

Dressed in his 1st Virginia Regiment Revolutionary War uniform, Grand Marshall Mark Casso leads the 4th of July Hometown Parade 2021 at the Great Falls Village Center.

Great Falls CONNECTION

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Rotary of Great Falls Celebrates Ten Years

BY EILEEN CURTIS

Ten years is an anniversary to celebrate, and the Rotary of Great Falls did it in great style. A gala reception at River Bend Country Club provided the occasion for remembering the club's projects, speakers, and friends. President Stephen Clark introduced Master of Ceremonies Jeff Thinnies, the dynamo life-long Rotarian who founded the club. On that occasion, 85 newly minted Rotarians gathered at River Bend, a number that so amazed Rotary International that Thinnies was invited to speak at the international conference in Thailand that year.

The club's opening also served up drama with its guest speaker, Supreme Court Judge Antonin Scalia. Over the years he has been followed by a who's who of presenters, ranging from Senators and astronauts to CEOs and NGOs championing causes such as Preventing Soldier Suicide, environmental protection for the Potomac River, and Alzheimer's updates.

Now it was Thinnies at the podium, who enthusiastically recalled all the service projects embraced by the Rotary of Great Falls. On the international side was an impressive list that included a bus for an orphanage in the Ukraine; wells to bring water to Zambia; desks for students in Honduras; vaccinations for young girls in India and Nepal; aid to Syrian refugees arrived in Germany.

That was just a warmup for projects undertaken at home. During the pandemic, the club became a major supporter of Meals for Heroes, sending food to the critical care workers across the Metropolitan area. When it became known that hunger in our area had skyrocketed to over 3,000 families, the Rotary of Great Falls established a challenge grant to assist Cornerstones, the large western Fairfax non-profit aiding the hungry. Other local efforts have included Georgetown Pike Cleanup, sponsorships for Great Falls Seniors and the Grange, sup-

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An Americana 4th of July in Great Falls.



Storey Summers, 10, of Great Falls, tries her strength at a high striker, ringing the bell every time.

Hometown Celebration Returns to Great Falls

Americana fun, unmasked and free.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Great Falls traditions returned to the Village Centre Green for the 4th of July 2021. Presented by Celebrate Great Falls, the welcoming atmosphere and organization drew families from the community and surrounding areas to the shaded, grassy common.

Before the younger children paraded around the perimeter of the interior common, dressed in their finest patriotic dis-

plays in the Little Patriot Parade, the older children, like Michael Picard, 7, and his sister Caitlyn, 10, provided service hours.

"I'm helping in the pizza booth," said Caitlyn. For Michael, volunteering took on a special meaning. "I'm looking forward to a snow cone," Michael said, eyeing the machine. "I don't remember having one before."

Organ grinder Terry Bender of Great Falls and his wife Jan brought a festive historical aspect to the event. He situated himself along the interior pathway with his newest street organ, handmade for him in 2018. As children and parents walked by, they gathered for a short time around Terry. He

showed how the organ played music using punched paper rolls with tunes arranged especially for this type of street organ.

Charlotte Klesh, 3, of Vienna wandered with her dad around the common. "We came a few years ago. We love the old town, Americana feel," he said.

Story Summers, 10, of Great Falls, said while she loved the fireworks best, those would be later in the evening at Turner Farm, "I'm glad we don't have to be stuck inside like last year, and we don't have to wear any masks."

Shortly after 9:15 that morning, the Patriot Parade began, followed by the Main Parade at 10 and food and festivities until 12:30 p.m.

Little Patriots Parade Awardees

Young George Washington - John Maloney, 5, of Great Falls
Miss Betsy Ross - Sophia Blandford, 1 ½, of Great Falls
Little Liberty - Jay Enfield, 2, of Reston
Best Decorated Wagon - Harlow Grindler, 3, and Every, 6, of Great Falls
Best Curly Hair - Madison (Maddie) Moore, 2 ½ of Ashburn
Most Entertaining - Emerson Smyers, 3, of Great Falls
Star Spangled Family - Aiden, 2, Callum, 7, Sadie, eight weeks, Brooks, 2, Emerson, 4.



