

Beloved Martha, Mary Wiseman, Looks Back with Joy

Mount Vernon's Martha Washington is hanging up the bonnet and dress after 20 years.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

For Mary Wiseman, historically portraying Lady Washington for nearly 20 years at the Mount Vernon plantation has branched out in ways she never could imagine back in the beginning. She's become an originator of "character interpretation," an expert on the life and times of the real Martha, a history teacher of sorts, and a character around the Mount Vernon community where she's lived for the past 15 years. Now she's passing the bonnet to a younger Martha character interpreter, and looks back with joy at her opportunities.

"I didn't intend to become the nation's grandmother, but I kind of did," Wiseman said, "it's been a joy for me."

For years, she'd wake up in her Belle View apartment, put on the authentic-looking bonnet and puffy dress and drive the short distance to the plantation where she'd smile, teach history and bring authenticity for the thousands that walked through the gate. The visitors would feel like they were talking to the real Martha. "I'm very proud of that," she said.

Wiseman and Martha shared many traits in real life, only coincidence, but it added to the portrayal. They were both of Welsh and English descent, both doting grandmothers, and both came from the same part of Virginia between Richmond and Fredericksburg. That's where Wiseman lives now in New Kent County. "I live about 10 miles as the crow flies from where Martha was born," she said. "I didn't plan any of it."

It all started in Williamsburg back in the 1970s where she was perfecting the skill of character interpretation on a variety of characters in Colonial Williamsburg. Martha Washington was one of the characters she studied, and years later, there was



Mount Vernon character interpreter Mary Wiseman as Martha Washington.

er and the two got married in early 1759 and she moved into Mount Vernon.

There were illnesses and deaths in the family, and a new grandchild of Martha's was born, and then she traveled up to Valley Forge in the winter of 1777 to be with George.

In 1783, the Revolutionary War was over, George returned home, and became the first president in 1789."

George Washington died in 1799 and Martha died on May 22, 1802. "After he died, she really didn't want to go on," Wiseman said. "They were really partners."

As Martha, Wiseman has gotten to ride down Pennsylvania Avenue in the Memorial Day parades, rode in a GW

Birthday parade in Old Town, participated in July 4th celebrations, candlelight Christmas events, and met another famous Martha, Martha Stewart.

"I had the delight of giving Martha Stewart a recommendation," she said.

Other people she's met were Lady Gird Johnson, Kathleen Matthews, Jane Pauley, Katie Couric, and attended Sen. John Warner's birthday. In 1982, there was a George Washington mini series starring Jacquelyn Smith and, "I was their consultant," Wiseman said.

Over the last few years, she's trained Elizabeth Keaney to be the new Martha, and Keaney will be coming in to portray Martha, and also living in Belle View. Keaney started playing Martha's granddaughter years ago, and now "she sounds exactly like me," Wiseman said.

Wiseman's bonnet and puffy dress will still be in use though for an occasional appearance for a history class or guest appearance in New Kent County.

While in Mount Vernon this summer, Wiseman is filming a documentary of sorts on her life, and was surprised with a medal — a purple heart from her father who was killed in World War II right before she was born.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Mount Vernon character interpreter Mary Wiseman as Martha Washington poses with her grandson Zach, 15, who was her grandson in the Martha world when he was a baby.

an opening in Mount Vernon, so she jumped on it, commuting for a while. In 2004, she moved to

move to an area riddled with the congestion and traffic. The community of Belle View embraced her though, and at Primo's Restaurant, they know her order and the special salad she gets. "I became a fixture in that area," she said. Many times, she would leave on the bonnet and dress

— and smile. "People could come and sit down with me and talk," she said.

"I didn't intend to become the nation's grandmother, but I kind of did. it's been a joy for me."

— Mary Wiseman as Martha Washington

Belle View and took on the role, even though her contacts in Williamsburg couldn't believe she'd

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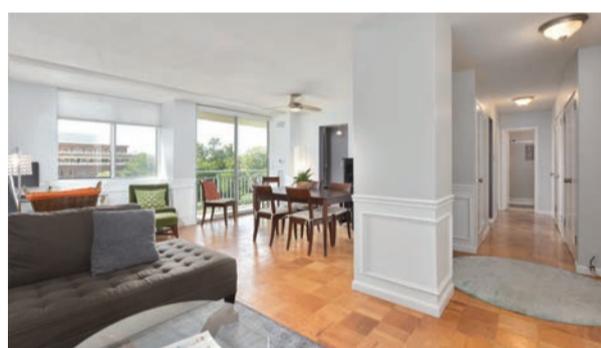


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Marijuana Is Now Legal

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

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

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 le-



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

gal, 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 al-

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

— Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30)

lowed, 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 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 includ-

ed 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 indus-

try 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 treat-

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

— Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice Virginia

ment. 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.



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



Springfield Supervisor Pat Herry



Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee Supervisor)



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

Police Weapons Point At Black People

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

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 resistance 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 dis-

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>

trict 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 Herry (R) said he hoped the Board would make note of the research team’s opinion.

“We regularly publish that,” said Herry. “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

SEE POLICE WEAPONS, PAGE 5
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Police Weapons

FROM PAGE 4

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

“They use the pointing of weapons to actually deescalate a situa-

tion.” 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.

“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>

upcoming events.

