

# CONNECTION

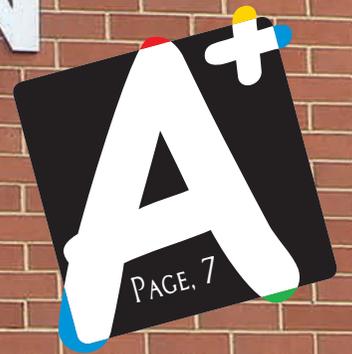
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## 'An Icon of Courage, Hope and Unlimited Potential'

NEWS, PAGE 8

# KATHERINE JOHNSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Principal Tammy Hanna prepares to cut the ribbon on the newly-renamed Johnson Middle School.



## Holding Dear: 2,364 Local Souls Lost to the Pandemic

NEWS, PAGE 3

## A Class To Be Remembered And Cherished

NEWS, PAGE 6

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Crowd present at the ceremony.



Leaders in the 13 jurisdictions of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission gather at the Remembrance Ceremony held June 9 for those lost to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Holding Dear: 2,364 Local Souls Lost to the Pandemic

### Northern Virginia Regional Commission holds a Remembrance Ceremony.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**O**n March 21, 2020, the Fairfax County Health Department reported its first death of a resident due to COVID-19. Four hundred and forty-six days later, on June 9, 2021, at the Fairfax County Government Center, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission held a solemn Remembrance Ceremony for those lost to the COVID-19 pandemic. Community leaders gathered to remember the 2,364 souls thus far and reflect on the pandemic's terrible toll on the region. The Northern Virginia Regional Commission is a consortium of 13 local governments representing more than 2.5 million residents.

"We come together to grieve... for all the lives that have been cut short. We mourn our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents, children, friends, and neighbors," said P. David Tarter, Chairman, Northern Virginia Regional Commission.

Jeffrey McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors said, "Today... we're gathered specifically to honor those who we have sadly lost. Behind me, you will see 236 flags. Each flag represents ten people we lost to COVID-19 across our Northern Virginia region, totaling 2,364 people. This number, of course, isn't complete."

**REGIONAL COOPERATION** in fighting the pandemic had been critical, McKay said. He told those gathered they may have noticed when they came into the County Government Center that county flags remained at half-staff to honor those in the community who died and thank the first responders and frontline workers for the sacrifices they made.

"They have been relentless heroes throughout this pandemic. ... We hope to honor all of those who have died and who gave so much during this crisis through a permanent memorial that's in its very early stages of planning," McKay said. "We will never forget the real human toll of this pandemic, the people, the personalities that these flags behind me represent, and we will always honor those who we have sadly lost."

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Chaplain Harry Chelpon, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, gives the Invocation.



P. David Tatter, Chairman Northern Virginia Regional Commission.



Jeffrey McKay, Chairman Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.



Kevin Davis, Chief, Fairfax County Police.



Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Director, Fairfax Health District.

**"The vaccine is the best tool available for ending the pandemic. ..."**

— Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu,  
Director, Fairfax Health District

Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Director, Fairfax Health District said that as the community begins to heal and recover from the "unprecedented season of loss," people must do everything in their power to protect the most vulnerable who remain at risk for severe disease and death. "The vaccine is the best tool available for ending the pandemic. ... We haven't reached the level of immunity required to stop the COVID virus from circu-

lating in our community."

While many have been vaccinated, many others have not yet had access to the vaccine or decided to get vaccinated. "Children under 12 are not yet eligible. So, our work is far from over... We need everyone's participation, government, schools, businesses, nonprofits, faith leaders, and parents, to achieve the highest level of immunity within our community."

Fairfax County Chief of Police Kevin Davis spoke of a man he never met, Lawrence "Larry" Magni of Reston, who died on Aug. 25, 2020, from complications related to

COVID-19. Magni served in the challenging role as the Police Department's Resource Management Bureau Director of Facilities and Security.

"All the leaders of the police department that I spoke to asked me to tell you a little bit about Larry. And Larry's name and Larry's story are not unlike the ten names that each American flag behind me represents. His story is not uncommon, but it is worth telling." Magni was "beloved" by the Fairfax County Police Department family just as each of the 2,345 other individuals who died from COVID-19 complications was also beloved by those who knew them best.

Fairfax County Fire Chief John Butler compared his three weekly morning calls with "Dr. G," [Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Director, Fairfax Health District] as a time of "global war."

"We've all lost loved ones and watched as our lives and lives of many other friends and family were turned upside down. Earlier this year, President Biden said to heal us, we must remember. Remember those we lost and those who are left behind. So today, we recognize the profound loss we've all suffered, and we remember. We remember those who are no longer with us," said Butler.

**THE TRADITION** of firefighters ringing a bell is symbolic and used to represent the end of an emergency and return to quarters. When a firefighter dies in the line of duty, the mournful toll of the bell announces the passing and shows great honor.

"Today, we adapt that symbolic ceremonial act in a slightly different way," said Butler.

One by one, Tarter called out the 13 jurisdictions, the bell ringing three times for each: "Arlington County, Fairfax County, Prince William County, Loudoun County, City of Alexandria, City of Fairfax, City of Falls Church, City of Manassas, City of Manassas Park, Town of Dumfries, Town of Herndon, Town of Leesburg, Town of Vienna." Following, he said, "You'll now hear Amazing Grace from our bagpiper. This concludes our ceremony. Thank you, and let us always hold dear the many we have lost."

A video of the ceremony can be viewed on Chairman McKay's official Facebook page.

# Pedestrian and Bicyclist Fatalities Rise in the Area

Road design, speeds, lighting and negligence are factors.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

This spring has seen several fatal pedestrian accidents, possibly signaling a warning to drivers, pedestrians and transportation engineers that more could be done to lessen these fatalities in Fairfax County.

