

‘Face Yourselves’

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

As twilight descended across the city, the powerful strains of “We Shall Overcome” rang out at the intersection of Fairfax and King streets as a crowd gathered Aug. 8 to remember Benjamin Thomas, a 16-year-old who was lynched at that site 122 years ago.

It happened around midnight, Aug. 8, 1899, when a mob of 2,000 white Alexandrians attacked the city jail on North St. Asaph Street. With a rope around his neck, Thomas was dragged to the intersection known as Leadbeater Corner opposite Market Square. Along the way, he was pelted with stones and pieces of iron, stabbed and shot several times before being hanged from a lamppost.

“We can never bring justice for Benjamin Thomas but with perseverance we can begin to tell the truth, which will move to reconciliation,” said Rabbi David Spinrad of Beth El Hebrew Congregation just prior to unveiling the historic marker at the site of the lynching.

Two years earlier, on April 23, 1897, another African American teenager, Joseph McCoy, was lynched at the corner of Cameron and Lee streets after being pulled from his cell at the police station. A historic marker was dedicated at that site earlier this year.

Both markers are part of the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, which is working with the Equal Justice Initiative based in Montgomery, Ala. The Equal Justice Initiative published “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror” in 2015 and opened The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in 2019.

The memorial includes over 800 steel monuments, or pillars, one for each county in the United States where a racial terror lynching took place, with the names of the lynching victims engraved on the pillars. Communities across the country will be able to claim their pillars and install them in the counties they represent and the ACRP is working towards that end.

Joining Spinrad in the remembrance ceremony for Thomas were Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson, Acting Chief of Police Don Hayes, Sheriff’s Office Captain Sean Casey, Alexandria Poet Laureate KaNikki Jakarta, Shiloh Baptist Church Rev. Taft Quincey Heatley, Beulah Baptist Church Rev. Professor Quadricos B. Driskell, and vocalist Tanya Wilkins. Worshipful Grand Historian McArthur Myers, 31st Masonic District Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Virginia, led the wreath laying procession from Market Square across the street to the site where Thomas was murdered.

Research by the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project committee showed



Acting Chief of Police Don Hayes speaks at the Aug. 8 remembrance ceremony for Benjamin Thomas, a 16-year-old who was lynched at the corner of Fairfax and King streets on Aug. 8, 1899.



Worshipful Grand Historian McArthur Myers, 31st Masonic District MHPHGLVA, leads the wreath laying procession from Market Square to the corner of Fairfax and King streets on Aug. 8, 2021 as part of the remembrance ceremony and marker dedication in memory of Benjamin Thomas. Thomas was 16 years old when he was lynched at that intersection on Aug. 8, 1899.

that in both Alexandria lynchings, the white authorities were deliberately complicit in their refusal to name and bring to justice members of the white mob. In the case of Thomas, the officers defending the jail were not prepared to protect the prisoner. Instead, city officials and law enforcement officers obstructed and punished members

City dedicates marker in memory of lynching victim Benjamin Thomas.



A crowd gathers at the corner of Fairfax and King streets Aug. 8 to dedicate a marker commemorating the Aug. 8, 1899, lynching of 16-year-old Benjamin Thomas.

PHOTOS/CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



A crowd fills Market Square Aug. 8 for the twilight ceremony commemorating the lynching of 16-year-old Benjamin Thomas, which took place Aug. 8, 1899. A marker was dedicated at the corner of Fairfax and King streets where the lynching took place.



Alexandria City Hall is illuminated in purple, the color of mourning, in honor of Benjamin Thomas, a 16-year-old who was lynched at the corner of Fairfax and King streets on Aug. 8, 1899. Carlyle House and the George Washington Masonic Memorial were also illuminated in purple from Aug. 6-9 in memory of Thomas.

of the Black community who were willing to stand up to white violence.

In closing the remembrance ceremony, Rev. Driskell quoted novelist and activist James Baldwin: “You cannot lynch me and keep me in ghettos without becoming something monstrous yourselves.... Not ev-

erything can be changed that is faced, but nothing can be changed unless it is faced.”

Driskell concluded simply, “Face yourselves.”

To learn more about Benjamin Thomas and the events of Aug. 8, 1899, visit the In Memoriam page at Alexandriava.gov/Historic.

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Big Money for Big Biz, Not as Much for Poor

Lawmakers go on a spending spree with billions of dollars from Uncle Sam.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Big business cleaned up this week, taking home the biggest prizes in the special session to spend \$3 billion in stimulus cash. Next year, their taxes will be lower because of an \$862 million investment into the unemployment insurance trust fund. And telecommunications giants will bankroll windfall profits from the \$700 million available to expand broadband internet.

Meanwhile, low-income Virginians didn't fare quite as well.

Gov. Ralph Northam and Democratic majorities in the House and Senate rejected a proposal from the Virginia Housing Alliance to build 7,000 new units of affordable housing. And they rejected a proposal from the Fund Our Schools coalition that would have used local schools as community hubs to distribute wrap-around services such as housing assistance or food security. Some argued that spending this pot of money on broadband is a mistake, especially considering the money Congress is about to unleash.

"This is not an equity budget," said Kim Bobo, executive director of the Virginia Poverty Law Center. "The big-ticket items really are large-scale infrastructure and long-term projects that really will do little in the short term to help low-income families."

Democratic leaders in the House and Senate cut a deal late Friday afternoon in a closed-door meeting that was not open to the public or the press, making some slight changes around the edges of the governor's proposal. Sheriff's deputies will get bonuses, as will correctional officers and home health care workers. But for the most part, the \$3 billion spending plan was essentially the document Northam handed them last month — plus a \$1 billion pot of money for him to spend next year.

"While other states are closing budget gaps, we are investing in Virginians," said Northam in a written statement after House Democrats and Senate Democrats cut a deal. "We have consistently put resources into helping families, businesses, and communities recover from this pandemic and prepare for the future."

THE APPEALS COURT was also on the agenda for the special session, allowing Democrats to install eight new judges to a 17-member court, expanding its jurisdiction and shifting its politics. Democratic leaders finally got around to announcing the names of the judges they wanted to appoint Monday.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/GAZETTE PACKET

Democrats who wield the gavel in the House and Senate crafted a plan to spend \$3 billion of stimulus cash. They also appointed an entirely new slate of judges to the appeals court, expanding its jurisdiction and shifting its politics.

day afternoon, a few hours before parading them through two committee hearings and giving them a final vote. The new judges include four women and four African Americans, a counterbalance to the current bench that's disproportionately white and male.

"We elected an unprecedented level of diversity to the bench," said House Majority Leader Charniele Herring of Alexandria. "Today we took a historic step forward in making our legal system more equitable and expanding people's rights as the Virginia Court of Appeals comes in step with state appellate courts across the country."

very important problem that I want to bring attention to."

