

A chance encounter between two local athletes Riya Saran (left) and Zahab Kamal Khan, led to a Guinness record for one and support for two organizations, Children with Hair Loss, United States and the Zahab, Neha Foundation, Karāchi, Sindh, Pakistan.

World Record for a Cause

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Crisis in Afghanistan Reverberates Locally

Afghan Americans speak out.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The United States and other countries have welcomed more than 150,000 Afghans and their families since the emergency evacuations began in mid-August. Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban on Aug. 15 after withdrawal of most of the United States forces. The U.S. and other nations offered refuge to many Afghans who aided them during the last twenty years.

Afghan interpreters and translators who worked directly with the U.S. Armed Forces or under the Chief of Mission authority at U.S. Embassy Kabul applied to the U.S. for humanitarian visas known as a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) for themselves and their family members.

With events rapidly unfolding and the U.S. racing to complete withdrawal, Three local Afghan Americans, twenty years apart in ages, share their perspectives on the troop withdrawal, rescue operation, and humanitarian crisis.

SENZEL SCHAEFER of Reston escaped Tehran, Iran, at age 5 when her family rushed to the airport in 1979. The family was in Tehran for her father's job, a city editor of the Tehran Journal, where he was printing anti-Khomeini articles. The Soviet-Afghan war began in 1979 also.

The family arrived in New York with two suitcases.

Because Schaefer speaks Farsi and Pashto, she spent these last two weeks volunteering for a company with 150 employees in Afghanistan trying to get out.

"Little did I know what I was getting into. These people are trapped in Afghanistan today," said Schaefer. "They call me day and night. They're pleading; they're crying; they're fearful. And so, between my work, my children, and my life, I've spent the better part of six, seven hours a day emailing and messaging them through WhatsApp or talking to them on the phone, trying to calm them down. I have nothing to offer them. They have no way out of the country. You have to understand [it is] 150 people (employees). And an average family of five or six people." Schaefer added that President Biden said the evacuations wouldn't stop after the withdrawal, but she questioned how that would look.

"You cannot wrap your head around the impact of a decision that hits 38 million Afghans but also millions of people around the world that were involved in this so-called War on Terror for 20 years. I think 750,000 Americans [military] filed in and out of Afghanistan on tour. It's the biggest of anything of that nature in our country's history," Schaefer said.

Schaefer hoped for the women of Afghanistan.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Dor Niaz stands outside the family-operated restaurant in Great Falls.

istan to have found their voices through education and employment. Now she worries about potentially half of the country's population to be shut down.

Schaefer said Afghans who settle in this area are prepared to help new arrivals. She told of the outpouring of the local community, including an attorney who is helping process the refugee paperwork.

Of Americans, she says: "We're in a state of shock because our government does things that we don't agree with; it gets us into these situations, and we are left to pick up the pieces. ... The level of pain that reverberates through all of America is immense.

"We cannot be ungrateful to this host country that took us in. ... I have lived a great life because of that."

DOR NIAZ, Great Falls restaurant owner, left Afghan alone in 1984 at age 17; later he was able to bring family members, including his parents, to join him in the United States.

"As for myself, my family, and my kids, we feel responsible," said Niaz. "Because America, if it takes the risk to bring them over, ... then it's our time to back it up."



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Senzel Schaefer, Afghan American, and her daughters, pack 100 small backpacks, each with a workbook, markers, and a set of clothes and socks for Afghan refugees. Later, the girls wrote letters to enclose.

"My heart, I'm crying to those people, those moms, and dads [left behind]. You grab your kids, your wife, and if you are lucky, you get out; your parents you are leaving behind. ... There is no welfare system. How will the elderly get on? They are being kicked out on the street. This is the fabric of a country that has been destroyed," Niaz said, with tears.

Niaz will donate, he will volunteer to serve as a translator. He will tell the refugees who have arrived in the United States that they are "in the land of opportunity. ...

How to Help

The local resettlement agencies for the Northern Virginia area are:

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

<https://www.cdda.net/need-help/immigrants-and-refugees/migration-and-refugee-services/>

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES

https://lssnca.org/take_action/afghan-allies.html

ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

<https://www.ecdcus.org/>

Because Fairfax County has a sizable Afghan population, it is anticipated that many refugees will eventually resettle here.

There is nothing like it. It will take time for you to understand it. It's not easy, but you have to be able to adjust and be flexible."

Niaz said the terrorists who killed 13 United States Servicemembers, at least 160 Afghans, and injured many more, "are the scum of the earth. They need to be dealt with."

"America leaves on Tuesday...then you will see the killing fields...When you kill one, the second one is just like a moth you kill. No problem ... God says when you kill one human being, you are killing the entire family," Niaz said.