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The Washington Library at Mount Vernon is seeking additional volunteers to staff its front desk. No library experience required. Duties include greeting and directing Library guests and assisting with general Library and building operations. Available shifts are 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 1 – 5 p.m. Monday – Friday. Benefits include access to the estate and behind-the-scenes Library happenings, discounted estate admission for friends and family, as well as food and retail discounts. Qualifications include basic computer skills including MS Office, familiarity with office phone

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 13

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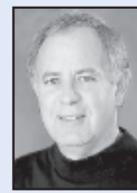
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New Member class. Website: <https://www.jlnv.org/july-15th-jlnv-virtual-meet-and-greet/>

TUESDAY/JULY 20

DNA Genealogy Tools. 1-3 p.m. Via Zoom. Former police detective David Vasquez discusses how to use DNA tools such as GEDMatch in his July 20 presentation at the Mount Vernon Genealogical Society’s monthly meeting. Register no later than July 12 to this free Zoom event at <https://mvgenealogy.org/cpage.php?pt=111> OR by emailing your name and address to contact-us@mvgenealogy.org. Visit www.mvgenealogy.org and link to the Events Page for more information on this and other



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Eviction Prevention Is Not Housing Investment

By MICHELLE KROCKER

America has a housing crisis - an affordability crisis, as well as a housing supply crisis. Recently, the National Association of Realtors released a report showing that over the last 20 years new housing starts fell 5.5 million units short of long-term historical levels. "The scale of the problem is so large," said David Bank, senior vice president of Rosen Consulting Group and one of the report's authors. "We need affordable, we need market-rate, we need single-family, we need multifamily."

Our region is also experiencing a housing crisis. To address our unmet housing needs, elected officials from the District, Maryland and Virginia unanimously adopted the Council of Governments' regional goal of producing 375,000 net new housing units between 2015 and 2030. Housing should be located in activity centers near transit, with one-third of the units

serving low-income households and one-third for middle-income households. The regional goal translates into 25,000 net new housing units per year, so clearly we need to build more housing.

The eviction crisis created by the pandemic is unlike anything we have experienced in our lifetimes. Through multiple assistance programs, the federal government has responded with substantial tranches of funding to provide financial resources to prevent evictions by paying back rent, advancing rent for those impacted by COVID, and helping landlords remain solvent. However, the administrative process of getting that much money out the door has been daunting for state and local governments, resulting in bottlenecks to deliver relief assistance. With the end to the CDC moratorium on July 31 — with little hope for further extension — strategies for mutually beneficial agreements between landlords and tenants, with the help of trusted community part-

ners and continued rental assistance will be needed to stave off an eviction catastrophe.

Eviction Prevention Does Not Equal Housing Investment. It is imperative that this relief assistance not be construed as solving our pre-pandemic housing crisis. Eviction prevention does not solve the historic under-investment in housing production and preservation. We must have investments to end homelessness, provide permanent supportive housing for persons with disabilities, create housing that's affordable for low and moderate income households, young families wanting to buy their first home, and seniors on fixed incomes who want to remain in their communities.

Over the coming months, the Virginia General Assembly and localities throughout the Commonwealth will make consequential decisions on how to spend the largess from the American Rescue Plan funds. With accounts of Virginia's better-than-expected finan-

cial recovery from the pandemic, housing advocates should be bold in their recommendations for how Virginia allocates the \$4.3 billion in federal funds. Having secured historic gains for the state Housing Trust Fund, permanent supportive housing, and the new Virginia Opportunity Tax Credit, it's time to build a housing trust fund that closes the gap of only four affordable units for every 10 households eligible for housing that's affordable.

It is also the time for Northern Virginia advocates to press local governments for the funding needed to meet their share of the region's housing goals as defined by the COG pledge. This is housing's moment to imagine a region and a Commonwealth that is fair, equitable, inclusive and provides housing for all. Let's not squander this unique opportunity.

Michelle Krocker is the Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance <https://nvaha.org/>

Encore Theatre Innovates Drive Through Theatre

Voyager's Compass returns for two performances on Saturday, July 10 at St. Thomas More Cathedral School parking lot and Sunday, July 11 at Lubber Run Amphitheater. Meet a new exotic creature at each stop as the Encore Stage and Studio

presentation guides cars along the path to explore the seven skies and find their way home.

Audience members will remain masked and in their vehicles for the duration of the show. The July 10 performances are scheduled for 9:30-12:00 p.m. and the

Lubber Run performance at 11:00 a.m. The production was written by local teenage writer Xander Tillock. Encore Theatre is an Arlington-based company "by kids for kids."

Proceeds from the \$10 per vehicle tickets will be donated to En-

core's "Theatre For All" fund which provides scholarships and outreach programs. In addition, bring along a can of tuna, tomatoes or soup or a box of low-sugar cereal to be donated to Arlington Food Assistance Center.

— SHIRLEY RUHE

Plant Clinic Needed in Climate Crisis

When I completed my Master Gardener training in 1981, several of my classmates and I wanted to

LETTERS set up a plant clinic at the Alexandria Farmers' Market. It would be a free service to the city and staffed by volunteers, who

could provide horticultural advice and diagnostic services to homeowners. But we needed a free spot at the market to set up. Needless to say, it took a lot of effort to get that spot, but eventually the plant clinic became a valuable service to the community for 30+ years.

This year, City Hall has decided that free horticultural advice is no longer needed, and the Plant Clinic can no longer have a seat at the market. I'm wondering who is making this determination, especially considering the environmental impact of invasive plants,

scorching summers, and the decimation of our valuable tree canopy to make way for things like snack bars at the high school athletic field.

Paula Coupe
Alexandria

Beacon Hill Site Meets All Criteria

To the editor:

Thank you for "County Eyes Spot for New Fire Station and Affordable Housing" in the July 1 Gazette. We would like to make further points.

The site will include a modern replacement for the Kennedy Shelter, providing housing and services. The current Kennedy Shelter on Fort Belvoir suffers from many inadequacies, cannot be rebuilt, and is in a poor location.

The Beacon Hill site meets all the criteria to serve our unhoused fellow citizens: access to sufficient transportation; near employment

and health services; walkable; space for supportive housing, parking; not isolated; properly distanced from schools; already owned; free of hazards.