The inflatable slide proves a draw for Alex Benyishay, 1, at the 4th of July Hometown Celebration 2021.



Emerson Smyers, 3, of Great Falls, is awarded "Most Entertaining 2021" at the Little Patriot Parade held on the Village Centre Green at the Gazebo. She is pictured with her father.



Fire trucks, floats, horses, antique cars, and more, it's all fun at the Main Parade held in the Great Falls Village Center on the 4th of July.



John Maloney, 5, of Great Falls, joins Ella DeTrani, 6, of McLean and her sister, Lia, 5, after listening to Terry Bender of Great Falls explain how the organ grinder plays music.

Marijuana Is Now Legal in Virginia

The long strange trip from a failed war on drugs to social equity licenses.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Smoke 'em if you've got 'em because pot is now legal in the commonwealth of Virginia.

For advocates who have been working in the trenches for years, the new law that goes into effect July 1 is the culmination of years of determination in the face of seemingly impossible odds. The tide began to turn after Democrats seized control of the General Assembly and lawmakers started taking a new look at police brutality after the murder of George Floyd. Now that law is signed, sealed, delivered and ready to light up.

"Virginians have long been calling for the end of prohibition," said Jenn Michelle Pedini, the executive director of Virginia NORML who led the fight for legalization. "In 2021, their voices are finally being heard."

Although marijuana is now legal in small amounts for adults, possession of more than an ounce can result in a civil penalty of \$25 and possession of more than one pound is a felony. This mirrors the way other states have eased into legalization, allowing small amounts before gradually increasing how much of the drug they can have on them at a given time. Many advocates applaud the new law legalizing pot in small amounts, but they say keeping the penalties for larger amounts is problematic.

"This is one step to eliminate the racist policing around simple possession," said Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice Virginia. "People are still incarcerated for larger amounts than one ounce, and Virginia is making a way to profit off of pounds of marijuana while really ignoring and neglecting a lot of folks who have lost their lives and their families to the enforcement of marijuana [prohibition] that has been disproportionately on Black Virginians."

THE NEW LAW ALLOWS each household to have four plants, although commercial sales won't begin until New Year's Day 2024. Smoking weed in public is not legal, although you can smoke it in the privacy of your home or anywhere on your property. In many ways, the new rules around pot mirror all the existing ones around alcohol. Having an open container of marijuana in a vehicle is not allowed, and driving under the influence remains illegal.

"The prohibition on marijuana has failed both in this commonwealth and in this country," said Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30), who introduced the bill legalizing marijuana. "Cannabis does not have to be the boogeyman that some are making it out to be."

The journey from prohibition to legalization began after Democrats won control of the



As of July 1, possession of less than an ounce of marijuana is legal in Virginia.

"The prohibition on marijuana has failed both in this commonwealth and in this country."

— Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30)

"This is one step to eliminate the racist policing around simple possession."

— Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice Virginia

House and Senate in 2019. The following year, they decriminalized marijuana and began setting the groundwork for legalization. The bill legalizing marijuana was a heavy lift for a General Assembly that was meeting mostly virtually, and it included everything from expunging old convictions in the failed war on drugs to the creation of a new Cannabis Control Authority. The effort almost fell apart in the Senate, where some conservative Democrats opposed legalization.

"People smoke marijuana to get high," said Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34). "The purpose of smoking it is to create an altered mental state, and that may be fine on your own time but once you legalize something people have the ability to pretty much use it anytime they want."

THE DEBATE OVER LEGALIZATION culminated in a moment of high drama in the Senate, which was meeting at the Science Museum of Virginia to allow for social distancing. Senators were tied 20 to 20, and Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax broke the vote in favor of legalization. As part of a compromise that secured the deal, lawmakers agreed to circle back around next year and

work out the specifics about how the new industry will work and how licenses are granted.