AUROZO NIAZ is 21 years old and lives in Vienna, an Afghan American born in the United States and daughter of Dor Niaz.

"The past two weeks, I have been in touch with the whole Afghan diaspora. We're trying to support each other at this time, mentally, emotionally; whatever we

can do for one another because we are suffering abroad as we are, domestically. We have been trying our best to come together and get donations and organize the donations ... cash, and materials so that they go directly into the hands of the refugees," Aurozo Niaz said.

She described Go Fund Me solicitations, collections of money for apartment rentals, furnishings, hygiene kits, clothes, and school supplies for the children. Aurozo Niaz said that A-1 Carpet Service in Chantilly coordinated a drop-off site, and trucks were assisting. "We have 20 to 30 people at a time unloading full on.

We organized these donations," said Aurozo Niaz. "We want to contribute as much as we can because these people coming here are our family ... It's a collective culture."

Aurozo Niaz added that pain, loss, and grief are a permanent part of the Afghan identity. "We're in constant mourning. I ache for my country that I will never have the chance to visit ... step on the soil of my roots. I ache for the children of Afghanistan who have known nothing but war; for the

Record Setting Times

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN"
PLUM



COMMENTARY

Not intending to repeat a column I wrote a few weeks ago, but it is hot outside! That column focused on the findings of experts with the Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine (VASEM) with data mainly about Coastal Virginia but with an explanation that what happens in the coastal region has repercussions across the state. The report is now online where you can read about sea-level rise, more frequent and intense weather-related events, and more variability in seasonal temperature. http://www.vasem.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/VASEM_VirginiasCoastalAreasReport_FINAL.pdf.

As soon as I had turned in my column for publication, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued its most recent report that verified its past findings on climate change, but with a great sense of urgency as to how rapidly changes are occurring. They termed climate change as "widespread, rapid and intensifying." <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>

As though we did not have enough evidence

already, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issued its State of the Climate in 2020 with more than 530 scientists around the world verifying what we have been hearing from others. <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/news/reporting-state-climate-2020>.

Greenhouse gases are the highest on record. Global surface temperature as well as upper atmospheric temperature and sea surface temperatures are at record or near-record highs. July was earth's hottest month on record. The Arctic and Antarctica are warming and losing record levels of ice. Crazy weather patterns are occurring around the world.

These are not the kind of records we want to set as part of the upward trends that virtually all scientists are reporting. Reversing the trends for which all experts seem to agree is of great urgency; the task at hand will not be done easily or quickly, but we must get started. Ultimately action must occur on an international level. In the meantime, we must act at the national level by ensuring that our infrastructure improvements, about which there has been much

congressional debate, be done in earth-friendly ways that help to curtail climate change.

Incentives and tax breaks to businesses and industries must have requirements for environmental action that will contribute to greenhouse emissions reductions.

The Clean Energy Act passed in Virginia is a major step in the right direction. The law requires new measures to promote energy efficiency, sets a schedule for closing old fossil fuel power plants, and requires electricity to come from 100 percent renewable sources such as solar or wind. Energy companies must pay penalties for not meeting their targets. Construction is underway in the Atlantic Ocean 27 miles offshore from Virginia Beach on what will be the nation's largest wind farm. When completed by Dominion Energy the wind farm will provide zero-emissions electricity to 660,000 homes. Solar farms are sprouting up across the Commonwealth as consumers and businesses are installing small solar farms until larger ones are constructed.

I know you did not ask for or expect two columns so close together on the subject of weather, but the threat to life as we know it is real and closer than we may have thought. Let's continue to do our part in our personal ways to be kind to Mother Earth, and let's ensure that our leaders do the same.

Detailing Relief in Dollars

BY SEN. ADAM EBBIN

On Monday Aug. 2, the Virginian-General Assembly convened in Richmond for a Special Session to allocate federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and appoint judges to fill eight vacancies on the Virginia Court of Appeals. The judicial slots were created by legislation passed earlier in the year to create an automatic right to appeal and proportionately increase the number of jurists to meet the heightened case load. For the first time since COVID hit Virginia, the House and Senate have returned to their respective chambers in the Capitol. Due to close quarters, our desks are surrounded by plexiglass to prevent possible transmission of the increasingly common COVID-19 Delta variant.

Unlike previous special sessions, the Senate and House agreed to limit legislative action to a single bill which allocates \$3.2 billion of the \$4.3 billion in ARPA funds, and makes several emergency policy changes through budget language. Federal guidance limits the General Assembly to spending these funds to respond to COVID-19 and its economic impacts, providing increased pay to workers essential to responding to the pandemic, and investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. While we are focused on these critical issues, some of my Republican colleagues had different ideas, filing amendments to the budget which would have banned "critical race theory" (a legal theory examined in some law schools) in public schools, and blocking common sense protections for transgender students. I am glad my motion to

rule these amendments not "germane" to the budget bill was sustained and we were able to move forward with a budget focused on the needs of Virginians.