A caption incorrectly implied that supporters do not live nearby. A main opposition organizer lives more than a mile away. Supporters from closer neighborhoods were present. All of Mount Vernon has a stake. The site decision should be on criteria that best serve the needs of our unhoused neighbors.

Most neighbors are not opposed,
SEE BEACON HILL, PAGE 7

Let Us Know Your View

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NEWS

Michael Pope, Gazette Packet Win Multiple SPJ Dateline Awards

The Washington, D.C., Pro chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists announced the recipients of its 2021 Dateline Awards for journalism excellence June 15 in a virtual presentation. Alexandria Gazette Packet took home five first place and finalist awards in the weekly newspaper division, by Michael Pope.

Pope's "Interrogating Inequality" in the Gazette Packet won the Non-Breaking News category. His "Crashing Economy," won the Business category.

His reporting for the Gazette Packet made him a finalist in three additional categories: "Alexandria's Failed Experiment with Wards," was a finalist in Features; Pope's Criminal Justice Reform reporting was a finalist for Beat Reporting; "Disproportionate Policing" entry was a finalist in Investigative Journalism.

Pope also won three first-place awards for his radio broadcast work with Virginia Public Radio: He was winner of Non-Breaking News for Reporting on the Incarcerated; winner for Beat Reporting for Virginia General Assembly coverage; and winner for Business for "Unemployment in Virginia."

"What a challenge the judges

faced this year in selecting the best of the best," said Randy Showstack, president of the Washington, D.C. Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. "This has been a year when extraordinary events reared their heads, merged, and sometimes collided – a pandemic, urgent calls for social justice reform, a presidential election and ... an increasing concern about climate change. So, it is not surprising that our contest would receive a record number of entries, with so many of the entries displaying the highest caliber of journalistic excellence."

The Alexandria Gazette Packet and its sister Connection Newspapers are lucky to have a reporter of Michael Pope's quality as a regular contributor, said Mary Kimm, editor and publisher of the newspaper group.

Awards were presented for excellence in TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, newsletter/trade publication, and online journalism, encompassing breaking news, business writing, commentary, photography, and more.

Beacon Hill

FROM PAGE 6

but have specific concerns addressable by facts. Police at the meeting made clear that worries about crime in the community are not borne out by calls from or about the Kennedy Shelter. 911 emergency calls are mostly health related; the rest are general disputes contained within the shelter, usually between shelter guests.

Focus on sex offenders exaggerates imagined harm from a handful of homeless people, while in surrounding neighborhoods, four dozen sex offenders already live in homes and apartments.

There is no evidence that property values decrease with a shelter. This neighborhood is up 9% this year per Zillow. Completion of EM-BARK will further increase values.

Neighbors' fears dissipate after a shelter is built. Neighbors can volunteer, support shelter residents, and invest in success. Beacon Hill remains the best site for co-locating the fire station, shelter, and supportive housing.

Kristin Rosenthal
William Collins

For Kennedy Shelter Allies

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Going for the Gold Noah Lyles headed to Tokyo Olympics.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Only a few short years ago, Noah Lyles could be seen warming up to the strains of James Brown's "I Feel Good" as he trained on the track of Parker-Gray Memorial Field at what was then T.C. Williams High School. Next month, the world becomes his stage as Lyles heads to Tokyo as part of the U.S. Olympic Track & Field team.

"I don't think anybody could prepare you for the lion that you have to slay at the Olympic Trials," said Lyles during a press conference following his victory in the 200 meters in Eugene, Ore. on Sunday, June 27. "It's not World Championships, it's not U.S. Championships, this is the hardest team to make and everybody here shows it."

Lyles, the reigning world champion, ran the 200 meters in 19.74 seconds – the fastest in the world this year – making him the gold medal favorite as he heads to Tokyo. He had disappointing seventh-place finish in the 100-meter race.

The son of Keisha Caine Bishop and Kevin Lyles, both Track and Field athletes at Seton Hall University, Lyles, 23, was joined at the trials by his younger brother Josephus Lyles, who fell short of mak-



Alexandria native Noah Lyles celebrates after taking home the gold medal in the 200 meters during the U.S. Olympic Track & Field trials June 27 in Eugene, Ore. Lyles finished in 19.74 seconds — the fastest time in the world this year — and will compete this July at the Tokyo Olympics.



Brothers Noah and Josephus Lyles rest between heats at the U.S. Olympic Track & Field trials in Eugene, Ore. Noah Lyles will represent the U.S. at the Tokyo Olympics. Josephus Lyles did not make the team.



U.S. Olympian and 2016 T.C. Williams graduate Noah Lyles holds up his graduation cap during an address to the T.C. Williams Class of 2020 during last year's virtual graduation ceremony.

ing the Olympic team.

With his victory and the expectation that he will run on the U.S. 4x100 relay team, two gold medals are within the grasp of the 2016 T.C. Williams graduate. Lyles joins boxer Troy Isley as the second Alexandrian headed to Tokyo.

Lyles, who now calls Florida

home, set his sights on the Olympics when he was in the eighth grade. He fell one place short in his bid to compete in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games as a high school senior.

He shared some of the adversities he faced in his quest to become a professional athlete during a commencement address he deliv-

ered during last year's virtual graduation ceremony for T.C.

"I was born with severe asthma," said Lyles, who turned pro directly out of high school. "Can you imagine a track athlete with asthma? But I persevered. I wanted to make a whole new path for myself."

Lyles also spoke of his dyslexia,

ADD and experiences with bullying.

"It wasn't an easy path," said Lyles, who proudly held up his own graduation cap adorned with the Olympic rings. "But I didn't want to be another child who just goes through the motions. I wanted to create my own destiny and facing those adversities is what got me here today."

The charismatic Lyles is being compared to track great Usain Bolt and is already running faster than Bolt did at the same age.