THE SPECIAL SESSION offered an opportunity for lawmakers to spread billions of dollars in federal stimulus money, creating an opportunity to help people in need and also fund specific projects in House districts where Democratic incumbents are in difficult elections. The \$1 million appropriation for an African-American cultural center in Virginia Beach will likely be a talking point for several House Democrats in Hampton Roads who are in swing districts, and oth-

"This is not an equity budget."

— Kim Bobo,
executive director of the Virginia Poverty Law Center

One of the new appeals court judges is Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge Daniel Ortiz, who is the only one to draw opposition during the judicial interviews. Two Democrats refrained from voting for Ortiz after concerns were raised over his role in the guardianship system, which was complicated by his former job as a lawyer for Inova. In 2019, the Richmond Times-Dispatch published a three-part series called "Unguarded" that revealed how the guardianship process leaves vulnerable people unprotected.

"I'm not necessarily saying Ortiz should be blamed for all this," said Del. Mark Levine (D-45), who was one of the two to take a walk on Ortiz. "I felt that if we did not do what we did that no one would bring attention to this problem, and I do think it's a

er pork barrel spending is aimed at Henrico County and Fredericksburg. Across Virginia, businesses will benefit from a \$250 million appropriation for the Rebuild VA Economic Recovery Fund.

"We are making monumental investments in businesses through the Rebuild Virginia program," said Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw. "Our response since March 2020 has helped Virginia maintain our best state for business rating from CNBC and made sure we continue that growth as we begin to come out on the other side of the economic crisis."

The approach taken by the Democratic leadership aligns with much of the agenda outlined by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce in advance of the special ses-

sion. Meanwhile, groups advocating for low-income Virginians had a harder time. Many advocates were hoping to persuade the governor and lawmakers on the merits of affordable housing, a need that is expected to become more pronounced when a federal eviction moratorium expires. They were not successful, despite a detailed plan to construct 7,000 new units of affordable housing circulated by the Virginia Housing Alliance.

"We would have preferred that there would be more money for unemployment and other things such as affordable housing and some other things under family and child welfare we would have preferred," said Jay Speer, executive director of the Virginia Poverty Law Center. "But we're certainly hopeful that in the next budget cycle next year we'll see some of these things."

YET ANOTHER PROPOSAL for stimulus spending that was rejected by the Democratic leadership was a proposal to use local neighborhood schools as a community hub for offering social services. The idea was that the school wouldn't just offer educational services, it would also be a community hub where people could get other services that wrapped around public education — things like food security, housing, internet access or health needs. The Fund Our Schools coalition presented research showing these kinds of schools allow students to focus on learning rather than economic insecurity.

"Most advocates in the coalition are disappointed that we didn't see any funding during the special session for community schools," said Chad Stewart, manager of education policy at the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis. "We really see it as a pressing issue that we're going to need to continue working with lawmakers on over the coming months and into the next legislative session."

The community schools model has been implemented in states as large as California and as small as Vermont. New York City used its federal stimulus money to expand community school models by nearly 150 school sites. The problem for Virginia is that it doesn't have an existing state office to implement it, which is why the coalition is asking for dedicated funding to establish community schools in school divisions with the most poverty. That's why advocates are pressing for the Virginia Department of Education to form an office to work with school divisions on implementation.

"These services can create access for the community to get health services, nutrition, housing support, tutoring, expanded learning time — all of which are shown to improve student outcomes," said James Federman, president of the Virginia Education Association. "Not to have to deal with the toxic stress created by food insecurity, inadequate housing, lack of internet access or unmet health needs."

Senior Services of Alexandria's Volunteers Are the Best

Senior Services of Alexandria (SSA) would like to thank its volunteers for making a difference in an older adult's life every day. From Meals on Wheels to Groceries-to-Go, AniMeals, Friendly Visitors, and Senior Ambassadors, they are helping to make sure that Alexandria's seniors are receiving proper nutrition, companionship, and information to keep them healthy, safe and engaged in the community. SSA couldn't accomplish its mission of allowing older adults to age with dignity without its volunteers, and we are grateful to them. If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity, visit SSA's website at www.seniorservicesalex.org or call 703-836-4414 ext. 110.



Thanks to Cicely Woodrow and La'Shawn Knox with the Sheriff's Office for delivering Meals on Wheels on July 4th where seniors received a patriotic "goody" bag. Pictured here with Marshall Hespe, SSA's Nutrition Programs Manager.



Thanks to Gary Hacker who is back restocking the Senior Information Corners around town, and he's also a Senior Ambassador.



Norma Roberts, volunteer coordinator for the AniMeals Program, with her pup "Lucky."



Jennifer Leonard and "Lucy" are Friendly Visitors and brighten the day of their senior with weekly visits.



Samantha Whiteside is a Groceries to Go Volunteer who works at the Motley Fool.



Felicia Brewster a local Realtor shops for an older adult receiving Groceries to Go.



Jeffery's Catering who prepares tasty Meals on Wheels for seniors 365 days a year.

\$12,500 Grant to Support Seniors and Pets

Senior Services of Alexandria has received a \$12,500 Meals on Wheels Loves Pets grant for its pet support program, AniMeals on Wheels. Funding will be used to provide expanded access to needed veterinary care, grooming services, and other support as needed for the pets of Meals on Wheels and current AniMeals clients, which can often be a financial and physical challenge for older adults to manage on their own. The AniMeals program is a collaboration between SSA and the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA).

"Senior Services of Alexandria is pleased to have received this grant that will provide monies for expanded care for the pets of current Meals on Wheels and AniMeals clients," said Mary Lee Anderson, SSA's Executive Director. "SSA will collaborate with its AniMeals partner, The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, to provide expanded services for clients' pets including veterinary care, grooming services and more. Ensuring that Meals on Wheels clients' pets continue to stay healthy is one step toward combating loneliness."

"For years, we've been glad to help beloved pets stay with their owners, working alongside Senior Services of Alexandria through the AniMeals component of Meals on Wheels," said Animal Welfare League of Alexandria Executive Director Stella Hanly. "This grant will allow us to extend those efforts to keep pets happy and healthy, and address the kinds of crises that might otherwise lead our clients to surrender a cher-



From left, Joanna Fortin, Director of Community Programs, Animal Welfare League of Alexandria; Mary Lee Anderson, Executive Director, Senior Services of Alexandria; and Stella Hanly, Executive Director of Animal Welfare League of Alexandria.

ished friend."

Funding for this grant was made possible through a partnership between Meals on Wheels America and PetSmart Charities as part of Meals on Wheels America's strategic effort to combat social isolation and loneliness among seniors across the country. This

year, Meals on Wheels America and PetSmart Charities awarded \$601,538 in grants to 79 local Meals on Wheels programs through the Meals on Wheels Loves Pets initiative. One in four seniors lives alone and, for many of them their pet is their closest companion; this funding helps to ensure they can live

"This grant will allow us ... to keep pets happy and healthy, and address the kinds of crises that might otherwise lead our clients to surrender a cherished friend."