"It is quite rare for a new industry to just show up somewhat suddenly, but Virginia has had the opportunity to watch and learn from other jurisdictions," said Paul Seaborn, a professor at the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia. "The goals as they've been stated in Virginia is to make this new industry more equitable than most or maybe all of our other industries."

When the Cannabis Control Authority starts granting licenses, some applicants are likely to have priority over others. For example, people who have been convicted of possession of marijuana might end up receiving preferential treatment. Family members of people who have been convicted of possession could also get priority. Residents of neighborhoods that have been disproportionately policed could also end up getting preferential treatment, although all the specifics of how those social equity licenses will work have yet to be approved by the General Assembly.

Some are opposed to that approach.

"You cannot provide preferential treatment lifting up one class or group of citizens without diminishing the rights of another," said Sen. Bill DeSteph (R-8), previewing the coming debate over the issue in 2022.

THE CREATION OF A new industry also allows Virginia to create new worker protections for employees in the marijuana business, including prohibiting worker misclassification and union busting. Gov. Ralph Northam and House Democrats want to prevent license holders from taking sides in union organizing efforts and require them to pay a prevailing wage. That's a proposal that's likely to receive opposition from Republicans and conservative Democrats who support Virginia's right-to-work law.

"These are state licensees, just like a contractor or a doctor or a lawyer or your plumber," said Stephen Haner, a senior fellow at the Thomas Jefferson Institute. "There's no other state licensee where the licensing requirements are tied into basically what I consider a very pro-union interpretation."

Labor leaders see this as an opportunity to protect workers before they are hired in an industry that won't even begin until 2024. As is the case with the social equity licenses, the rules about worker misclassification and union busting can be targeted to work against some of the damage created by the failed war on drugs. But that will only happen if lawmakers are able to get the legislation out of both chambers, which could be tricky.

"This is an industry that was specifically designed to combat some of the problems and failures that were caused by the war on drugs, and specifically the impact on certain communities especially Black communities and brown communities," said Michael Wilson, vice president at United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400.

Great Falls Rotarians at the 10th Anniversary gala at River Bend Country Club.



Rotary of Great Falls Celebrates Ten Years

FROM PAGE 2

port for the Great Falls Fire Department and the Fireworks. The club has staged community forums on Opioids and Human Trafficking. It helps package food for Rise Against Hunger and delivers meals to the homeless. It celebrates our country with a bi-annual Flags for Heroes display on the lawn of St. Francis.

Thinnes noted that the club is especially proud of its work with youth. It stages contests for middle and high schoolers centered on music and essays on Rotary's Four Way Test. It provides scholarships to immigrant children and to young Rotary leaders. It stages a First Time Campers weekend at Wolf Trap and offers STEM tutoring to latch-key kids. It has maintained an active Interact Club for ten years, comprising over 40 high school students at any given time. They are learning the power of service, culminating each year in a Habitat for Humanity project. Recently, the club added Rotaract for young professionals.

In his windup, Thinnes reminded everyone, "Of course, we also love to party!" Besides the club's monthly mixers, more elaborate events have included the annual 400-attendee Oktoberfest, complete with German oompah band and costumed dancers. Its singular Bocce Tournament is played on the back lawn at L'Auberge Chez Francois.

The club reached out to the local business community with a business reception that drew 70 entrepreneurs. Cars for the Cure came to raise money for diabetes research, a cause espoused by now-deceased Rotarian Butch Sevilla. Recently, the club committed to support Lift Me Up!, a therapeutic riding center and Great Falls' oldest non-profit. A horse race run by hobby horses and Interactors took place in a barn. So many people wanted to name their horse that competition required three races.