In early June, a 64-year-old cyclist died following a crash that occurred just after 10 a.m. at the intersection of Hidden Canyon Road and Blueridge View Drive in Centreville. Detectives from the Fairfax County Police Crash Reconstruction Unit have preliminarily determined that Raymond Buza, of Centreville, was on his bicycle traveling east on Hidden Canyon Road and was hit by a 2017 Hyundai Sonata turning left in front of Buza resulting in a fatal crash. The driver of the Sonata remained at the scene, and was later charged with infliction of injury on a vulnerable road user, the police said.

On June 3, Reynaldo Quinteros Alfaro, 54, of Alexandria, was crossing South Kings Highway when the driver of a 2017 Dodge Journey was traveling southbound on South Kings Highway, a posted 35-mile-per-hour roadway, and struck him. Virginia law, §46.2-924, requires drivers to stop for pedestrians at any intersection when the driver is approaching on a highway where the speed limit is not more than 35 miles per hour. Quinteros Alfaro was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead, police said.

On June 4, Fatima Del Carmen Alvarez Romero, of Alexandria, a 24-year-old cyclist, died in a crash just after 11 a.m. at the intersection of Telegraph Road and Franconia Road. According to the FCPD, she was on her bicycle and entered the crosswalk to cross Telegraph Road on the south side of the Franconia Road intersection. Alvarez Romero proceeded east through the intersection in front of a 2020 GMC Savanna which was traveling north on Telegraph Road and had



PHOTO BY ALEXIS GLENN

The ghost bike at Franconia Road and Telegraph Road, where a bicyclist was hit and killed while crossing in the crosswalk.



On Saturday, June 12, family gathered at the crash site.

a green traffic signal which resulted in the crash. The driver of the GMC Savanna remained at the scene.

In April, Choon Yoo, 77, of Annandale, died following a crash at 10 p.m. near the intersection of Little River Turnpike and Backlick Road. Detectives determined that Yoo was crossing Little River Turnpike and the driver of a 2011 Toyota Corolla on Little River Turnpike and struck Yoo.

## POLICE PRESENCE

The Fairfax County Police Department is increasing the number of static and roving patrols throughout affected areas to increase police visibility and enforce laws that make the roads safer, according to Sgt. Hudson Bull. "While enforcement and education efforts are underway, the Department relies on its partnership with the community in sharing our message to increase public safety,"

Bull said. Although many fatalities have occurred in early June that makes it seem like a large amount, "to date, fatal crashes, and all crashes, are lower compared to 2020 and 2019," Bull said.

Many states are taking part in the "Vision Zero," traffic safety program. "Vision Zero starts with the ethical belief that everyone has the right to move safely in their communities, and that system designers and policy makers share the responsibility to ensure safe systems for travel," the policy information stated. In this area, the Vision Zero program is active in Alexandria, Montgomery County, Md. and Washington, D.C. Fairfax County is not listed on their map, and some members of the bicycling community feel the county should adhere to Vision Zero. "The Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling calls on Fairfax County to join its neighboring jurisdictions in adopting Vision Zero and acknowledging that the injuries and deaths of vulnerable road users are preventable," FABB stated.

## OUTDATED STREET DESIGN

In many cases, "it's the design of streets that needs to be updated to prioritize street safety over motorist speed where pedestrians and bicyclists are likely to be present and accommodate all users with safe, welcoming, and context-appropriate facilities and networks," said Melanie Bowzer at the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals, who responded by email. Other factors affect the severity of injuries too, including road design that lends itself to people driving fast and the increase of larger vehicles on the road that is increasing fatal and serious crashes. Distracted driving is also a relevant factor in pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities, Bowzer noted.

VDOT works closely with Fairfax County to administer projects through the county's prioritization and funding processes, following the comprehensive and multimodal plans for the County. "Safety is always our top priority and is a vital consideration at each stage of project design," VDOT said. At the project development stage, VDOT will initiate all highway construction projects with the presumption that the projects shall accommodate bicycling and walking, their planning document states.

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

### SATURDAY/JUNE 19

Community Shred Event. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Long & Foster Real Estate, 6045 Burke Centre Pkwy., Burke. Prevent identity theft by securely shredding your outdated bank statements bills, legal agreements and other documents. Bring your documents to the Long & Foster office in Burke to be shredded and recycled at this free Community Shred Event – all are welcome! Simply drive up and TrueShred personnel will empty your receptacles of files into their rolling bins for destruction. The files can be in anything: boxes, bags, crates,

etc. Documents are destroyed on site and dropped off for recycling.

### FAIRFAX STATION RAILROAD MUSEUM REOPENS

The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is reopening on Sunday, July 11, 2021, with a "Welcome Back" event from noon - 3 p.m. with free admission, tours and refreshments. Docents will provide tours featuring new exhibits. Young visitors can enjoy puzzles and other attractions. Museum members will discuss volunteer opportunities for those interested. For more information on volunteer opportunities, visit [volunteers@fairfax-station.org](mailto:volunteers@fairfax-station.org)

or 703-425-9225. For questions about the Museum, visit [information@fairfax-station.org](mailto:information@fairfax-station.org). The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station, VA. Visit [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org), 703-425-9225.

### HISTORY'S HAND: INVENTOR'S MIND

Designed for today's inventors, innovators, and entrepreneurs, as well as history buffs and the intellectually curious, this interactive webinar series features several installments moderated by USPTO Historian Adam Bisno. He's assembled a group of historians with great sto-

ries to tell about specific inventors, their patents, and the crucial role of invention in economic progress. The creative endeavor of inventing has existed since humankind first populated the earth. As individuals and teams, we have pursued innovation as a means of addressing life's challenges, big and small. This rich history of problem solving reveals some truly fascinating patterns and concepts that can delight and inform inventors of the modern day.