"Yes, it's nice to be fast, but what could take you over the top?" he is quoted as saying in his Olympic profile. "Usain Bolt, household name.

Transcended the sport. Michael Phelps, swimmer, transcended the sport. What is going to take you from being just popular in track to being popular in the world? By being different or by being you. You can't get to that point by being somebody else."

The Tokyo Olympic Games begin July 23 and run through Aug. 8. Track & Field events begin July 29 and culminate Aug. 7.

Arlington swimmer Torri Huske broke her own American record in the 100m butterfly at the Olympic trials on June 14, and will also compete at the Tokyo Olympics.

www.olympics.com/tokyo

On the Road Again Safety protocols in place as trolley service resumes.

After a more than a year-long pause in operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Alexandria's King Street Trolley resumed service July 5.

The free service will again shuttle riders along King Street with a few changes in service. The trolley will run from King Street Metro Station to City Hall's Market Square, every 15 minutes from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., seven days a week, including holidays.

A new stop at the southeast corner of Market Square on North Fairfax Street will serve passengers accessing the Potomac River waterfront. The stops at Union Street and Lee Street will no longer be served, due to the street closure on the 100 block of King

Street.

All riders are required to wear face masks while on board and all trolleys are equipped with driver barriers. Smoking, eating and drinking are prohibited on the trolley and passengers with strollers must close strollers before entering. The trolley stops at designated stops or at a safe location by request. Passengers must pull the cord to signal a stop.

The King Street Trolley is equipped with wheelchair ramps and bike racks as well as automated stop announcements.

To contact DASH (the trolley operator) about lost items or other inquiries, call (703) 746-3274 or visit www.dashbus.com/trolley



PHOTO BY R. KENNEDY/VISIT ALEXANDRIA

— JEANNE THEISMANN The free King Street Trolley is back in service as of July 5.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Coolers full of 7-day meal kits, planned by registered dietitian nutritionists and prepared daily by trained food service professionals pack a Fairfax County Public School bus for its Bus Route Meal Service, Summer 2021.



Hutchinson Principal Sarah Aiello takes a meal kit from an FCPS employee during the first day of the Bus Route Meal Distribution.

School Buses and Sites Provide Free Grab and Go 7-day Meal Kits

County children under 18 and all FCPS students eligible.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Ten Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) buses began rolling Monday, June 28, on a mission to deliver their precious cargo, coolers full of nutritious breakfast and lunch items packed in seven-day, bulk meal kits, grab-and-go style. It is a lifeline for some children living in the county's 406 square miles, who depend on USDA's child nutrition programs for the nourishment they need to grow and thrive.

According to FCPS, nearly one-third of its students qualified for free and reduced-price meals in the fall of 2019. Families who earn less than 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals, and those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals. Fairfax County Summer Meal Program runs under the USDA Summer Food Service Program and enters its second week on July 5.

"The distribution of the meal kits fulfills an essential service to our community. The meals provide much-needed support to our most vulnerable students and families. Upon pickup, parents are not asked for any information other than the number of meals they require," said Dr. Ricardy Anderson, Fairfax County School Board Chair. "It is important to continue to spread the word that the distribution of meals is still available at FCPS schools and bus routes because the families who have the greatest need may not be aware the service is continuing throughout the summer months."

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that school districts could continue serving free meals to all children regardless of family income and allow the meals served in a drive-thru or walk-up setting, offered as "grab-and-go" meals through June 2022 under its Summer Food Service Program.

The program is vital, particularly for communities hardest hit by COVID. According to FCPS, all county children under eighteen years of age, and all FCPS students, regardless of age, are eligible to receive the no-cost, weekly Meal Kits, which can be provided to parents or caretakers without the presence of a child.

FCPS made the free meal kits available in two ways. Parents, guardians, and students can access the kits at the weekly Bus Route Meal Service distributing throughout the county through Thursday, Aug. 5. The second option is to visit one of the Meal Kit Sites (every Monday) through Aug. 2.

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS can let the FCPS employees know how many children need a meal kit. No other questions are asked, nor is identification required. Students may also pick up the meal kits.

On Tuesday, June 29, Delmay Sandoval of Herndon was first in line at Hutchinson Elementary school parking lot for that Bus Route Meal Service location. She sat in her car with the windows rolled down with her two children and baby in the back seat. The temperature registered 95 degrees, and the sun was blazing. "I received this message last night from the school. It's in Spanish," Sandoval said. "I didn't know about the

meals before that."

According to Sarah Aiello, Principal at Hutchinson, she texted the community multiple times the night before "to prep them because it's something new." She stood in the school parking lot as the bus arrived and called out to people, "Once a week, every Tuesday, 11:37."

Parents, caretakers, and students exited their cars to receive the meal kits off-loaded from the bus's rear. "I need it for three kids," one woman said. "Dos ninos," said a man.

Seeing small children in some vehicles, Aiello and other school staff hurried toward them with meal kits and loaded them into the trunks. Aiello later reported 80 meal kits distributed.

Registered dietitian nutritionists plan the meals and trained food service professionals prepare them daily using fresh high-quality ingredients. The grab-and-go meals "are tasty, well-balanced, and contain protein, whole grains, fruits and/or vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free milk," according to the Fairfax County Office of Food and Nutrition Services.

Ten FCPS buses run designated Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday routes to schools and other locations, once a week with scheduled arrival and departure times for the Summer Meal Bus Routes.

The routes stay the same for the 6-week program. The last day of the Summer Meal Bus Routes is Thursday, Aug. 5. Search Bus Route Meal Service- Summer 2021 | Fairfax County Public Schools for a list of the Monday through Thursday routes for the ten buses.

Monday Meal Kit Sites

June 28 - August 2 - 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.
or until supplies are exhausted.