— Stella Hanly,
Executive Director, AWLA

happy, healthy lives together.

"Having the company of a pet not only makes homebound seniors feel less lonely but also improves their physical and mental well-being, helping them to stay happier, healthier and more independent. Yet, nearly half of the clients receiving pet assistance from Meals on Wheels don't have anyone else to help them with their pet needs," said Meals on Wheels America President and CEO Ellie Hollander. "That's why we're so appreciative of our growing partnership with PetSmart Charities – it makes it possible for us to continue to invest Meals on Wheels Loves Pets grants in local Meals on Wheels programs, like Senior Services of Alexandria and the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, to provide critical supplies, care and assistance for pets of seniors."



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Deciding on Funds, Addressing Needs

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL



COMMENTARY

On Aug. 10, the General Assembly completed work in a special session to appropriate federal pandemic funds and elect judges.

In March, President Joe Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). ARPA brought \$4.3 billion in unexpected funds to Virginia but required it to be invested in specific areas such as water, sewer and broadband infrastructure to respond to the COVID-19 emergency, address pandemic impacts and provide government services suffering from revenue reductions because of the pandemic. Unlike other counties, Fairfax County received \$222 million in direct ARPA funding with similar requirements.

Here is how we voted to invest most of these funds:

- ❖ \$700 million to build “last-mile” broadband and close Virginia’s digital divide over the next three years;

- ❖ \$862 million for Virginia’s Unemployment Trust Fund which was depleted. Without our action, it would have been forced to assess major unemployment insurance premium increases on small businesses;

- ❖ \$73.6 million to upgrade the Virginia Employment Commission’s systems to improve responses to unemployment claims;

- ❖ \$250 million for school heating, ventilation and air conditioning upgrades if localities match those funds; localities that are traditionally charged with funding 100% of school construction costs in Virginia.

\$411 million for wastewater treatment infrastructure, including \$125 million for the Al-

xandria, Richmond and Lynchburg combined sewers which currently dump billions of gallons of untreated sewage into the Potomac and James rivers.

- ❖ \$25 million for the Virginia state park maintenance backlog. I had hoped to address a statewide \$275 million backlog so we can complete work at Stafford County’s Wadewater State Park. I will continue to press for this in the Governor’s next budget.

- ❖ \$111 million in financial aid for low-income Virginia college students;

- ❖ An historic \$250 million investment in our stressed mental health system;

- ❖ \$120 million for consumer utility assistance;

- ❖ New funds for supportive housing, substance abuse treatment and community crisis systems;

- ❖ \$5,000 bonuses for all Virginia State Police (VSP) and state Capitol Police officers and \$3,000 bonuses for deputy sheriffs and correctional officers around the state. We also funded bonuses to alleviate salary compression in the VSP and \$5,000 recruitment bonuses with \$2,000 recruitment relocation grants.

- ❖ \$3 million to improve access to early voting;

- ❖ \$4 million for gun violence prevention programs;

- ❖ We also retained \$1.1 billion of ARPA funds to appropriate in 2022 contingent upon Delta variant progress.

We also passed an amendment requiring the Department of Motor Vehicles to open for in-person service within 30 days.

We also worked to reform Virginia’s judicial appellate system. Prior to our action, Virginia was the only state in America that did not provide a right of appeal to litigants in either criminal or civil cases. In 2020, I carried a resolution directing the Judicial Council of Virginia to study the issue and that group recommended a change. I worked with Senate Judiciary Chairman Sen. John Edwards to draft the legislation which passed during the regular session.

The study recommended that the legislature elect six new judges to handle the case volume generated by creating a right of appeal. Because of two retirements among existing judges, we had to elect eight new members to the Court. After a six-month vetting process by nine bar associations that considered 82 applicants, our caucuses vetted candidates and elected eight new members to the Court of Appeals of Virginia.

Four new judges will come from Northern Virginia. This is a welcome development because previously our region had only one member, but we have over 32% of Virginia’s population. The Court of Appeals has never had a judge from Arlington or Alexandria. There were no judges on the existing court who lived west of Richmond. We elected one judge from Charlottesville and one from Roanoke. Four new judges are African-Americans and four are women. The existing court had only one minority member and three women.

The new judges represent a diversity of legal expertise, practice areas, life experiences and perspectives and eight judges have not been elected since the Court was created in 1985. Our action was truly historic and will greatly bolster our judicial system and how it operates.

It is an honor to serve you. Please share your views with me at scott@scottsurovell.org.

Alexandria Treatment Court Partners with NOVA Parks

NOVA Parks, a multi-jurisdictional organization overseeing a number of parks and recreational facilities in Northern Virginia, recently partnered with the Alexandria Treatment Court to assist treatment court participants in their path toward recovery. ATC seeks to provide treatment and assistance to individuals diagnosed with substance use disorders who stand charged with non-violent offenses.

Participants commit to in-depth substance abuse treatment, including individual and group therapy, frequent testing, and participation in community support groups in return for an opportunity to have non-violent criminal charges reduced or dismissed. Participants who successfully progress through the ATC program receive in-court recognition of meaningful milestones.

That recognition may take many forms, to include receiving incen-

tives such

as free admission to local cultural experiences. Incentives which allow participants to build on personal relationships with their children carry particular significance.

NOVA Parks donated a significant number of passes to two fun-filled Alexandria amusement parks popular with children, the Great Waves Water Park and the Cameron Run Mini-Golf Park, to be used as incentives for program participants.

Alexandria Commonwealth’s Attorney Bryan Porter said: “I want to thank

NOVA Parks for helping members of the Alexandria community on their path toward recovery. Our innovative Alexandria Treatment Court program relies on the generosity of individuals and organizations to provide the incentives which facilitate rehabilitation. NOVA Parks is an important partner in making the Alexandria

community healthier. Passes to the Great Waves Water Park and the Cameron Run Mini-Golf Park will allow ATC participants to bond with their children and create childhood memories.”

If you or an organization you

are affiliated with is interested in partnering

with the Alexandria Treatment Court, please contact Deputy Commonwealth’s Attorney David Lord at david.lord@alexandriava.gov or 703-746-4100.

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OBIUTARY

Thomas “Tommy” Lacey Jr.

Recent T.C. graduate dies at 18.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Tommy Lacey was a towering figure. At 6 feet 5 inches tall, he was a gentle giant with a passion for sports and hanging out with friends at Al's Steakhouse in Del Ray. A standout lacrosse player, the 2021 graduate of T.C. Williams High School was preparing to attend James Madison University in the fall when he died unexpectedly on Aug. 4. He was 18 years old.