Register now for one, several, or all of the sessions. The programs take place from 3 to 4 p.m. each Wednesday in June. You can see the schedule and register for the

sessions here: <https://www.uspto.gov/about-us/events/historys-hand-inventors-mind>

### Upcoming events

JUNE 16, 2021 - VIRTUAL. History's Hand: Inventor's Mind  
"Lessons from the birth of the Telecommunications Revolution: Samuel Morse's Electro-Magnetic Telegraph" will feature Adam Mossoff, Professor of Law at the Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University.  
JUNE 23, 2021 - VIRTUAL. History's Hand: Inventor's Mind  
"Five myths about patents and American economic progress" will feature Zorina Khan, Professor of Economics, Bowdoin College.

# Collective Bargaining: A Step to 'One Fairfax'

BY LISA SALES



**A**t age 20, I took on a job as a grocery-bagger. I balanced my work alongside my full-time college studies, caring for my father who was dying of cancer, while living with an abusive boyfriend, sadly my first serious relationship. Amidst all of the chaos and trauma associated with this period of my life, my job provided an outlet, a sense of stability, and gave me agency. This was because I had the protection of a union and the right to collectively bargain alongside my colleagues.

Although my career has since spanned a number of jobs across public and private sectors, it was this role at the grocery store that taught me early on the importance of listening to workers – and especially the voices of women. Women are the most marginalized of the marginalized. While we're over half the population, over a third of American women are heads of households with children, living in poverty. As a survivor of domestic violence and sexual assault, and life-long fighter for women's rights, I know that there is a link between the lack of equality for women in the workplace and the violence perpetrated against us. Safe working conditions, fair pay, and strong benefits have cascading effects that

extend far beyond the workplace.

I'm writing as an equality advocate and active Fairfax County community member in full support of collective bargaining for Fairfax County employees. I am urging the Board of Supervisors to pass an ordinance that empowers our essential workforce. This ordinance must give workers a real say in their wages, benefits, and working conditions. It should not create barriers

for organizing. It should not create a two-class system by excluding so-called "non-merit" workers, like School Aged Child Care (SACC) providers who are majority women and make up an essential workforce caring for the future of Fairfax. Passing a meaningful and inclusive collective bargaining ordinance is a necessity if we want a Fairfax that supports women, people of color, people with disabilities, other marginalized communities, and all working families.

**THE FIGHT FOR EQUITY** is a global battle, but I'm a firm believer that all politics is local. I'm choosing to be an ally in this push for collective bargaining for county employees because I want to change future outcomes for women and the next generation here in Fairfax. We need to create conditions for women to be successful and to be lifted from poverty. Many county workers are

mothers and care-providers, doing it all, and we need to make sure they have what they need to thrive.

As an Economic Policy Institute study noted, a "promising way to address both gender-specific disparities and the broken link between all typical workers' pay and economy-wide productivity growth is through the resuscitation of collective bargaining." Providing better working conditions is a smart investment of taxpayer dollars that strengthens the social fabric of Fairfax. We can avoid the huge costs associated with high rates of attrition, retraining, and wellness issues. If we invest on the front end, we will not only get more productivity on the back end, our families and our communities will prosper.

**COLLECTIVE BARGAINING** is inextricably tied to the fight for an equitable and compassionate "One Fairfax." To not provide meaningful and inclusive collective bargaining to our county workforce would be the antithesis of a "One Fairfax." Elected leaders should be strong champions for workers and legislate accordingly. Community members should rally behind the very workers that take care of us. We need to make the Commonwealth's counties number one for workers and not just businesses. We can start here.

*Lisa Sales, Mount Vernon, equality advocate and Fairfax County community member.*

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# A Class To Be Remembered and Cherished

**Bruins graduates 2021 earn a record amount of scholarships.**

BY JESS KIRBY  
THE CONNECTION

**O**n the warm morning of June 10, Lake Braddock Secondary School seniors and their friends and families gathered at Jiffy Lube Live to celebrate their commencement—the first time they all gathered together since before the pandemic.

The ceremony opened with the presentation of colors by the school's JROTC, followed by a recorded performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" by singers from Lake Braddock Secondary School and elementary schools from the area.

Principal Dr. Daniel Smith welcomed the graduates and guests with a short address. He noted that the graduates earned a total of \$7.88 million in scholarships—the highest in Lake Braddock history.

"Graduates, you've been created in order that you might make a difference," he said. "You have within you the power to change the world. Your life and what you do with it today, tomorrow and each and every day afterward matters, and it will matter forever."

The Lake Braddock Secondary School Senior Choir then came to the stage and sang "Will The Circle Be Unbroken."

Senior Mohamed Messouak followed with his graduate address, speaking about the school's inclusivity of people from all walks of life and his hopes for the future.

"Education did not make us Bruins great, but it aided in bringing out the unique greatness that was already present within each of us," he said. "Not to sound cliché, but we are the future, and last year has shown us that. It is now up to us to step forward, set our goals, fulfill them and, all the while, never forgetting our roots as Lake Braddock Bruins."

Messouak reminisced about the years they were able to attend school in person, seeing fellow students flip water bottles and throw slices of American cheese on the walls, before COVID-19 changed everything.

"Through the fear of illness and death and the feeling of isolation, we remained strong, resilient Bruins," he said. "We also recognize those among us who have supported their families through economic struggles, those who selflessly wore masks to protect themselves and others, those who stood up and protested for what they believed to be right."