Jeff didn't know it, but the celebration received a bonus a few days later. Rotary District 7610 is recognized as a strong performer in the entire Rotary International system and it was holding its annual awards ceremony. The Rotary of Great Falls received the Governor's citation. There was more good news. The club's nominee for Citizen of the Year was Eric Knudsen, former president of the Great Falls Citizens Association, and he received the Area award in that category. And club Rotarian of the Year, Sean Plunkett, a past club president whose creative mind thinks up inventive fundraisers such as hobbyhorse races, was named Area Rotarian of the Year. The honors continued to roll. Rotary of Great Falls was named Area Club of the Year, in recognition of its vital role as a community partner.

For more information, visit rotarygreatfallsva.org.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

SATURDAY/JULY 10

19th Amendment Kick-Off. 2 p.m. But for the 19th Amendment - A Talk Delivered by Cheryl Johnson, Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. Hybrid Event - Vienna Community Center (120 Cherry St., SE and Livestream via Facebook and YouTube). A speech and Q&A with Cheryl Johnson followed by the American Association of University Women performance: Failure is Impossible.

SUNDAY/JULY 11

Blood Drive. 7:45-12:05 p.m. At Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Lewinsville Presbyterian Church will host its quarterly Blood Drive. INOVA Blood Services will be accepting donations via their bloodmobile. The

bloodmobile will be parked in the church's main parking lot near the Music entrance. All INOVA Blood Services personnel will be wearing masks and donors will be required to bring and wear their own masks. Bring a photo I.D. when you come to donate. Use the link for more information and to sign up online. Walk-ins welcome. Visit the website: <https://www.lewinsville.org/events/blood-drive/>

ONGOING

In-Person Worship Begins. 10:15 a.m. The Church of the Good Shepherd (United Methodist), 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. In-person worship services will resume with some restrictions. Details at: https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/goodshepherdva/files/revised2_in_person_worship_begins_june_13.pdf

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Police Weapons Point At

Long awaited report on Use of Force includes dozens of recommendations to guide the

By KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

An independent study of Fairfax County Police Department use of force confirmed that Black people are overrepresented in use-of-force incidents by Fairfax police.

African-American people were also 1.8 times more likely to have a weapon pointed at them, and are more at risk of force being used against them during arrests, according to the report.

“What’s really concerning is when you have a consistent message or consistent story that the data tell you. And so, for African-Americans, you saw they were overrepresented across four of the six benchmarks, you saw they were overrepresented in four of the six multivariate severity models, and you saw they were overrepresented in the arrest model,” said Dr. Michael R. Smith, of the University of Texas at San Antonio, who is the co-author of the research project, “An Investigation of the Use of Force by the Fairfax County Police Department.” Smith is also a former Fairfax County police officer.

“That’s the kind of consistent story that I think is ripe for conversation and particularly for directed mechanisms to address,” Smith told the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors during a Public Safety Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 29, 2021.

The previous Board of Supervisors directed the study to better understand the influence of civilian race and ethnicity and other factors that impact use of force, said Rodney Lusk, chairman of the Board’s Public Safety Committee.

Smith and his colleagues Dr. Rob Tillyer, from the University of Texas at San Antonio, and Dr. Robin S. Engel from the University of Cincinnati, examined data from 1,360 encounters with civilians when force was used by Fairfax officers during 2016-2018.

“As we heard from advocates within our community and from our citizens at large across the county, there exists a sense that force is disproportionately applied against members of the African-American community and the Hispanic communities here in Fairfax County,” said Lusk. “I believe the data that this report lays out is a solid first step in understanding the underlying reasons for that sentiment and will act as a compass and guide us forward as we work to address inequities in our public safety and criminal justice infrastructure.”