Thomas Edward Lacey Jr. was born Oct. 1, 2002, to Nancy Lacey and Thomas Lacey Sr. He was raised in Alexandria along with younger brothers Jack and Will and sister Molly.

Tommy attended both public and private schools, including Trinity MOPS Preschool, Maury Elementary, Basilica School of Saint Mary, Bishop Ireton High School and T.C. Williams High School. He was known for his athletic prowess and love of sports, playing football as an ankle biter through his freshman year of high school. He especially excelled at lacrosse, playing for eight years at Alexandria Lacrosse Club, Bishop Ireton and T.C. Williams.

Summers were spent with family in Georgia along with an annual two-week stay at Camp Laney in Mentone, Ala., where Tommy forged many lifelong friendships. He was known for his toothy grin, easy going sense of humor, and his fierce devotion to his family and friends. As the oldest cousin on the Lacey side of the family, Tommy was the pied piper of spirited high jinks on family vacations.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Tommy Lacey died Aug. 4 at the age of 18.

Tommy, who died with his parents by his side, was predeceased by his grandfathers, Cdr. Archibald S. Thompson, U.S. Navy, and Robert A. Lacey, and his cousin, Albert H. Gruneisen, IV.

In addition to his parents and siblings, Tommy is survived by grandmothers Patryce Thompson and Eleanor Lacey, aunts Katherine, Margaret, Anne, Elizabeth, Ellen (James), and Natalie, his Uncle Robert and nine first cousins.

A funeral Mass will be held Thursday, Aug. 12, at 10 a.m. at the Basilica of Saint Mary, 310 South Royal St. Donations may be made in Tommy's memory to the WENDT Center for Loss & Healing, P.O. Box 45924, Baltimore, Md., 21297 or www.wendtcenter.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.

EXTENSION OF CDC EVICTION MORATORIUM

On Aug. 3, 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a new order temporarily halting evictions in locations where there have been surges in COVID-19 and increases in cases of the Delta variant. The moratorium is in effect through Oct. 3 and covers all renters living in communities, including the City of Alexandria, that meet these criteria. Information of community transmission can be viewed on the CDC COVID tracker.

Rent relief related to pandemic income loss continues to be available for Alexandria residents. The Virginia Rent Relief Program (RRP) provides rent relief to both renters and landlords: RRP provides eligible renters with assistance to cover rent payments past due beginning April 1, 2020. Renters can submit applications online or call 703-962-1884 for more information.

Landlords can apply on behalf of tenants to receive financial assistance for past-due and current rental payments. Landlords can submit applications online, email rentrelief@virginiahousing.com, or call the City of Alexandria Office of Housing at 703-746-4990 for eligibility assistance.

The City's Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) Office of Community Services (OCS) also provides rental assistance

to eligible households facing a housing crisis or homelessness. Residents can call the DCHS Customer Call Center at 703-746-5700 or text 703-346-5599 to learn about rental assistance, as well as other available emergency assistance.

CHARLES E. BEATLEY LIBRARY UNDERGOES PARKING LOT REPAIRS

Parking will be limited at the Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, located at 5005 Duke Street in Alexandria, due to a parking lot repair project beginning Monday, Aug. 9. The branch and parking lot will remain open during construction; however, sections of the parking lot will be closed during construction causing limited parking.

This five-month project will improve drainage and parking conditions for customers at this location. Beatley Central Library is open for business during normal hours throughout all construction activity. The parking lot project is scheduled to be completed in January 2022.

Consider using public transit to reach the library. Metrobus 8Z, 29K, 29 N, 21A and 25 B stop near the library and DASH buses AT7 and AT8 stop at the library.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 9

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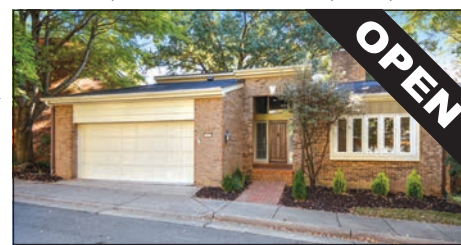
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All Fired Up

Friendship Firehouse Festival celebrates 25 years.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Friendship Firehouse Festival made a triumphant return after a one-year hiatus to celebrate its 25th anniversary Aug. 7 at the historic Friendship Firehouse Museum on S. Alfred Street.

"We had around 200 people come through the museum today," said Catherine Weinraub, the historian and site manager of the Friendship Firehouse Museum. "I think that is a good turnout for the first festival in two years."

Sponsored by the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association, the festival saw early crowds enjoying clear skies, learning about the city's historic firefighting apparatus and perusing the many booths lining the 100 block of South Alfred Street, including that of local author Larry Issa.

"This has been a good day," said Issa, who was debuting his award-winning "Get Back to the Book."

"I enjoy meeting and talking with everyone and I don't think the rain dampened anyone's spirits."

Cloudy skies moved over the region followed by a steady rain, causing the festival to end one hour early, but not before attendees were given free fire helmets and special cookies handed out in memory of longtime Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association president Joe Shumard.



Gretchen Bulova, Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria, holds cookies given to attendees in memory of longtime Friendship Veterans Fire Association president Joe Shumard Aug. 7 at the Friendship Firehouse Festival.

"I am happy with our turnout and hope people will come back and visit," Weinraub added. "We are open once a month and invite everyone to learn about the history of firefighting in Alexandria."

www.alexandriava.gov/FriendshipFirehouse

PHOTOS BY
JEANNE THEISMANN/
GAZETTE PACKET



Nur Telli, left, with son Sulaman, 4, and Aisha, 6, pose for a photo in front of 19th century firefighting apparatus during a visit to the Friendship Firehouse Museum as part of the Friendship Firehouse Festival Aug. 7.



Alexandria author Larry Issa debuts his award-winning "Get Back in the Book" at the Aug. 7 Friendship Firehouse Festival.



Representatives of the Alexandria Sheriff's Office in front of historic fire fighting apparatus Aug. 7 at the Friendship Firehouse Festival.



Del Ray Balloon Boutique owners Robert Groves and Linda Johnson display their creative designs during the Aug. 7 Friendship Firehouse Festival.

FROM PAGE 7

FALL RECREATION PROGRAM AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

The Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities' fall programming will offer a variety of in-person options for all ages and new virtual programs. A complete list of fall programs will be available on the City's website Wednesday, Aug. 4. Registration for fall classes and activities offered by RPCA will begin at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, August 18, for City residents and on Friday, Aug. 20, for nonresidents. Fall registration applies to programs taking place September through December 2021.