Associate Principal Lindsey Kearns presented the faculty award to graduate Taylor Brooke. Through the Teachers for Tomorrow Program, she received a guaranteed teaching position in Fairfax County Public Schools after she graduates from Christopher Newport University's five-year elementary education master's program.

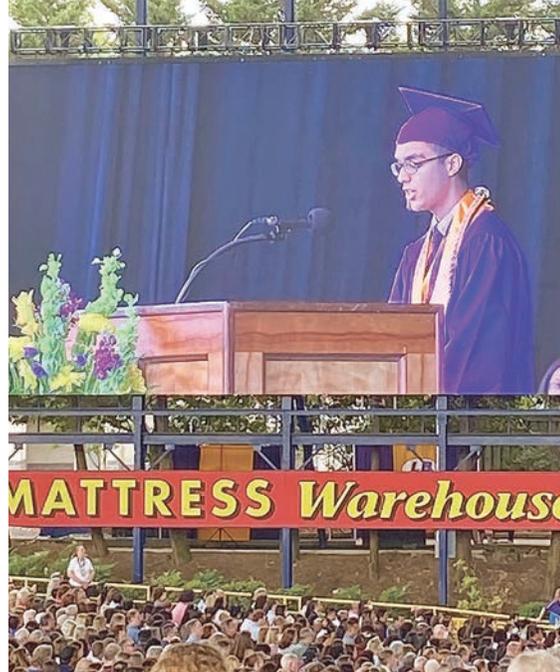
"This student served our school as a Bruin Ambassador and through their service as a member of the National Honor Society, the National Art Honor Society and the National Music Honor Society," she said. "They are passionate about education, both as a learner and a future teacher."

Senior Class Administrator Teri Hampton then gave a speech presenting the class of 2021, drawing on their unique circumstances



Associate Principal Lindsey Kearns presented the faculty award to graduate Taylor Brooke.

PHOTOS BY JESS KIRBY/THE CONNECTION



Senior Mohamed Messouak delivers graduate address.

**"It is now up to us to step forward, set our goals, fulfill them and, all the while, never forgetting our roots as Lake Braddock Bruins."**

— Mohamed Messouak  
in graduate address

"Your senior year began virtually, as you coped with a global pandemic, and now you are beginning your year with a cicada plague," she said. "You always said your class would be the one to remember and one to write down in Lake Braddock's history books. Your class definitely has not disappointed. You will always be remembered and cherished by us all."

With the final turning of the tassels, the class of 2021 became graduates of Lake Braddock Secondary School, despite all the hardships they faced throughout their four years.

## VIEWPOINTS

## What will you miss about high school and what are your plans for the future?

— JESS KIRBY

**Theo Varias, Burke, Lake Braddock Secondary School graduate**

Theo will be attending Northern Virginia Community College for two years, then will likely transfer to James Madison University to major in environmental engineering. He will miss the people in high school most. "Even though all the people you meet are by chance and just who you have in your classes, it's like a social circle you have on the day-to-day that is kind of irreplaceable." He plans to "get a good engineering job somewhere, work for the EPA or something—whatever happens happens."



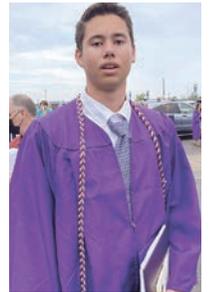
**McKenzie Shedd, Burke, Lake Braddock Secondary School graduate**

McKenzie will be attending the United States Naval Academy to major in naval architecture. She will miss "the freedom to make mistakes without it changing everything. You make a small mistake and it's fine, whatever. You get a B in the class, it doesn't matter. In college it's a bit more intense." After college "I'm going to graduate and be an officer in the navy, then either do my five years and get out and go civilian or make a career out of it."



**Logan Gonzalez, Burke, Lake Braddock Secondary School graduate**

Logan will be attending Florida State University to major in political science. He will miss "all the connections I made and all the friends I had." In the future he plans to join the army.



**Sinh Tran, Burke, Lake Braddock Secondary School graduate**

Sinh will be attending George Mason University to study computer engineering, but he is unsure about his plans for the future right now. The thing he will miss most is "my friends because I've only been in high school for a year because of COVID. Probably, I will miss my friends and my teachers."



**Kenny Nguyen, Lorton, South County High School graduate**

Kenny will be attending George Mason University to major in information technology. He will miss "probably the friends and teachers that I've encountered throughout these four years. They've really changed my life for the better." He is looking forward to learning more about information technology while "making my family proud and hopefully living a good life."



**Ayana Ahmed, Lorton, South County High School graduate**

Ayana will be attending Virginia Commonwealth University to study pre-dentistry. "I'm definitely going to miss the relationships I created with friends and everyone. I see myself working in an office as an orthodontist—that's the main goal right now."



**Alina Asmar, Lorton, South County High School graduate**

Alina will be attending Virginia Commonwealth University to major in health science with a minor in child development. Because she will be attending college out of state, she will miss her "tight-knit" friends and family. "I see myself going to PA school to become a physician assistant in the future."