According to the report, “Broken down by race and ethnicity, the Fairfax County Police Department used force against 576 Black persons (42 percent), 519 white persons (38 percent), 218 Hispanic persons (16 percent), and 45 Asian persons (three percent) that took place between Jan. 1, 2016 and Dec. 31, 2018. Average force levels were slightly higher for Blacks (2.4 on a 4.0 scale) than for other racial groups (2.1 for Whites, 2.2 of Hispanics, 2.0 for Asians), while resis-



Dr. Michael R. Smith, University of Texas at San Antonio



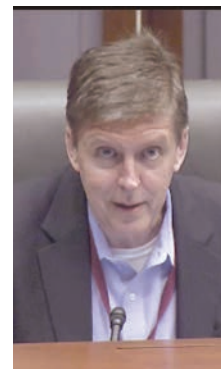
Dr. Rob Tillyer, University of Texas at San Antonio



Dr. Robin S. Engel, University of Cincinnati



Mount Vernon Supervisor Daniel Storck



Hunter Mill Supervisor Walter Alcorn



Braddock Supervisor James Walkinshaw

tance levels were essentially equal across the racial and ethnic groups.”

THE RESEARCH TEAM condensed the 275-page report down to a 40-minute presentation.

Some key findings verbatim, included:

“Force used against Blacks exceeded all benchmarks and was disproportionate compared to whites in Mount Vernon. Blacks also experienced consistently higher rates of force compared to benchmarks in Franconia, McLean and West Springfield.

“Hispanics were overrepresented as subjects of force in Sully & Mason (3 of 6 benchmarks).

“Rates of force used against Asians exceeded benchmarks in Mount Vernon, Reston, West Springfield and Fair Oaks.

“Force used against minority civilians exceeded that of whites in Sully (Hispanics), Mount Vernon (Blacks & Asians), McLean (Blacks & Asians), Mason (Hispanics), Reston (Asians), Franconia (Blacks), West Springfield (Blacks & Asians), and Fair Oaks (Asians).”

Breaking down the data by district stations “revealed some differences from the countywide findings,” according to Smith, Tillyer and Engel. “For example, in Mount Vernon, the rates of force used against Black civilians exceeded all benchmarks, and force was used disproportionately against Blacks relative to whites in four of the six benchmarks examined. Blacks also experienced force at rates that consistently exceeded the benchmark comparisons in Franconia, McLean, and West Springfield.”

“In the end, data does matter. It does help us to see things as they are, maybe not as we wish they were, or even as we perceive they are,” said Mount Vernon Supervisor Daniel Storck.

“Obviously, Mount Vernon’s District Station’s results are very concerning, deeply concerning to me. We are actually served by three stations and all three of them have issues of overuse,” he said.

DEMOGRAPHICS were not considered by the scientists because they “are a very poor

indicator of risk of a particular group having force used against them. It’s common in the media and other outlets but it’s not appropriate from a scientific perspective,” said Tillyer.

For example, according to this, it would not make sense to note the disparity of Black people making up 42 percent of Fairfax police use of force while being just 10 percent of the population. Or that white people make up 50 percent of the population but just 38 percent of police use of force.

During the question and answer portion of the committee meeting, Springfield District Supervisor Pat Herrity (R) said he hoped the Board would make note of the research team’s opinion.

“We regularly publish that,” said Herrity. “I’ve been asking for a caveat to that.”

But Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn disagreed. “I realize that you’re saying social scientists don’t measure looking at population. I do,” he said.

“I think it’s very important for all our public services, particularly those related to law enforcement, that we do watch that. We have to. That’s speaking as an elected official, not as a social scientist,” said Alcorn.

The Connection reported that Black people made up 38.54 percent of the arrests in 2019, according to statistics provided by the police in 2020. Black people were targets of police use of force 45.63 percent of the time in the county. Black people make up approximately 10 percent of the population. Black people are arrested and the subject of police force disproportionately more.

THE 275-PAGE REPORT included 12 pages of recommendations the Board will discuss at its next Public Safety Committee meeting in September.

One recommendation included capturing all instances of force and resistance sequentially during each encounter involving the use of force.

“Capturing the uses of force and resistance sequentially, so what happened first, then what happened, then what happened next, is sort of state of the art,” said Smith. “It’s where the field is going and where the

police department’s data collection ought to go.

“That will provide us the ability to have a much more nuanced and greater understanding of how these events transpire. How do some escalate quickly, how do some not escalate quickly, or how do they escalate. That’s the kind of data you need to answer such important questions.”