Summer registration continues to be open for the end of the season classes and camps. Visit alexandriava.gov/Recreation to learn more about the City's summer recreation programs and to register. For in-person registration, visit the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St. or call the Registration and Reservation Office at 703-746-5414 Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

ACPS- Help Provide Meals to Children Alexandria City Public School (ACPS) will provide two days worth of breakfast and lunch meals with a snack pack free for any enrolled ACPS student on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Friday distribution will include a meal(s) for Saturday. Volunteers will meet at various schools to assist with packing boxes and loading buses with boxed meals. Then, volunteers will ride the bus along to distribute the meals while on site at a few ACPS mobile pop-up locations. Click on each location to sign up: Francis C. Hammond Middle School, TC Williams High School, or Jefferson Houston School. www.volunteerallexandria.org

Alexandria Dept. of Community and Human Services- Volunteer Guardian

Looking for individuals who can assure the well-being of an incapacitated Alexandrian living in an Assisted Living Facility or Nursing Facility. Volunteer Guardians are appointed by the Court to make decisions for older Alexandria residents who have lost the capacity to understand the consequences of their decisions. The volunteer will visit the resident monthly and follow the person's wishes as much as possible. www.volunteerallexandria.org

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors

The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteerallexandria.org

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteerallexandria.org/ALIVE>

Alzheimer's Association - Walk to End Alzheimer's Saturday, Sept. 25 (National Harbor) & Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021 The National Mall, Washington, DC. Volunteers are needed on the day of the events to help with set up, sign placement, information services, promise

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flower distribution, cheerleaders, and route monitors. <https://www.volunteerallexandria.org/>

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.

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551- 2488, or donaldrea@aol.com.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-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 (Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov) at 703-324-4547.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

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PHOTO CREDIT GREGORY S. MANALO

A cozy throw can add an element of warmth to an interior space



PHOTO BY ANNE WALKER

The warm colors in this room by Anne Walker evoke visions of autumn.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE WALKER

Candles in hurricane lanterns such as these by Farm and Feast are a simple way to transition home accessories from summer to fall.

Design Ideas to Welcome Fall

Small changes in home accessories can transform a space.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

When it comes to interior design, attention to even the smallest of details took on new importance over the past year. Spending more time indoors has allowed us to experience the ways in which minor embellishments can have a major impact on the mood and feel of a room. From throw pillows in a living room to doormats in a mud room, local designers unveil accessories that can help one transition from summer to autumn while maintaining serenity and style.

"Don't look at this as a major undertaking or you'll be overwhelmed," said Alexandria interior designer Allison Bohlke. "It doesn't have to be time consuming. As the weather begins to cool down, take an hour to look around your house for places where you remove things that scream summer and swap them out for cozy alternatives."

"I created a blue and white nautical theme in my family room for summer," continued Bohlke. "In a month or so, I will put away my linen throw pillows and cotton throws and bring out my cashmere throws and wool throw pillows in warm camel and rich cream for a cozy look."

One of the easiest ways to transition home decor from summer to fall is to add candlelight, advises Potomac interior designer Anne Walker of Anne Walker Interiors Design. "There's something about the warm glow of real candlelight that just can't be replaced. It's an instant mood lifter," she said. "Hurricane lanterns come in several sizes and in beautiful smoked glass or clear glass. We use six in assorted sizes on our patio all year round, and they never get old."

Kitchens and bathrooms can serve as a backdrop for cool weather inspiration. "If you've been using white hand towels and kitchen towels, try getting versions in bold colors or monogrammed hand towels using thread in warm, jewel tones," said Bohlke.

In fact, the power of color should not be underestimated. "Use color so that the spaces appeal to every-



PHOTO COURTESY OF SALLIE LORD

Designer Sallie Lord says the approach of Autumn is time to reorganize an office space to prepare for a new school year.

one, said Sherry Hope-Kennedy of Studio SHK. "Keep the main area more neutral while having more fun with private areas."

Seasonal blossoms in colors that herald the start of fall can add an air of chic serenity to any interior space. "Fresh flowers will always be in style, said Walker. "Like real candlelight, fresh flowers are a low-cost way to bring real joy into your home."

A wooden drink tray not only conjures up woody images of autumn, but it's versatile, functional and can be used year round, particularly as school begins. "Filled with flower vases, it can be a casual-chic centerpiece on your dining table, or you can use it to carry barware or beverages to your guests," said Walker. "In your mudroom, it could hold keys, phones and other things you need to drop in a central location."

"The [metal bin] has an outdoorsy, cool vibe with industrial chic décor," continued Walker. "Use [them] to corral office supplies on your desk, to hold television remote controls in your family room, or to serve snacks when you entertain. Fill them with rolled-up towels near your mudroom or guest room. Fill them with plants to make an herb garden on your patio. The possibilities are endless."

Whether one hour or one month, spending time on a home refresh is worth the effort, says Chantilly designer Sallie Lord of GHI Team. "This is a great time for a purge to clean out the desk drawers to prepare for a new school year ahead," she said. "We love a well organized space that you can walk in and feel the design and the function."

Itching to Know Cause of Local Phenomenon

Possible invasion of the oak leaf itch mite.

to live in." The mites feed on midge larva inside the galls.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

People in Northern Virginia may reconsider where they enjoy the outdoors. A mite so tiny the naked eye cannot see it may insert her tiny stylets and secrete saliva into residents and suck their fluids. Its bite packs such a punch for some its after-effects cause sleepless nights and visits to physicians.

Reports popped up in Northern Virginia in late July and early August, neighborhood social media posts seeking cause and relief for what appeared to be an outbreak of human pruritic dermatitis, itchy rashes, and lesions from bites, possibly from the oak leaf itch mite. How to get rid of the pests? The Arlington Facebook group, "Arlington Neighbors Helping Each Other Through COVID-19," recorded nearly 300 posts on the matter by Aug. 10. The discussion appeared in other local online groups as well.

Some entomologists and scientists say that the source of mysterious bites may be the anthropeid, the oak leaf itch mite, *Pyemotes herfsi*. The eight-legged parasite could be giving humans and pets a "mite shower" as the invisible pests fall from flagging pin oak tree branches or crawl onto them, sight unseen as they garden or sit in the grass.

Other Virginia entomologists and scientists say the cause has yet to be scientifically qualified. The biter's identity is not supported in the area by a sample, the gold confirmation standard. The oak leaf itch mite, *Pyemotes herfsi*, was confirmed when a sample was submitted to the Insect Diagnostic Lab at Kansas State University in 2014, after that region experienced similar experiences, according to *ksal.com*.

On Monday, Aug. 9, Eric Day, Department of Entomology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and State University said, "This is not a mite we have received in the lab... They [the oak leaf tree mite] are often associated with insect galls. Midges [any small two-winged fly] make the gall, a protective structure for them

interesting," wrote Lori Chamberlain, Virginia Department of Forestry, in an email to the Connection the same day. "Unfortunately... there has not been a sample submitted to the Virginia Tech Insect Identification Lab this year."

Photos of the apparent bites, like the ones taken Aug. 7 on the arms of two Herndon residents, John Pilcicki, a wildlife biologist at DOD, and Heather, showed areas approximately two centimeters in diameter, with a central vesicle, pustule or blister-like swelling.