PHOTOS BY JESS KIRBY/THE CONNECTION

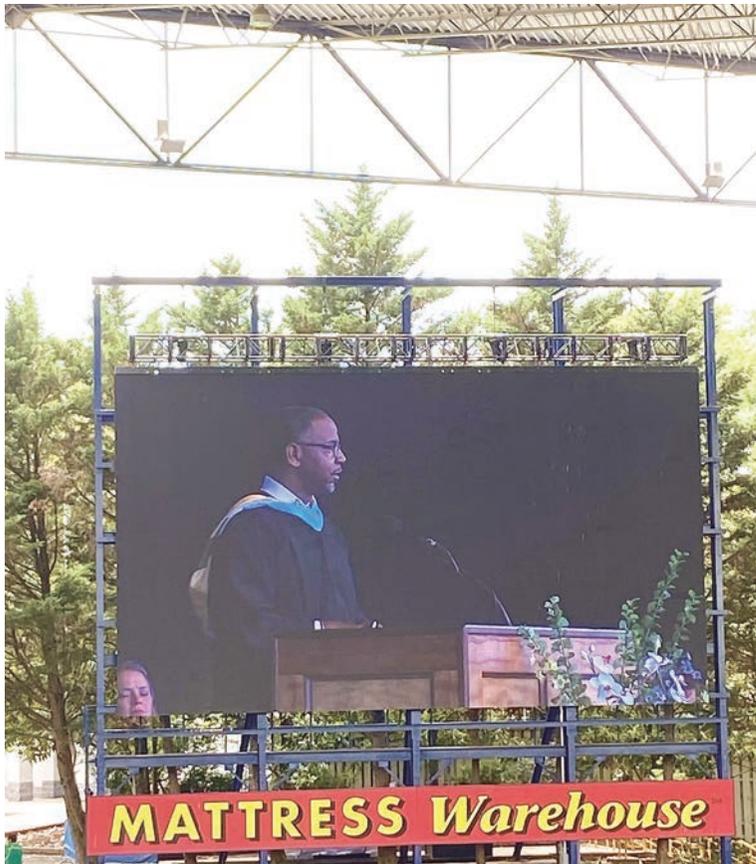


PHOTO BY JESS KIRBY/THE CONNECTION

Principal Gary Morris shared his thoughts about the graduates in the form of a letter to his young daughter 'as words of hope for her future.'

## South County Celebrates a 'Class of Silver Lining'

BY JESS KIRBY  
THE CONNECTION

**O**n June 10, South County High School class of 2021 became one of the many Fairfax County schools to graduate at Jiffy Lube Live. Throughout the bright, sunny afternoon, speakers shared their hope for a future in the hands of these graduates.

The class of 2021 South County Treble Singers opened the ceremony with a recording of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Class Representative Marie Repczynski gave her acknowledgement speech about South County's third school color, silver, which outlines the school's blue and green logo.

"As a silver lining is a positive outcome of a not-so-great situation, I believe that we, as a group of 564 seniors, are the embodiment of the South County silver lining," she said. "When COVID hit... we first experienced a set of silver linings, as being at home every day reminded us of the beauty of a simpler life. May we all take the time in our future to appreciate the beauty of simpler moments such as those."

Repczynski later received the Principal's Award for her natural leadership and selflessness.

"It is easily one of the greatest silver linings that we have learned, if nothing else, that there is nothing quite like being physically present around others, and not just seeing them if only they turned on their camera," she said. "As we all gathered here together in person for the first time in over a year, and one final time to say goodbye, may we take a moment to appreciate what it means to be together. Congratulations to the class of the silver lining, the class of 2021."

Megan Pastino continued by delivering the Honor Graduate Address and introducing herself to the graduates.

"While it may seem a little bit counterintuitive to introduce myself to you all in a ceremony that will end in teary goodbyes... I know that I am introducing myself not to former classmates, but to future politicians, educators, artists, medical professionals, military service members, professional athletes, innovators and the builders of our future," she said. "When today is over, and the sun sets on our high school career, remember to live boldly, to speak up loudly and often for what is right and to lead with the confidence that you are making a difference."

SEE SOUTH COUNTY, PAGE 11

# This Summer Will Be a Balancing Act

Parents face a dilemma give much needed mental break vs. boosting skills.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**A**s camps, swimming pools and simply spending time with friends were cancelled last summer and then followed by a tumultuous school year filled with uncertainty, parents are left to grapple with how to walk the fine line between catching up academically and tending to the overall well-being of their children. Students from preschool to high school might benefit from less focus on summer brain drain and more on brain breaks.

"[Students] are absolutely experiencing exhaustion and burnout from this school year during the pandemic," said Dianne Galasso, LMSW, a mental health therapist with an online practice. "They have been pushed to their limits. In order to give your child an emotional and mental break, parents could try to lower expectations and really listen to what they are needing."

Creating that balance requires creativity, said Sonia Pruneda-Hernandez, Director of Early Childhood Education Initiatives at Montgomery College, who suggests enrolling in activities that are designed to offer fun experiences while also adding a subtle element of academics such as summer reading or other programs. "There are activities that families do within the home and outside of it that can be turned into fun, intentional learning experiences at no cost," said Pruneda-Hernandez. "Allowing a child to help with cooking ... [and] grocery shopping while having conversations about what they are doing not only promotes learning but can strengthen the relationship."

"For older children, an activity like cooking with a simple recipe is a great way to learn fractions. Learning a new musical instrument cultivates creativity and improves memory," said Lisa Turissini, Ed.D., Director of Marymount University's School of Education. "High school students can always start researching colleges and creatively draft those college essays."

"Over the summer, children need time to reconnect with friends and to practice their social skills. Summer programs and camps provide an opportunity for kids to socialize, visit new places, explore and engage in activities that connect to academics. But parents can create these same experiences with their children over the summer by visiting parks, the zoo or other places of interest."

While underscoring the need to maintain and develop writing skills, parents can do so in a way that is light-hearted and fun, said Brandon C.S. Wallace, Associate Professor, Montgomery College School of Education.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIANNE GALASSO.

Therapist Dianne Galasso, pictured here with her grandchildren, says that many children are burnt out after the pandemic school year and supporting their emotional and mental wellbeing should be the priority this summer.