Other recommendations:

- ❖ Substantially increase the amount of training hours provided annually for de-escalation skills and tactics.

- ❖ Adopt a single, clear standard for the use of deadly force – Deadly force is permissible only if the suspect poses an imminent risk of death or serious injury to the officer or others.

- ❖ Consider limiting canine bites only to certain types of crimes or other narrowly-defined conditions

- ❖ Utilize body-worn camera footage to evaluate racial/ethnic disparities in treatment by the FCPD, force escalation or de-escalation, and to improve training and accountability

Other recommendations included more extensive deescalation training; rotating officers from higher crime areas; improving the ability to “capture” medical and injury data for civilians and officers.

POLICE CHIEF Kevin Davis said “at least a third” of the examined uses of force involved the pointing of a firearm by a police officer.

“That’s loud and clear to us,” Davis told the Board. “Why is that happening and what can we do to reduce that number?”

Eyebrows raised when Smith said analysis was conducted again “after some preliminary discussions with senior leadership of the police department.”

In that reanalysis, pointing a weapon at a person was reclassified from use-of-force level three (on a scale of 1-4) to a use-of-force level one, the same level as soft-hand control.

“What’s important to understand is that the disparity in force versus African Americans in particular is largely located in the pointing of a weapon at someone,” said

Black People

path forward.



Springfield Supervisor Pat Herrity



Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee Supervisor)

Smith. The new “softer” analysis largely obscured the disparities.

“The firearms our officers carry are loaded, yes? We’re basically talking about pointing a loaded firearm at somebody,” said Alcorn. “Soft-hand control does not involve the potential of deadly force. I frankly would discount the analysis of putting that in L-1 [the least severe use of force category],” he said.

Herrity, on the other hand, said he’s been



Deputy County Executive David Rohrer with Fairfax County Police Chief Kevin Davis

on ride-alongs with narcotics units where pointing a weapon “changes the equation quickly.”

“They use the pointing of weapons to actually deescalate a situation,” said Herrity, the Board’s lone Republican.

Braddock Supervisor James Walkinshaw countered: “I don’t think the Police Executive Research Forum would view pointing a firearm as a deescalation technique. Necessary, effective maybe in some instances, but

not deescalation,” he said.

“I do have a frustration with that slide in that it’s not reflected in the report. I searched for reestimation and you kind of didn’t show your work on that slide,” he said. “I think the public would benefit more from hearing how you came to the conclusions that were on that slide.”

THE PUBLIC will have that opportunity, said Lusk.

SEE THE PRESENTATION DECK:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2021/june29-public-safety-police-department-use-of-force-presentation.pdf>

SEE THE FULL STUDY

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2021/june29-public-safety-use-of-force-research-project-report-utsa.pdf>

“We will hold a public input meeting which will include the researchers ... as well as others in the community which includes advocates to have the same opportunity that we’ve had here today,” said Lusk.

In addition, Lusk said that he, along with Chairman Jeff McKay and Davis, would form a community group made up of advocates, community members, police staff and others who will review the study in detail and report back to the public safety committee with feedback on findings and recommendations, including a timeline for implementation.

All of the recommendations made by this study will be added to the Public Safety Committee’s Community Input Matrix.

This extensive list of police reform ideas and suggestions was compiled from input from public safety professionals, community members and advocacy organizations.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/police-reform/police-reform-suggestions.pdf>



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WELLBEING

Back to Work

Angst, readjustment as employees return to the office.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

More than one year after the emergence of COVID-19 and the subsequent, work-from-home mandates, many employees are heading back to the office. After adjusting to that new normal created by the pandemic and experiencing the benefits that came with it, the reemergence of rush hour traffic, office politics, and a loss of freedom is leading to dread and angst among some workers.