Dates of distribution

- June 28
- July 6 (Tuesday, July 6 due to the Monday, July 5 holiday)
- July 12
- July 19
- July 26
- August 2

Meal Kit sites

- Centreville HS- 6001 Union Mill Rd, Clifton
- Edison HS 5801 Franconia Rd, Alexandria
- Falls Church HS 7521 Jaguar Trail, Falls Church
- Hayfield SS 7630 Telegraph Rd, Alexandria, VA
- Marshall HS 7731 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church
- Mount Vernon HS 8515 Old Mt Vernon Rd, Alexandria begins 07/06
- South County HS 8700 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton
- South Lakes HS 11400 South Lakes Dr, Reston
- West Springfield HS 6100 Rolling Rd, West Springfield
- Westfield HS 4700 Stonecroft Blvd, Chantilly
- Woodson HS 9525 Main St, Fairfax

A list of the Monday Meal Kit sites open for pick up.

THE MONDAY MORNING FCPS Summer Meal Program Meal Kit Sites are open 8:30 - 10:30 a.m., for the remaining weeks in the season -July 12 through Aug. 2. Like the bus routes, meal kits containing seven days of breakfast and lunch items are packed in bulk. Adults may purchase kits for themselves and other adults for \$28 each at the Monday sites. Meal kits are not available off the buses for purchase by adults.

The Monday morning FCPS Summer Meal Program Meal Kit Sites are Centreville HS, Edison HS, Falls Church HS, Hayfield SS, Marshall HS, Mount Vernon HS, South County HS, South Lakes HS, West Springfield HS, Westfield HS, and Woodson HS.

Search Meal Kit Sites (Every Monday) June 28 through August 2 for more information.

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NEWS

Balloon Releases Could Bring Fines

New law bans the intentional outdoor release of balloons, which can harm wildlife, environment.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
 MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

A balloon with a mind of its own follows a young boy around the streets of Paris amusing all, in the classic French children's movie, "The Red Balloon." But when balloons come down, they are not so amusing.

People have released balloons into the sky for years, to cheer up parties, jamborees, games, graduations and celebrations, but with enactment of a new Virginia law, intentionally releasing balloons outdoors can bring a \$25 fine for each balloon.

On June 29, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam signed into law a bill that bans the intentional outdoor release of nonbiodegradable balloons.

Prior to this new law, people could release up to 50 balloons at one time. Virginia Beach Del. Nancy Guy, the bill's sponsor, was motivated in part by Virginia Aquarium officials in Virginia Beach who have found balloons and balloon remnants in the stomachs of turtles and marine mammals like dolphins and whales.

While some legislators trivialized the bill as it languished in the General Assembly for a decade, Guy said during the legislators' debate that intentionally releasing balloons is "a legalized form of littering."

Latex balloons, foil balloons and plastic ribbons are a top source of debris found on Virginia's remote beaches according to Clean Virginia Waterways of Longwood University. The Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan identified balloons and their attachments as one of the top five most harmful types of marine debris.

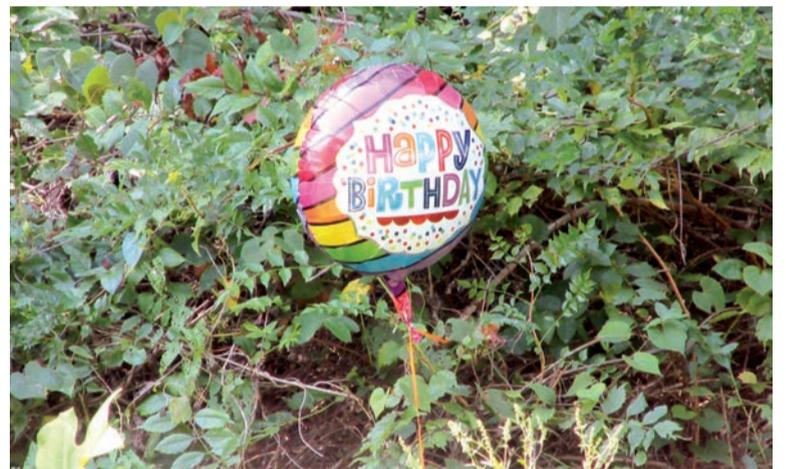
Why Balloons Are a Problem

Aquatic animals mistake balloons for food because some balloons look like jellyfish. When eaten, balloons can cause intestinal blockage and be lethal. "Balloons and plastic ribbons are among the deadliest types of ocean trash to all kinds of wildlife including sea turtles and birds," said Christina Trapani, a Longwood researcher.

Mount Vernon Delegate Paul Krizek voted for the bill. "As much as we all love balloons filled with helium, it makes sense to legally forbid the purposeful release into the environment, especially as marine wildlife like turtles and birds see the deflated, floating balloon



These balloons were snagged in trees in the Mount Vernon area.



These balloons came down in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.

Alternatives to Balloons

To make events festive, there are alternatives to balloons, but everything has an impact of some kind. Several online party suppliers claim their products are "biodegradable" or "compostable." Non-balloon options include bubbles, paper balls and pompoms, tissue paper balls, biodegradable confetti, flags and streamers. Colorful real leaves and flowers readily decompose, and could be the best choice.

plastic as food which then kills them once ingested," Krizek said.

While some manufacturers may claim their balloons are biodegradable, most balloons biodegrade very slowly. According to Wildlife Center of Virginia officials, balloons can take months to years to fully break down. As they break down, wildlife can mistake small latex and plastic pieces for food and choke on them or die from eating them.

The Biodegradable Products Institute (<https://www.bpiworld.org/>) certifies compostable products.

org/) certifies compostable products.

Balloons have chemical components, plasticizers and artificial dyes which can have adverse environmental impacts.

Seabirds, wading birds, raptors and other birds can get entangled in balloons, especially in their strings or ribbons. This can impair the birds' mobility, feeding and other behavior.