"Children may want to explore writing short stories or scripts for their favorite television show or YouTube influencer, ensuring that whatever is written richly describes main characters, settings as well as uses vocabulary from the character's typical speech patterns," Wallace said. Additionally, many museums are opening or, at least, providing virtual tours; that may be an opportunity to either physically or virtually visit museums near and far."

While enjoying unstructured free time children, Wallace warns parents to be mindful of excessive screen time. Developing and maintaining a schedule is one way to create a healthy balance between activities. "Have your child create a comic strip with paper and coloring supplies," he said. "Think about helping your child write a letter and send it

through snail mail to relatives that they may have not been able to see because of the pandemic."

Not all students have academic deficiencies this summer. "Parents know their children best, but I would advise to not overly focus on learning lost," said Turissini "Some students actually excelled academically during the pandemic. Many will quickly pick up what they've missed once things resume in the fall."

**"Over the summer, children need time to reconnect with friends and to practice their social skills."**

— Lisa Turissini, Ed.D.

BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Fairfax City officials (including Mayor David Meyer, fourth from left, Johnson family members and City Schools Supt. Phyllis Pajardo (at far right) gather after the ceremony.

# 'An Icon of Courage, Hope and Unlimited Potential'

## Fairfax school renamed for NASA's Katherine Johnson.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

No longer honoring a Confederate soldier, Fairfax City's middle school is now named after famed NASA mathematician, Katherine Johnson. With a slew of dignitaries, plus Johnson's relatives in attendance, a joyful renaming ceremony was held June 4.

"I couldn't think of a more inspiring person to go into the future with than Katherine Johnson," said Fairfax City School Board member Jon Buttram. "I'm enthusiastic about it and am looking forward to this school continuing to be great, but under a new banner."

Board colleague Mitch Sutterfield said Johnson's name is "instantly recognizable" and gives the school

"redemption" for its former moniker. Eighth-grader Genesis Say said Johnson "made a great impact on the world." But until the movie, "Hidden Figures," not many people knew about it. So, she said, "With the school named after her, more people will explore her story."

Seventh-grader Isabella Benavides, on the name-change committee, called it "a new start for the school, the county and everyone. I think it's great that we're doing this." So does school Principal Tammy Hanna.

"We were thrilled when the Board selected someone who'd broken barriers, because that's what we tell our children, all the time," said Hanna. "And Katherine Johnson broke through barriers, not only of race, but gender. She was a behind-the-scenes person. And in middle school, you invest in kids, but don't always get to see the fruit. So this is a very appropriate name for a middle school."

SEE SCHOOL, PAGE 9

## Snapshot of NASA's Katherine Johnson

Katherine Johnson helped send astronaut John Glenn into orbit around the earth and, later, was an integral part of Neil Armstrong's moon landing. She was also one of the brilliant Black female mathematicians featured in the book and movie, "Hidden Figures."

Born in West Virginia in 1918, she always loved and excelled at math. She started high school at age 10 and graduated from college at 18. She was also one of three Black students to integrate West Virginia's graduate school in mathematics.

In 1952, Johnson joined the all-Black computing section at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). Five years later, she became part of NACA's Space Task Group which later became NASA.

She was a team member who worked on various space projects. And according to NASA, in 1962, Johnson "was called upon to do the work she would become most known for" – preparing for Glenn's orbital mission and controlling the trajectory of his Friendship 7 capsule mission from liftoff to splashdown.



Katherine Johnson

With the introduction of IBM's calculating machines and the glitches accompanying them, Glenn famously asked engineers for Johnson to run the numbers before his takeoff. "If she says they're good, then I'm ready to go," he said. The flight was a success and marked a turning point in the space race between America and the Soviet Union.

Johnson retired in 1986, after 33 years at NASA. And in 2015, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor, by President Barack Obama. She died in 2020 at age 101.

— BONNIE HOBBS



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Surrounded by students, dignitaries and Johnson family members, Principal Tammy Hanna is about to cut the ribbon on the school.

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PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



(From left) are Valerie Johnson and Dr. Aprille Ericsson.



(From left) are Mildred and Pamela Johnson.

# Fairfax School Renamed for NASA's Katherine Johnson

FROM PAGE 8

**JOHNSON'S NIECE**, Valerie Johnson, an FCPS math resource specialist, was "elated that they chose her name and she's finally being recognized for the work she's done for NASA and the world. Every summer, I'd visit with her and my uncle James in Hampton Roads. She loved to entertain, tutor, sing in her church choir and garden – and everything she did was math-related. But when I was growing up, African-American women weren't revered, so I didn't recognize the magnitude of what she'd done. Without social media, if people didn't celebrate us, we had to write our own narratives and tell our own stories."

Samantha Richards, president of Katherine Johnson's sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha called the renaming "amazing. She's definitely no more a hidden figure, but an icon of courage, hope and unlimited potential. I knew Dr. Johnson over 36 years, and she'll continue being a launching pad for others."

Another niece, Pamela Johnson, was "excited and honored that they selected her name for a school. She always wanted to educate children, so this is a wonderful honor for her." Also at the ceremony were relatives Carol Jones, Katherine Johnson's brother-in-law, Lonnie Johnson, and sister-in-law, Mildred Johnson.

"We're happy this recognition has been given to her," said Mildred Johnson. "She was an outstanding role model, especially in the sciences, for young girls and women. A brilliant mathematician, she helped write the formula to put a man on the moon. And we thank the school and Fairfax City for this honor."

Welcoming everyone to the ceremony, City Schools Superintendent Phyllis Pajardo said, "Names matter and tell people they're valued. We thank the School Board – it's the reason we're here today. And we're tremendously honored to have members of Katherine Johnson's family with us."