"Most of the clients I'm currently working with are anxious about returning to work because of potential exposure to COVID, they're worried about losing flexibility and control over their work-day and quality of life," said David Hansen, Licensed Professional Counselor and Certified Career Counselor in Fairfax. "My clients are afraid of losing that, and right now there's a lot of anxiety because it's unclear to them what the expectations will be when they're back in the office."

Just as employees and employers had to make significant modifications abruptly, urgently and without precedent, some of the same kinds of adjustments will need to be made during the transition back to working in person. "Last March, it took people a while to adjust and figure out how to make working from home function properly, but over time, and even though it was hard, many working people and their families got into a steady groove, and even found that they could build in more quality time to take care of themselves and their families," said Hansen.

Losing those benefits has led to a reevaluation of goals and values.

"The success and power-driven environment that

we live in was shaken by the pandemic. Many have seen that they can lead fulfilling lives with less," said Arlington psychologist Kerry Anderson, Ph.D. who transitioned her practice to video conferencing during the pandemic. "They may find that what they have is good enough and adding more may tip the scales back to stress and excess. Now more than before it's important to reassess your current values as your life stands today. What do you want the next three to five years to look like? What have you learned over the course of this year that you would like to maintain? What are you ready to let go of that has not served you well?"

Retuning without giving up all of the autonomy could be a solution, says Hansen. "I think that employees who want to retain some of their freedom and flexibility in their schedule can have open and honest conversations with their supervisor about maintain-

ing at least one or more work-from-home days."

While some employees might be able to negotiate an arrangement that allows them to maintain at least part of the change in workstyle that resulted from the pandemic, others may not have that luxury.

"Workers should lower their self-expectations accordingly," said psychologist Steven Thiessen, Ph.D. whose office is in Rockville. "They should expect to feel some level of discomfort, and they

should not expect to handle it perfectly. They should expect that they will need a period of adjustment."

Creating a plan can help reduce stress and anxiety, particularly for those who don't have the power to ask for flexibility. "I think one of the most important things employees can do right now as they're thinking about going back to work is identify, very specifically, what positive changes they've made since COVID that they want to hold onto," said Anderson. "Finding creative ways to maintain activities like exercising or spending time with family can give you something to look forward to and can reduce some of the anxiety over returning to work."

"I think that employees who want to retain some of their freedom and flexibility in their schedule can have open and honest conversations with their supervisor about maintaining at least one or more work-from-home days."

— David Hansen, career counselor

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Best Real Estate Market Ever

First half 2021 compared to the same time 2020 and 2011 in McLean and Great Falls.

By Karen Briscoe

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

The residential real estate market in McLean and Great Falls is to date experiencing the best year ever! The number of sales for the first half of the year are up 38 percent over 2020 transaction levels. The market experienced a slowdown due to the pandemic stay-at-home orders from mid-March to mid-June 2020. In 2021 it has now surpassed the previous peak record of 705 transactions in the first half of 2004 with 741 transactions in the first half of this year. Note that a decade ago when the market was in recovery mode there were only 430 sales in the same period.

The last peak cycle for the area was in the early 2000s with these first half numbers: 563 sales in 2001, 622 in 2002, 654 in 2003, peak of 705 in 2004 and then back down to 678 in 2005. The trends returned to a more "normal" level in 2006 of 448 and 470 in 2007. The financial and real estate markets corrected significantly in 2008 and 2009 with a bottom number of real estate sales of 283 and 294 respectfully and the road to recovery began in 2010 with 348.

The good news is that these numbers indicate that home prices are appreciating. The lower bracket in the McLean and Great Falls communities comprises values less than \$1.25 m and the upper market are those greater than \$1.25 m. In the first half of 2021, 49 percent of the sales were over \$1.25 m and 51 percent under. Compare that to one year ago in 2020 where 38 percent of the sales were over \$1.25 m and 62 percent under. One decade ago, in 2011 the upper brackets represented one-quarter of the sales and the below \$1.25 m represented 75 percent of the market. This is really good news for home sellers given that in many segments of McLean and Great Falls prices have been flat for the last 15 years. As interest rates continue to be at historical lows, buyers still have incredible purchasing power.