IN A RANDOM SAMPLE of ten individuals in Herndon over two days, six reported near word-for-word complaints. The bites, similar to scores of ones posted and described online, occurred mainly on the Herndon residents' necks, shoulders, upper torsos, arms, and hands, although they were described elsewhere on the body as well.

Based on complaints, a pattern of similar descriptions emerged: extremely itchy, painful welts, and extended redness, with symptoms lasting 7 to 14 days. Some of Heather's bites were on her hand. She had been gardening and did not see or feel anything until the next day. According to the CDC, persons bitten by *Pyemotes herfsi*, the oak leaf itch mite, generally do not recall being bitten but feel an itchy discomfort (which can be intense) beginning 10 to 16 hours afterward, and lasting up to 14 days.

Kirsten Burls, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech Virginia State University, said, "I've never heard anybody suggest a way to obtain the actual insect identification. They're too small... My advice to individuals about this phenomenon [is] to say, 'This too will pass.'"

People should just be vigilant and rule out other possibilities. She ran through other pests whose bites also cause raised red areas but noted the differences. "Ticks, there's generally a tip... People are aware of when they are bitten by mosquitoes... Bed bugs are harder to spot but do result in finding evidence...

SEE INVASION, PAGE 11

Invasion Suspected

FROM PAGE 10

Chiggers are active this time of year, but it is not a big problem in a metropolitan area.”

During the summer of 2007, a bite rash outbreak occurred in the western suburbs of Chicago, reported U.S. Pharmacist. They, too, were not only dealing with the mysterious bites but the return of swarms of cicadas, like Northern Virginia.

According to the Illinois Natural History Survey report, Entomologist Ed Zaborski deduced a connection between the bites and the cicadas’ return. Zaborski believed the bites came from the Pyemotes (itch mites) appearing to feed on the cicada eggs. In 2004, Kansas reported a significant infestation of the oak leaf itch mite and Nebraska in 2005 when the mites fed on midge larva inside galls on pin oak trees.

“Weather associated with spring cold fronts or human or animal migration patterns may have carried the Pyemotes [itch mites] to Illinois from neighboring states, such as Kansas and Nebraska,” cited the report.

Dr. Raymond Cloyd, Department of Entomology Kansas State University said in Extension Entomology Oak Leaf Itch Mite that for “the first time in Kansas ... the oak leaf itch mite has been a problem in successive years (2015 and 2016), which is likely as-



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE GAZETTE

Oak trees with branch dieback, “flagging,” possibly harboring oak leaf itch mites as they feed on cicada eggs and larvae.

sociated with the mild winters we have experienced.”

Adria Bordas is the Unit Coordinator Senior Extension Agent-Horticulture Virgin-

SEE INVASION, PAGE 13



ALEXANDRIA RESTAURANT WEEK 2021

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Dine In, Out or at Home This Summer Restaurant Week

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Like an old friend that you know you can rely on year after year, Alexandria's summer Restaurant Week is almost here once more. The 10-day festival of all things foodie kicks off Aug. 20, but you'll want to make your reservations for many spots well ahead of time. Not quite ready to dine in? No problem. There are plenty of to-go options available as well.

Aldo's Italian Kitchen, 2850 Eisenhower Ave. Suite 1

Indoor dining, outdoor dining, takeout or delivery – Aldo's has your options for this Restaurant Week. Begin your meal with a soup or salad, then select from chicken marsala, lobster ravioli or grilled salmon as an entrée, and finally finish things off with a choice of cheesecakes – chocolate chip and limoncello are on offer – or a cannoli.

Augie's Mussel House, 1106 King St.

Augie's may be known for its mussels, but that's not all that's available for Restaurant Week. The restaurant's two-person menu deal offers up one appetizer (which features the likes of wings, steak and cheese eggrolls, and pretzels with beer sauce) and two en-



trees, including jambalaya pasta, chicken and waffles, and, of course, mussels.

Sisters Thai and the Magnolia Dessert Bar, 503 Montgomery St.

One of the newer kids in North Old Town is coming out of the gate strong with its Restaurant Week offer. Their in-person three-course menu starts with a choice of four appetizers,

ranging from curry puffs to spring rolls, and then moves onto a main course featuring the likes of panang curry, fried rice, pottery shrimp and more, and finally winds down with some toffee cake and ice cream.

Taqueria Picoso, 1472 N. Beauregard St.

Love tacos? Taqueria Picoso has you covered. The eatery is offering up deals for two

and for one, both featuring an array of protein choices to enhance your tortillas. The two-person option offers a choice of up to four proteins (equaling a pound in weight total), ranging from brisket to vegan chorizo, as well as eight tortillas and all the fixings, including guacamole, chips, rice and beans and two elote. The one-person menu offers a half-pound of proteins (choice of two) with all the sides except for elote. Not feeling the taco love? No problem. The taqueria also has quesadillas and wings on the Restaurant Week menu.

Yunnan by Potomac, 814 N. Fairfax St.

Noodles, bao buns and all the fixings: Where do we sign up? Yunnan by Potomac is offering both in-person and to-go orders for its Restaurant Week menu, and either way, you'll finish the meal happy and full. Their two-person deal offers up one small plate to start – choose from Asian pear radishes, chili bok choy, and more – one bao bun or dumpling order to share, and then two mixian noodle entrees, from lettuce wraps to brothly concoctions.

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

CALENDAR

AUG. 6-28

"Together" Art Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. "Together" is an art exhibit (August 6–28, 2021) of works by Del Ray Artisans' outstanding volunteers and board of directors. Celebrate their dedication and enjoy their artwork. Visit <https://delray-artisans.org/event/together>.

SATURDAY/AUG. 14

Original Summer Picnic. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At the Original Mount Vernon High School, 8333 Richmond Hwy, Alexandria. Join SFDC Saturday, August 14 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. for the original Summer Picnic at Original Mount Vernon High School. There will be live music, food trucks, local vendors, and more! All you need is a blanket or chair and they'll provide the rest. Visit the website: sfdc.org/picnic. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/original-summer-picnic-tickets-162577151637>

SATURDAY/AUG. 14

Garden Tour: Green Spring Up and Down. 10-11:30 a.m. (Adults) Extension Master Gardener docents lead a special "Grand Tour" of Green Spring! View some upper demonstration gardens, then take the garden path less travelled to explore the naturalistic lower garden areas: the Virginia Native Plant Garden, woodland stream valley, and ponds. Tour involves a steep slope with loose gravel. \$15 per person. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes (code 8A0.IOPR) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

SATURDAY/AUG. 14

Tea with Martha Washington. 1 p.m. At Mount Vernon Inn Restaurant, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon. Join Martha Washington for a cozy tea as she shares memories of her and the General's life as a young married couple, during the Revolution-

ary War and Presidency, and at their beloved Mount Vernon. Enjoy some of the Washingtons' favorite treats and delicacies prepared by the Mount Vernon Inn Restaurant. Following the program, guests are invited to take a self-guided tour of the estate. Call 703-780-2000 or visit mountvernon.org

SATURDAY/AUG. 14

Floral Design Workshop. 1-2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Discover new ways to arrange summer beauties or turn blooms into edible garnishes at Green Spring Gardens. On Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021, Green Spring hosts the "Floral Design Workshop: Summer Edition." Certified floral designer Betty Ann Galway will help you create a beautiful summer flower arrangement. Learn how to properly care for and handle flowers, and get some creative new design ideas. The cost is \$39 per person, plus a \$30 supply fee.