"This school joins a handful of public buildings in Fairfax City named after women – and the first named after a woman of color," continued Pajardo. "That is historic. And as the first Black woman to serve as Fairfax City Schools superintendent, it means I can see a Black woman featured prominently in this school."

Hanna then explained some of Johnson's quotes to the students, telling them, "Never be afraid to ask

questions. You might be the one asking what everyone else wanted to know. Know your learning style and follow your passions. Katherine Johnson wasn't afraid to tell people what they didn't want to hear, and she always did her best."

School Board member Toby Sorensen said that, as a Black woman in the 1950s, "Johnson breached the boundaries of what was expected from someone of her race. We want her name to inspire current and future students. Like her, reach for the stars and soar, Eagles, soar."

School alumni and 2006 Nobel Prize winner in medicine, Dr. Craig Mello, sent a video congratulating Johnson's family, plus Fairfax City Schools "for having the wisdom to choose this name. Science unifies all people because it values questions, rather than beliefs, and searches for answers to make this world a better place."

Dr. Aprille Ericsson, of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, was an aerospace engineer, has led space-flight mission teams, and designed and built systems to manage spacecraft. An MIT grad, she's the first Black woman to obtain a Ph.D in chemical engineering from Howard University.

**AT THE RENAMING CEREMONY**, she said, "Dr. Johnson shows us that, by studying and working hard, you can make a difference. As a child, I was inspired by the Apollo missions, but had no idea Johnson was instrumental in getting us into space. We both attended HB-

CUs [Historically Black Colleges or Universities] and broke barriers in our academic careers. And all you scholars can do it, too. I'm fortunate to have known Katherine – whose broad shoulders I stand on. We both taught at Black public schools, and teachers are rock stars."

As a young girl, said Valerie Johnson, "I just knew her as Aunt Katherine – a woman of character, poise and grace. As an adult, I learned she had superpowers. She had passion, courage and perseverance, sent astronauts to the moon and back, and taught us the impossible is possible. So students, dream bigger, think bigger and do bigger, just like my aunt."

Closing out the ceremony, Pajardo thanked the Johnson family for "sharing a part of your loved one with us. We welcome you to the Katherine Johnson Middle School family, and we'll work hard to make her proud."

**"We were thrilled when the Board selected someone who'd broken barriers, because that's what we tell our children, all the time,"**  
— Principal Tammy Hanna

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# CALENDAR

## OUR SPECIAL HARBOR OPENS

The Fairfax County Park Authority's Special Harbor spray park is now opened. This fully accessible Chesapeake-Bay-themed spray-ground has water features such as a spraying osprey nest, Chessie the sea serpent, misting sunflowers and a lighthouse. The beach area allows for quieter play with softer bubblers and interactive water tables while the computerized water maze and dumping crab basket provide more lively activity. Located at Lee District Park at 6601 Telegraph Road, Franconia. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/recenter/lee-district/family-recreation-area>.

## GOLF CAMPS

Join the nationwide resurgence of the lifelong game of golf. Laurel Hill Golf Club and Twin Lakes Golf Course are offering weeklong summer camps taught by professionals from The Eisman Golf Academy. Junior golfers ages 8-14 will learn and improve on golf fundamentals in a fun environment. Class sizes are limited for personalized instruction and camp includes on-course play. Also included are swag bags, hat, games and prizes. Camps will take place at Laurel Hill June 14 -18 and July 12-16, 2021; and at Twin Lakes on June 21-25, July 19-23, and Aug. 9-13, 2021. All camps run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. To register, visit the Junior Golf Fairfax website.

Laurel Hill Golf Club is located at 8701 Laurel Hill Crest Drive in Lorton. Twin Lakes Golf Course is located at 6201 Union Mill Road in Clifton.

## NOW THRU JULY 4

Paintings by Rich Moore. At the Loft Gallery, 33 Mill Street, Second Floor, Occoquan. "The skies proclaim the work of His hands." Psalm 19:1 showcases the artistry of versatile landscape oil painter, Rich Moore as he endeavors to reveal a unique glimpse into the magnificence and wonder of the "handiwork of God." Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Sunday, Noon-5 p.m. Online Facebook Live Artist's Reception: Friday, June 11, 2021 7:00 pm <https://www.facebook.com/loftgalleryocquan>.

## JUNE 9-JULY 18

"Renewal." At The Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, a satellite gallery sponsored by the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association, located in the Mosaic District shopping area at 2905 District Avenue, #105, Fairfax. Open Wednesday thru Sunday 11 - 7.

## FRIDAY/JUNE 18

Golf Exhibition. 6 p.m. at Laurel Hill Golf Club, 8701 Laurel Hill Crest Drive, Lorton. Josh Koch and Justin James, two of the fastest swingers in the world, go head-to-head in a golf hitting exhibition. Watch Koch and James tee off on hole one with club speeds over 150 mph, ball speeds over 225 mph, and balls carrying up to 400 yards. Activities include a long drive contest, swing demonstrations, trick shots, and even crowd participation.

## SUNDAY/JUNE 20

Celebrate the Summer Solstice. Celebrate the longest day of the year at the "Summer Solstice Campfire" at Hidden Oaks Nature Center, 7702 Royce Street, Annandale. Learn to separate fact and fiction regarding midsummer and its celestial events, and head out on a hike to wait for the sun to set. Enjoy roasting marshmallows around a campfire. This program is designed for participants age 6 to adult. It runs on Sunday, June 20, 2021, from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. The cost is \$7 per person. For more information, call 703-941-1065.