This is not my first rodeo! As one of the Realtors® who was active in the business during the last market run up, many inquire as to whether this rising market is sustainable. There are several strong market forces that are unique to this cycle. One, the Millennial generation is the largest ever representing over 91 million in the US. The global pandemic has led many Millennials to embrace "adulting" which means among other things household formation which in many cases leads to home purchasing. Most of the housing built in McLean and Great Falls was for the last largest generation, the Baby boomers which represents around 74 m. So even if no other factors presented themselves, there was going to be a housing shortage.

The majority of residential new home construction in McLean and Great Falls is in-fill where an older

2021 Sales Compared to 2020 and 2011						
2021 First Half Total Sales: 741						
	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
Zip Code						
22101	17	52	98	64	66	21
22102	15	20	48	21	17	135
22066	6	32	72	32	22	3
	Total: 38	Total: 104	Total: 218	Total: 117	Total: 105	Total: 159
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 360			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 381		
2020 First Half Total Sales: 538						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	14	19	77	32	71	5
22102	4	8	30	18	16	105
22066	2	6	46	33	44	8
	Total: 20	Total: 33	Total: 153	Total: 83	Total: 131	Total: 118
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 206			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 332		
2011 First Half Total Sales: 430						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	1	7	35	20	61	69
22102	6	4	17	13	22	80
22066	3	2	28	18	21	23
	Total: 10	Total: 13	Total: 80	Total: 51	Total: 104	Total: 172
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 103			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 327		



Karen Briscoe and Lizzy Conroy

home is torn down for a new home to be built in its place. Although there are pockets of land that a developer subdivides and installs streets and utilities and builds new homes, that supply is nowhere enough to meet demand. This is evident throughout the United States where the overall construction numbers for the decades since the 1970s averaged 26.2 m, except for the most recent decade of 2010-2020 which was right under 6 m. The new home construction slowdown was primarily due to the difficulty of obtaining credit after the Great Recession and increased construction costs. In addition to land prices rising, builders and developers have experienced significantly higher prices for lumber, appliances, etc.

There is still considerable demand for buyers ready, willing, and able to purchase a home in Northern Virginia in the balance of 2021. Current supply for

SEE HOT MARKET, PAGE 10

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park



Sun Dogs: A Tribute to Rush
Sunday, July 11, 5 p.m.
McLean Central Park Gazebo
Free admission

MCC Governing Board



MCC Governing Board Strategic Planning Session
Thursday, July 15, 6 - 8:30 p.m.
All board meetings are open to the public.

Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park



The Sensational Soul Cruisers: A Tribute to Motown
Sunday, July 18, 5 p.m.
McLean Central Park Gazebo
Free admission

Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park



Nashville Girls Night Out
Sunday, July 25, 5 p.m.
McLean Central Park Gazebo
Free admission

MCC Governing Board



Regular Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, July 28, 6:30 p.m.
All board meetings are open to the public.



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www.mcleancenter.org
Home of The Alden Theatre
www.aldentheatre.org

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NEWS

Hot Market

FROM PAGE 9

the overall McLean and Great Falls market is under 3 months which is considered a sellers' market as a balanced market is a 6-month supply. As homeowners recognize appreciation not experienced in over 15 years and want to take advantage of a sellers' market, predictions are that more homes will come available.

What about buyers? Yes, Virginia this is still a good time to invest in home ownership. Should 2021 prove to be the first or second year of a rising market, there could still be more price appreciation to come. The real estate market experienced a strong start in the first half of 2021 and indicators show that the second half will close out a banner year.

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

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriend-A-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-4547.

Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia based 501(c)(3) organization seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See www.ophrescue.org for information and all volunteer opportunities.

Master Gardener Training. The Fairfax County Master Gardener Association offers plant clinics, home turf training or speakers for homeowner's meetings. Fees vary. Visit fairfaxgardening.org or call MG Help Desk at 703-324-8556 for more.

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