SATURDAY/AUG. 14

Outdoor Musical Dinner. 4 p.m. At The Rectory on Princess Street, 711 Princess St., Alexandria. Honor the centennial year of Astor Piazzolla with a multi-course dinner of Argentinian steak and Malbec wine – and the singular sound of the bandoneon in a program featuring the entrancing music of the composer who brought tango to international attention, along with other celebrated tango composers and original music by Emmanuel Trifilio. Cost is \$42. Visit the website: <https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgarden-concerts>

AUG. 14-15

Alexandria Summer Sidewalk Sale. Throughout Old Town and Del Ray. One of the longest running seasonal summer shopping events



The Alexandria Summer Sidewalk Sale will take place Aug. 14-15 in Old Town and Del Ray.

returns to the D.C. region's Shop Small destination for independent boutiques, Alexandria, with the annual Alexandria Summer Sidewalk Sale throughout Old Town and Del Ray. The event features record participation with more than 70 Alexandria boutiques stepping out of their storefronts and offering discounted summer merchandise plus activations on King Street and in Del Ray. Learn more at VisitAlexandriaVA.com/SidewalkSale.

SUNDAY/AUG. 15

Brush Up Your British. 2-3 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. Celebrate Britain's National Afternoon Tea Week by exploring linguistic and cultural differences between Britain and America. Compare customs and manners in these two nations "divided by a common language" - at the tea table and beyond! A link to the virtual program will be emailed up to an hour before the start of the program. Optional afternoon tea boxes prepared by the caterer will be available for pick up at Green Spring Gardens between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on the day of the program. Tea boxes include savory finger sandwiches, pastries, scone with cream and jam, and tea bag. Lecture only: \$12/ Optional tea box: \$24. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes (code FB8.E4K2) or call

Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

THURSDAY/AUG. 19

Summer Garden Tour and Tea to Go. 1-2 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (Adult) Tour the vibrant demonstration gardens with a master gardener docent who will inspire you with dazzling plant combinations and tales of Green Spring past and present. Tour only: \$12/ Optional tea box: \$24. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes with program code (code 03T.8AQS) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

AUG. 20-29

Alexandria Restaurant Week. For 10 days and two weekends, more than 70 restaurants in Alexandria will offer a \$49 in-person and/or to-go dinner for two during Alexandria Restaurant Week. Nearly 50 of the restaurants will offer solo diners a \$25 in-person and/or to-go dinner for one in addition to serving the \$49 dinner for two. The online menu book makes it easy to browse selections from dozens of Alexandria eateries and enjoy special menus in-person or from the comfort of your own home. View the menu flip-book and view participating restaurants at www.AlexandriaRestaurantWeek.com.

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Invasion

FROM PAGE 13

ia Cooperative Extension Fairfax County Office. She said that although they had volunteers report bites, itching rash, “We don’t have anyone who has submitted a sample because they [the suspected mites] are microscopic...No one can say for definite that this is what it is ... However, as far back as 2004, when we had the 17 year Brood X, there have been reports that these [mites] might tend to brew up a little bit more in population and nuisance.”

While Northern Virginia has a large oak tree population, Bordas said the mites might not just be in oak trees. “I would say not just in oaks, though probably oaks in general.”

If the culprit is verified in the region as the oak tree itch mite, it makes a sci-fi horror story. Invisible, fully mature male and female alien invaders emerge from an ovisac at the end of their mother’s hugely swelling abdomen, then mate. The males, but the fertilized females with 200 to 300 eggs are laser-focused to eat and seek out their prey. They enter their home sight unseen through minute openings. The female invaders inject their prey with a potent neurotoxin and saliva mixture capable of paralyzing victims 166,000 times their size. The saliva liquifies the prey’s tissue, so the females can feed on their fluids, nourishing their progeny to adulthood in one week when they emerge. Dispersed via the wind, they can drop onto humans.

THE OAK LEAF ITCH MITE is a tiny reddish-tan parasite with a shiny exoskeleton and four pairs of legs. It is invisible to the naked eye. According to Raymond A. Cloyd, an entomology professor at Kansas State, “The oak leaf itch mite has one of the highest rates of population increase ... Millions can be produced in a very short time.”

Cloyd reported the oak leaf itch mite was first detected in the Midwest in 2004. It was responsible for the 2014 and 2017 widespread itching bites. “A single female can produce between 200 and 300 eggs,” according to Cloyd in Oak Leaf Itch Mite. Cloyd said that the oak leaf itch mite is thought to be exclusive to pin oak trees.

Although the oak leaf itch mite typically preys on midge eggs from the tiny two-winged flies commonly called “no-see-ums” that target pin oaks, the mites may not be as specific a feeder as previously

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Sole Survivor



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

It's been nearly three weeks since "the burning," and I'm here to say - while sitting down with my left foot elevated, that I am approximately 75% the man I used to be pre-July 17 around 2 pm central standard time. I can now walk, mostly on my right foot, but always with the help and security of my new best friend: the walker. I am no longer housebound or bedridden. Though I still cannot drive for fear of ripping off the brand new skin which has appeared on the balls of my feet (especially the progress on my right/driving foot), healing from the inside out; I am free however to be a passenger, and load myself onto the backseat of our SUV and extend my legs across the entire seat to minimize any discomfort. The pain is very manageable, but on occasion I have taken a few of the percocets that had been prescribed for pain. The relief was hardly immediate and the pill size was moderate so I don't see myself getting addicted (percocet is OxyContin). In fact, the size pill I was prescribed barely dulled the pain; most of which has subsided anyway. (And when I was in severe pain in Texas, the physician's assistant prescribed tylenol with codeine. It did nothing. It wasn't even worth the co-pay. Perhaps a physician's assistant, without a doctor present, couldn't prescribe a narcotic, especially one that has addictive qualities. Presumably, it was for my own protection. At that point however, I didn't need protection. I needed pain relief.)

After seeing a physician's assistant in Galveston, an Emergency Room doctor in Gaithersburg, two Podiatrists in Kensington and my Internal Medicine doctor in Silver Spring, I have been set free-ish. None of these doctors felt the need to see me again. The healing of my feet has progressed far enough that the threat of infection has passed so I am now on my own, sort of. I (my wife, Dina, actually) am to continue dressing my wounds for one to two weeks (depending on which foot) and use our own judgment about when to discontinue the treatment. It appears as if I have survived the ordeal, mostly.