## FRIDAY/JULY 2

Fourth of July at Workhouse Arts Center. Get your early bird tickets until June 15th. Join them on Friday, July 2 for the Annual Workhouse Fireworks Event. The community event is re-imagined and redesigned to better serve the community. VIP Entertainment will feature the U.S. Navy Band and DJ Nose. Arrive early for other surprises between 5 and 6 p.m. Drive In Tail Gate Entertainment will include a visit from Uncle Sam, Julia the Balloon Twister, art demos and a performance by the famous Great Zucchini.

## FAIRFAX STATION RAILROAD MUSEUM REOPENS

The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is re-opening on Sunday, July 11, 2021, with a "Welcome Back" event from noon - 3 p.m. with free admission, tours and refreshments. Docents will provide tours featuring new exhibits. Young visitors can enjoy puzzles and other attractions. Museum members will discuss volunteer opportunities for those interested. For more information on volunteer opportunities, visit [volunteers@fairfax-station.org](mailto:volunteers@fairfax-station.org) or 703-425-9225. For questions about the Museum, visit [information@fairfax-station.org](mailto:information@fairfax-station.org). The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Visit [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org); 703-425-9225.

# South County Celebrates a Class of 2021

FROM PAGE 7

In his address, Principal Gary Morris shared his thoughts about the graduates in the form of a letter to his young daughter "as words of hope for her future." He said that she will be in good hands, as the graduating class demonstrates four characteristics: courage, commitment, curiosity and lovingness.

"It will continue to take every voice, every person, every perspective to make this thing work," he said. "And if we do it right, it will be tough. It will be controversial. But to quote our very own Nathan Onibudo, 'Better will always be controversial. It always has, it always will be.'" Morris later presented Onibudo the Service Learning Award.

Award-winning journalist Ashlie Rodriguez delivered the keynote address, telling the graduates to remember the resilience they built up during the pandemic and to use it for the future. She shared her life experiences of moving to a foreign country during her senior year of high school and struggling to find a job after college.

"As I sat there in self-pity, I could feel that resilience fire up in me," she said. "I stand before you today as living proof that, no matter what setbacks come your way, the experience of the setbacks and challenges and hardships will make you stronger. Be thankful for them."

After more than a year of challenges and staying apart, the class of the silver lining turned their tassels and graduated together.

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## Navigate This



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

(All these times are approximate- or they're not. It depends. It's sort of an all hands on deck kind of thing. Everybody, everywhere has to be flexible. All of the following appointments/procedures have to be completed this day - or else. If not, it could adversely affect the timing and suitability of my treatment going forward. Not to exaggerate too much but, my life could be at risk if all of the following are not adhered to:)

Lab work at 9am-ish required for my every-four week-bone-strengthening shot. Nuclear medicine at 9:30 for the isotope injection for my 12:45 bone scan. After leaving Nuclear Medicine, I head to Radiology where I have a 10:30 am CT scan. When my scan is completed (it only takes a few minutes but generally speaking, they're not on time), I then go to the Infusion Center where I will get my every-four-week bone strengthening shot. (Again the shot itself and vitals only takes a few minutes, but again, the process can take up to 30 minutes depending on the activities of the oncology nurses and the pharmacy's availability to prepare the medicine and the printing of my usual and customary paperwork.) Next - and finally, I go back to Nuclear Medicine for my actual bone scan at 12:45. This scan will read the nuclear isotopes injected into my body at 9:30. The scan takes about 40 minutes as it crosses my body head to toe to assess the condition of my bones. (The condition of my bones is not great. Unfortunately, it's a side effect of my thyroid cancer medicine as well as the 11 previous years of miscellaneous chemotherapies.) When this last scan is completed, my medical day is done and I will then be free to go. I will likely get home at approximately 3 pm, seven hours after I left home.

This jam-packed day is a first and hopefully will be a last. On occasion, I have had a CT scan and a brain MRI on the same day (BOGO I jokingly refer to it), but never have I had medical madness (five separate appointments) as I will on June 24th, the consequences to my health notwithstanding. Hopefully, by the end of the week - before the weekend of worrying, I will have heard back from my oncologist and then we'll deal with the consequences of all these previous actions. The waiting is not a huge deal. I have been there and done that for 12 and half years going back to late February, 2009 when I was initially diagnosed.

However this is not "concierge care." Any one of these five appointments could be missed for any number of to-be-expected complications when medical care is scheduled. Emergencies, double-booked appointments, staff shortages and longer than anticipated appointments could all affect my day of semi-judgment. And if any one of these appointments/procedures doesn't occur as scheduled, my care/my life expectancy could be jeopardized. From experience I can tell you, when this cancer patient has experienced delays and rescheduled appointments due to lab work (low white blood count, high creatinine levels, high or low calcium, above-normal potassium and on occasion low magnesium), treatment is stopped until levels return to a more normal number. In the interim, after your treatment has been stopped, your life begins to pass by you as you (at least I did) think that a delay in treatment puts your survival at risk. I mean, if your treatment is stopped at all, how does that stop the cancer from damaging you worse than it already has? Whether a week or two delay really matters, no one can say for sure. However, for the patient, especially yours truly; despite the reassurances from medical staff, in my head anyway: IT REALLY MATTERED.

After receiving a "terminal" diagnosis in February, 2009, I just didn't feel I had any margin, life expectancy-wise, for error, missed appointments, rescheduled treatment, et cetera. I figured that the information about my health - and as a result, any subsequent change in that treatment, needed to be known in an extremely timely manner. And when it wasn't -or isn't, I feel my pain, if you what I mean? Nevertheless, there are no guarantees in the cancer-treatment world. One has to learn to go with the flow and hope that flow doesn't turn into a flood.

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



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