Registration # 914104-02. Also good for adults with physical disabilities.

Farmers Market information, vouchers, easy recipes, keeping safe, Wednesday, June 16, 10 a.m.

Presented by Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Food volunteers. Registration # 914400-20.

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The Masks are Off ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... and I suppose life is back on, especially for those of us who have been vaccinated. No more hiding your emotions and expressions behind your face-covering as you once again start interacting with the general public. They can see you and of course, you can see them - and you can hear/understand them, too. Conversations will flow more evenly now that they won't be interrupted by an "Excuse me, I can't understand you," or a "Could you please repeat that?" Conversations that were previously affected by fits and starts will revert back to questions and answers and what abouts. For me, the mask was an impediment to normal conversation. Necessary and prudent during a once-in-a-lifetime, public health emergency, but apparently, the time has come. Previous directives: masks, social distancing, contact tracing, quarantining and vaccinations were all most of us ever talked about. Now with vaccinations getting into more arms, our lives are expanding. From our living room to just plain living.

Though there are still mask-on requirements: in schools, on public conveyances, and in airports, train stations and the like and while obtaining healthcare services, we are now, especially those of us vaccinated, free to return to our previous life, mostly. Soon capacity restrictions will be lifted as our lives, so far as the activities which involve large crowds, both inside and out, can open back up in their entirety. Moreover, social distancing will likewise become a thing of the past. Now, all those round stickers marking six feet of distance as well as the plexiglas dividers will disappear as well. However, individual businesses retain the right to require visitors to mask up. As Bobby Brown used to sing: "That is my prerogative," and so too will businesses have their own prerogative to require patrons - or not, to abide by their mask-wearing requirements.

All of that being said and understood, even though I'm fully vaccinated, I still feel like I should mask-up. From the national vaccination statistics, there are plenty of people who have not yet been vaccinated and/or are unwilling/unconvinced they need to comply. I can't quite understand the "vaccine hesitancy" or the disinterest in following these most recent public health advisories. It seems like such a small, relatively risk-free/preventing risk step to take. I mean, whatever temporary side effects/discomfort one might experience a day or two after the injection pales in comparison to the effect on your body and/or life expectancy contacting the virus might have. I'll take a definite over a maybe anytime.

Besides, I don't want to be responsible for my own demise, or any others for that matter. In this situation, I'm happy/proud to conform to the public health directives. The virus is bigger - and badder, than any one of us; so to be bigger and badder than the virus, literally and figuratively, the more of us who receive the vaccine, the more of us will be able to survive this pandemic and safely embrace our former lives while not fearing the consequences of our inactions.

The other day at my local Giant, I happened to walk by the customer service desk where I heard a customer bragging to an employee about not planning on getting a vaccination, like he was proud of it. What a disconnect! I'm proud to have gotten my vaccination, and I'm equally proud to have participated in a national effort to try and combat the greatest health crisis this country has suffered since the Spanish Flu first infected Americans over 100 years ago.

I just wish more people would put the country ahead of themselves. For all that we're given here, it really doesn't seem too much to ask. In this circumstance, paybacks are not hell, they're heaven.

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

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