And though there were times at the beginning when the pain was excruciating, and times in the middle when the pain was bearable; at the end, in a week or two, I will be forever grateful that my condition did not deteriorate due to infection, blistering or nerve damage. As it happened, "the burning" was simply the unintended consequence of the damage 11-plus years of chemotherapy has done to my body, inside and out. Because of the neuropathy in my feet (thankfully, there isn't any neuropathy in my hands or other extremities), I can never, because physically I can't, walk barefoot. And because of that pre-existing condition, the bottoms of my feet are as soft as a baby's behind. With no calluses formed on my feet to protect me, I'm kind of a standing duck out there. I found out the soft way how hard it is for me to walk across hot pavement.

And the shoeless choice I made was a choice I, like millions of others who've gone to the beach, made quite casually. I was simply doing something - walking barefoot, that came naturally and historically, as in I've done it a hundred times, especially having walked across hot sand. Not anymore. As a long-time cancer patient, generally speaking, I'm aware of many of the dos and don'ts and what trouble to avoid, but never had I considered that my lung/thyroid cancer treatment might cause a problem potentially, on the soles of my feet if I walked barefoot at the beach. I know I'm supposed to avoid the sun (I'll be the one sitting under a beach umbrella with a hat on my head, sunglasses on my face and covered head to toe, with towels and a tearshirt), but nobody ever advised me that I shouldn't go to the beach. Before "the burning," I would have thought I was an experienced enough cancer patient that I knew what situations might be harmful to my health. Apparently not. It seems as if I haven't quite learned all my lessons, yet.

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

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News

Invasion Suspected

FROM PAGE 13

thought. Instead of feeding solely on midge eggs in the pin oak trees, the mites might also be devouring the massive numbers of cicada eggs left behind by the region's 2021 Brood X invasion, according to John Dudzinsky, Community Forester and Society of Municipal Arborists Virginia Liaison.

The bountiful cicada eggs deposited by the female Brood X cicadas over several weeks in May and June into slits of healthy and now flagging pin oak branches, among other trees, make easy feeding for the female mites to nourish their progeny.

Because of the vast, possibly unprecedented quantities of cicada eggs in Northern Virginia, the mites' seven-day life cycle, and the number of offspring produced by each mite, the oak leaf itch mite population may be exploding this year.

"Of course, oak leaf itch mites don't fly," Dudzinsky said. "The wind will catch them. They can even fit through the mesh of screens. They're extremely tiny, 1/125 of an inch," he said.

"Whatever is happening right now seems to be the same year as the cicadas," Day said, "I think it is a case of two and two together — make five."

Prevention and Elimination

There are very few strategies to prevent oak leaf itch mite bites. Dudzinsky said to minimize exposure to oak trees, especially pin oaks. Do not sit under them. If you are picking up leaves or fallen flagging branches from the cicadas [or working near them], wear long rubber gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, hat, pants, and socks pulled up and over pant cuffs.

Bordas, who works outside in four to five-hour stretches, understands how hard it is to dress with mite-protection when temperatures soar. She recommended wearing a shirt pretreated with DEET at a 30 percent level, no higher, and wearing it over a regular shirt to avoid skin exposure. "I put that on over a lighter shirt," Bordas said. She added not to spray the skin of older adults with DEET because their skin is thinner, likewise for children.

"Be cognizant of when you come indoors, immediately take a shower... and wash clothes in hot water," Bordas said.

Controlling the mites at their source may be impossible. There is nothing to treat mites on the trees "because the mites themselves are inside the galls," according to Bordas.

Obituary

Obituary

Francois Duret

If all you remember about Francois Duret were the sly, disarming smile and the twinkle in his eye, that would be enough.

But there was so much more.

Duret, who died June 23 in his beloved Old Town Alexandria, Va., also was a proud son of France whose national pride was always on display. In the saddle of a sleek BMW motorcycle, he was the 'Mad Frog', while the license plate on a tiny Smart car carried the vanity tag of 'Frog Two.'

During his half century in Alexandria, Duret, 77, was the ultimate host, entrepreneur and civic warrior who was adored by a legion of friends and neighbors, from Queen and Royal Streets, to France and the United Kingdom, where he and his family once lived.

Duret was a man of many passions: family, professional car racing, international sailboat competitions, music, the theater, politics, wine, cigars and great conversation. His love of the arts and music, encouraged by his grandmother, seemed to fill every room, and he shared that passion with his grand-daughter, who he accompanied on outings to the Kennedy Center and Cirque de Soleil. The son of Andre and Lucette Joussain Duret, Francois Rene Duret was born Dec. 3, 1943 in France, one of three children.

Duret was always drawn to adventure. As a young man, he signed up for duty in a French paratrooper unit. Little wonder that he would become a professional race car driver, competing in the iconic 24 Hours of Le Mans, one of the world's oldest motor-sports events; and at Goodwood Motor Circuit in the United Kingdom. His racing skills translated to the open water where he was a crew-member in competitive sailboat events in the U.S. and Europe.

Even in business, Duret embraced living life on the edge as a globe-trotting oil trader and design consultant for car manufacturers. And he once held a stake in a gold mine. His final business venture allowed him to share his joy for car racing with the public, founding AllSports, a luxe indoor miniature speedway that he operated for 15 years in Northern Virginia.

A friend, Will Langhorne, described Duret aptly as a "beam of positive energy in the world."

"Thank you for making the world a better place and blessing us with your love," Langhorne wrote. "See you



at the racetrack in the sky, my friend."

Indeed, Duret cherished his family and an ever-expanding circle of friends who joined him traveling the world, often into the perched villages of France and Italy.

In his Old Town Alexandria neighborhood, Duret proved a vocal and formidable advocate for historical preservation. His Queen Street home served as a de-facto headquarters for local campaigns to maintain the city's rich link to the nation's founding.

In that effort, he will be fondly remembered for almost single-handedly scuttling a neighbor's plans to transform a historic Queen Street townhouse to a glass-sheathed McMansion. Duret delivered the knockout blow during the Presidents' Day Parade when he strung a banner across the front of his home, calling attention to the planned blight next-door with a giant, bright red arrow. The bold play surprised more than a few passing city leaders and the Abe Lincoln stand-in, notably out-fitted in the historically appropriate black stove-pipe hat.

Duret's booming laugh could be heard for blocks.

Duret was preceded in death by his wife, Kathy Duret, who died in 2016. He is survived by his brothers, Jean Loup Duret and Michel Duret; daughter, Megan and grand-daughter, Francesca; and his extended family whom he adored, particularly his Aunt Mimi with whom he spoke at least three times a week.



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