Foil balloons can cause power outages when entangled on power lines. Mylar balloons' metallic coating can conduct electricity.

Ed Clark, president of the Wildlife Center of Virginia, summarized: "The bottom line is, these things get out there and there're no good consequences."

One balloon can travel thousands of miles, reports a University of Michigan study. A balloon released in Ann Arbor, Michigan, was found five days later in Pine Knob, Kentucky, 430 miles away. Balloons, balloon ribbons and fragments can come down in the forests, streams, fields, backyards, anywhere.

What goes up, always comes down, somewhere.

CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY/JULY 7

U.S. Army Blues Band. 7:30 p.m. At Lee District Park, 660 Telegraph Road, Franconia. This popular group began in 1942 as the U.S. Army Dance Band, created to entertain soldiers and civilians in the battle zone during World War II. Since then, it has evolved into the premier jazz ensemble of the United States Army. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) before leaving home for inclement weather updates.

SATURDAY/JULY 10

Cultural Heritage Nights are coming to Ossian Hall Park for free performances from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Saturdays in July and August. These performances are part of the Spotlight by Starlight Summer Entertainment Series at Ossian Hall Park that promotes awareness and appreciation of Fairfax County's cultural diversity. We've seen the makeup of our county change dramatically in the last decade, and this helps put out the welcome mat for neighbors and shared cultures.

On July 10, 2021, enjoy Peru Cultural Heritage Night "Centro Cultural Peru" and celebrate Peru's cultural heritage with dance and music. Ossian Hall Park is located at 7900 Heritage Drive in Annandale. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) for weather updates.

SATURDAY/JULY 10

Mount Vernon Nights. 8 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Schedule, July 2021
July 10 – Marc Berger (American Roots Music)
July 17 – QuinTango (Tango Music)

July 24 – Los Texmaniacs (Conjunto band)
July 31 – Robin and Linda Williams (Folk)
August 7 – The Pietasters (Ska)
August 14 – Crys Matthews (Jazz, Blues, Funk)
August 21 – Dom Flemons (Acoustic Blues)
August 28 – The U.S. Army Field Band, Six String Soldiers (Americana, Folk, Bluegrass, Irish)

MONDAY/JULY 12

Funday Monday- Story Time. 10:30-11:30 a.m. At Old Town Hall, 3999 University Dr., Fairfax. Funday Monday is open to children of all ages; however, those who haven't yet started school are particularly encouraged to attend. There will be music, movement, storytelling, performances, crafts, and more. Visit the website:

<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

SATURDAY/JULY 17

<cal2>a.m. At Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale. The children's band sings fun songs about science and how the world works with positive social messages! Sing and dance along to original songs and familiar favorites that inspire curiosity about science and bring smiles to all ages. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) before leaving home for inclement weather updates.

GOLF CAMPS

Join the nationwide resurgence of the lifelong game of golf. Laurel



Thursday/July 8

Outdoor Jazz Concert. 5:30 and 7 p.m. At The Rectory on Princess Street, 711 Princess St., Alexandria. Retro, smooth, and timeless. Vocalist and front-woman, Ariana Harbin leads jazz quartet Sweet Something in favorite jazz tunes in tribute to such legendary performers as Etta James, Peggy Lee, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, and more. Cost: \$42. Visit the website:

<https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgardenconcerts/>

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 July 12-16, 2021; and at Twin Lakes on 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.

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 or 703-425-9225. For questions about the Museum, visit information@fairfax-station.org. The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Visit www.fairfax-station.org; 703-425-9225.

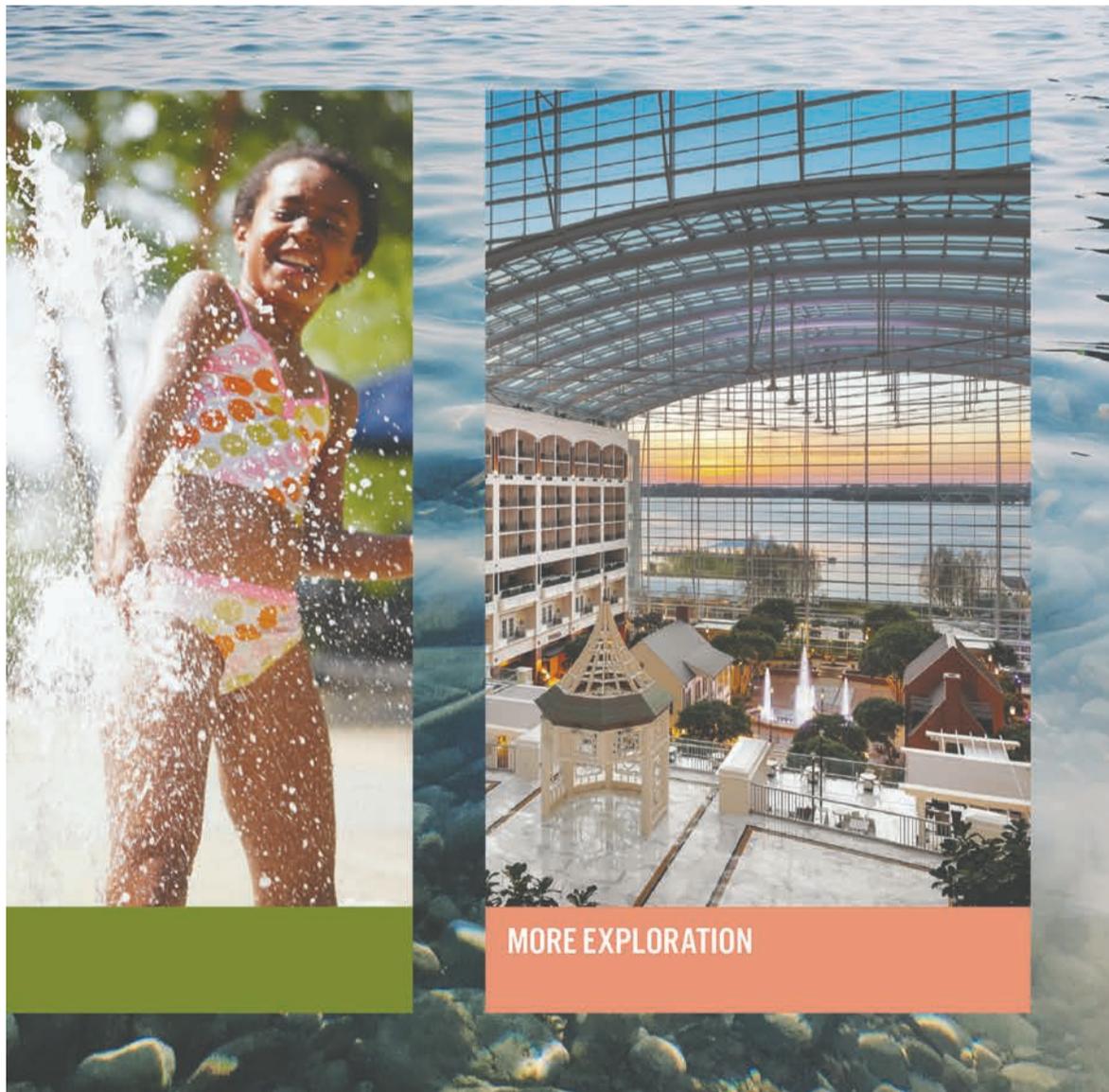
JULY 1-17

J.W. Hiller Retrospective Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans gallery, in the Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria: The John W. Hiller Retrospective Photography Exhibit showcases over four decades of photography from longtime member John W. Hiller. Works include Western landscapes, Japanese gardens, and contemporary experiential imagery. <<https://delrayartisans.org/event/retrospective/>>

SATURDAY/JULY 10

City of Alexandria Birthday Celebration. 8:45 p.m. The City of Alexandria will celebrate its 272nd and the USA's 245th birthday on Saturday, July 10, with a performance

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 12



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Mount Vernon Yacht Club Celebrates July 4th and a New Pool

Commodore Dan O’Keefe cut the ribbon at the Mount Vernon Yacht Club’s annual celebration of Independence Day which coincided this year with the grand opening of the newly constructed swimming pool. The annual softball game, parade of children, and singing of the national anthem preceded the opening and were enjoyed by all and followed by a barbecue buffet.

Part of the new pool has lane markings for swim team use.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



The swimmers get ready to test out the new pool.



Commodore Dan O’Keefe cuts the ribbon at the Mount Vernon Yacht Club’s annual celebration of Independence Day.

Patriotic Pride

U.S. flags are displayed at the intersection of Rosemont and Commonwealth Avenues in Rosemont in celebration of the Fourth of July holiday. The Rosemont area of the city is a designated Virginia Historic Landmark by the Virginia Board of Historic Resources.



JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE II

by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra ending with a Grand Finale fireworks display at 9:30 p.m. To limit crowds and prevent the spread of COVID-19, this year’s fireworks display has been repositioned to be visible from multiple vantage points along the Potomac River waterfront from Canal Center Plaza to Jones Point Park. To further reduce crowds, the event will not include the distribution of birthday cake or cannon support from the 3d United States Infantry Regiment.

Program Schedule:

8:45 p.m.—Opening and Welcome
Oronoco Bay Park (100 Madison St.)
9 p.m.—Performance by Alexandria Symphony Orchestra
Oronoco Bay Park (100 Madison St.)
9:30 p.m.—Grand Finale fireworks display
Vantage points:
Canal Center Plaza (Center Canal Plaza)
Rivergate Park (2 Montgomery St.)
Oronoco Bay Park (100 Madison St.)
Founders Park (351 North Union St.)
Waterfront Park (1A Prince St.)
Windmill Hill Park (501 South Union St.)
Fords Landing boardwalk (99 Franklin St.)
Jones Point Park (Jones Point Dr.)
George Washington Masonic Temple (101 Callahan Dr.)
Visit alexandriava.gov/Recreation for more information, or call the Special Events Hotline at 703-746-5592.

SATURDAY/JULY 10

Savory Soiree: “Liberté chérie: A Bastille Day Celebration.” 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. At The Secret Garden of the Rectory, 711 Princess Street, Alexandria. Celebrate Bastille Day with fine food and a delectable musical program of French songs and opera arias by Jules Massenet, Georges Bizet, Pauline Viardot, Nadia Boulanger and more. Visit the website: <https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgardenconcerts/>

SATURDAY/JULY 10

Del Ray Vintage & Flea Market. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At the parking lot of 1900 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Hosted monthly by Del Ray residents and businesswomen, Lauren Fisher, PsyD, and Amy Eggers, the market is held on the second Saturday of each month. The goal of the market is to give community members a chance to participate in a grass-roots event, either as shoppers or vendors, with vintage/antique/flea market items they are hoping to sell or acquire. Items for sale range from vintage and like-new clothing to housewares, sports memorabilia, child and baby items, artwork and more. Visit delrayvintageflea.com.

SATURDAY/JULY 10

Eco-Gardening Ideas: Evening Stroll at Green Spring. 5:30-7 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Take an evening stroll through the gardens at Green Spring with curatorial horticulturist Brenda Skarphol to see eco-friendly and sustainable garden ideas. Learn how to incorporate native plants that will attract more pollinators and wildlife to your garden, and ways to improve your soil to enhance water retention and manage runoff. \$18 per person. Register online at www.fairfax-county.gov/parks/parktakes (code NQN.P4JZ) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

TUESDAY/JULY 13

Summer Concert. 6-8 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Featuring music by Black Moon Tonic. Bring the whole family, a picnic, lawn chairs and a blanket to spread. Alcohol is not permitted. Call 703-642-5173 in the event of inclement weather.

BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 5

systems, and friendly and welcoming demeanor. Email FWSLibrary@mountvernon.org to learn more.

ONGOING

Local, farm-fresh produce – including strawberries and asparagus – and more will be featured at the now-opened McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon Farmers Market. From 8 a.m. to noon every Wednesday (through December 22), 16 local farmers and food producers will sell fresh, locally grown vegetables and fruits; meats; Chesapeake Bay seafood; breads and pastries; honey, jams and jellies; milk, cheese and eggs; herbs and plants; and more. The market is located at the Sherwood Hall Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. All of the items sold at the market are grown or produced by the vendors and come from within a radius of 125 miles. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT cards can be used. As a bonus, the market will match up to \$20 per market visit in SNAP dollars for fruits and vegetables.

This year's vendors are:

- Arnest Seafood – crab cakes, scallops, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and more
- Grace's Pastries - cakes, pastries and breads, with a Caribbean touch
- Great Harvest Bread - breads and pastries
- Honey Brook Farms - meats and vegetables raised with no chemicals, gluten-free baked goods
- House of Empanadas – variety of empanadas
- King Mushrooms – variety of locally grown mushrooms
- Locust Grove Farm - vegetables and herbs
- Misty Meadow Farm Creamery - milk, ice cream, cheese and eggs
- No. 1 Sons – pickles, kimchi, sauerkraut and kombucha teas
- Ochoa Produce - vegetables, herbs and flowers
- Traveling Shepherd Coffee Co. – variety of freshly roasted coffee
- Twin Springs Orchard - fruits, vegetables, cheese and more
- Valentine's Bakery & Meats - meats and baked goods.

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.

United Community (formerly UCM), 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, seeks volunteers for Food Pantry assistance, Early Learning Center teacher aides, basic needs counselors, youth tutors and mentors, office administration/data entry, and community outreach. Flexible hours and schedules. Opportunities for all ages to serve, including community service hours. More info at ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities or email volunteer@ucmagency.org.

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.

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I'm the Big Winner



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

(Not a cancer column.) For the past six months or so, I have been the email-recipient of \$50 gift cards to numerous to count/tally. They have run the gamut from Ace Hardware to Zappos.com and everything in between like CVS, Kohls, Walmart; you name it. I have rarely clicked on any of these "give-aways" because the one time I did, the answers required on the site - to claim my winnings, seemed a bit intrusive, as in what they were asking was none of their business. If they truly want to incentivize me to spend money at their store/site, they need to leave my personal business out of their equation. You don't need to know my mother's maiden name or the name of the city where I was born, to give me money, and you definitely are not getting my credit card number into which you'll make "the transfer." I've been down that rabbit hole before, and it's not good.

For a time, I was naively open and curious about these presumptive money/data grabs. I figured that in a pandemic world where millions of potential buyers are quarantining at home, and brick and mortar businesses are left fending for themselves, finding an alternate route to my wallet/credit cards while many of us were less inclined to go out and mix with the masses, a gift card teaser seemed prudent and reasonable. Moreover, given the very extenuating circumstances we've all endured these last 18 months, it was safe even; given our collective evolution in terms of purchasing goods and services online over the last decade to buy remotely. Throw in the same day service available with some vendors and there really is very little need to leave your house.

But after being nearly hooked and gutted by a phishing expedition once before, I've become extremely cautious about taking any bait/ tipping my toe in the figurative computer water, especially when the offers seem to be pulling at my heart's strings: free/easy money. Certainly I am mindful of the advisory: "If it sounds too good to be true, ..." yelled from the highest mountain tops in the past decade. However, the fraudulent pursuit of our almighty dollars are not being sent by idiots/ innocent target marketers. Hardly. These callers, with whom you eventually have to make verbal or online contact are quite proficient at answering your questions and/or allaying any fears that the about-to-be-extremely-unlucky mark is exhibiting. And once the caller/responder to your query has control of your computer - which you provided (it seemed like the logical thing to do to close/finalize the deal), the gift card party is officially over. The "free" money you had anticipated receiving is now going to cost you real money, as opposed to the offer you initially received which, as it happens, wasn't real/free at all.

Still, even with my previous near-death financial wipeout, I did click on a CVS offer. The site had all the CVS bells and whistles and colors which I've come to recognize and the offer seemed genuine: three choices to click on a box to win a \$50 gift card. And of course, it was the third and final red box on which I clicked that offered up my \$50. That was easy. Too easy.

As it soon became apparent, claiming the money was the problem. Once I answered a bunch of questions about my name, rank and serial number of where I live and so forth, I realized I was leading the caller down the garden path to my identity and all sorts of harrowing misadventures which I'd prefer not to experience first hand. Before it got too late/too personal on the sight, I politely backed out before any damage was done. As a result of this near calamity, I am no longer clicking on anything that seems the least bit enticing with unsolicited offers of direct payments/gift cards to me. If however, there are solicitations to me for gift cards to be mailed to my home without any preconditions or questions answered, I'd be happy to receive them. Otherwise, I won't bother. I've been shamed once, I can't afford, literally, to be shamed twice, then it is my fault (a fool and his money ...).

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

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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 workday 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 pan-

dem. 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 maintaining 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 Thiesen, 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."

"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

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."

"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."

— Arlington psychologist
Kerry Anderson, Ph.D.

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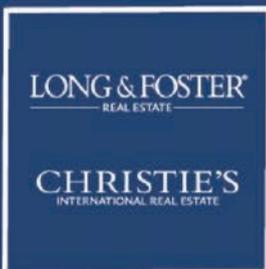
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