Under that guidance, the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee leadership gathered input from members over the last month to share with Governor Northam before the Governor finalized his proposed spending plan. I was happy to see \$50 million in funding for the Alexandria's Combined Sewer Overflow remediation project included, which will reduce the cost burden on ratepayers.

As parents, students, and educators prepare to return for a fully in-person school year, their safety and ability to learn best is top-of-mind to all of us. A key way to improve the long-term safety of our students and staff is to ensure that schools have high quality ventilation and HVAC systems. That is why the General Assembly allocated \$250 million to repair and improve these systems in elementary and secondary schools. This funding will require a local dollar-for-dollar match, yielding a \$500 million investment. The upgrades are estimated to cover 80% of all needed HVAC repair and replacement capital projects in Virginia schools, modernizing our education infrastructure across the Commonwealth.

During the pandemic, mental health issues and addiction have become drastically more prevalent, leading to devastating impacts on families and overburdening our psychiatric hospitals to the point that, in mid-July, state facilities were forced to stop admitting new patients. The final budget bill provides the necessary funding to staff up and open more admis-

sion slots in these critical facilities, and makes a massive, \$485 million downpayment on improvements to our mental health and substance abuse treatment programs in Virginia. Righting the trajectory for these services will create a brighter future. In concert with improvements to mental health services, the General Assembly invested an additional \$354 million in public health including facility infrastructure improvements and modernization of our public health technology to ensure that Virginians can receive high-quality services.

To continue to improve public safety, we also allocated close to \$93 million for anti-violence initiatives, including \$75 million to increase state police and state supported sworn officers of sheriffs' departments salaries to competitive levels, \$13.2 million for support services for victims of crime including sexual and domestic violence, \$4 million to improve mental-health training for law enforcement to implement the new "Marcus Alert" system which requires mental health professionals respond with police officers that are called to deal with a person in crisis, and \$5 million in gun violence prevention programs.

The social distancing we have practiced over the past year has, in many cases, only been possible because of affordable access to reliable internet — from online school, to work, to accessing e-books from the library, to telehealth services, the internet has been a lifeline for many. However, for many Virginians, access to broadband is still out of reach. But that will change with the passage of this budget bill. The

SEE EBBIN, PAGE 11

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Great Falls Dinner Honors Service Members Killed in Kabul

Semper Fi & America's Fund financial support extends to translators and interpreters for resettlement.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Bob Nelson Sr. and the Bob Nelson Real Estate team held a special Military Appreciation Monday Dinner at The Old Brogue in Great Falls, Va., on Monday, Aug. 30, with two seatings.

Funds raised through donations will go to Semper Fi and America's Fund. The non-profit is dedicated to various programs to assist wounded veterans in all branches of the United States Armed Forces.

"My purpose for choosing this organization is in recognition of the eleven Marines, one Soldier and one Seamen who lost their lives on Thursday in Afghanistan," said Nelson. He wanted to honor these service members and all the others who had lost their lives or been injured in America's longest war.

Helen Toolan of Herndon, former military spouse and one of the founders of Semper Fi & America's Fund, attended the dinner. Since the organization's founding 17 years ago, it has provided financial assistance to over 26,000 U.S. service members and their families.

"We are continuing our efforts to financially assist those who need us, whether wounded, ill or injured, and we help their families as well during COVID," said Toolan. "It is not a one and done."

Toolan that there are at least 17 service members who were wounded in the Afghanistan attack that they know of, and the organization will be assisting their families as well.

"In the meantime, we began a program [Afghan Interpreters Welcome Fund] to help interpreters and translators who have been attached to our service members throughout



Helen Toolan of Herndon, former military spouse and one of the founders of Semper Fi & America's Fund

the years get settled where they are positioned worldwide," Toolan said.

"You had our backs, now we have yours," states the organization's website.

CAITLYN DRAFFEN is a former Marine who served at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego. She knew two of the Marines who died in the attack outside of the Kabul airport on Thursday, serving their fellow countrymen as well as America's allies in Afghanistan.

PHOTOS BY
MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION



From back right, Bob Nelson, founder of the Military Appreciation Monthly Dinner, Caitlyn Draffen, former Marine who served at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, and Helen Toolan of Herndon, former military spouse and one of the founders of Semper Fi & America's Fund.

"I thought it was a wonderful idea to come down here to see the support everyone is bringing.

"I knew Marine Corp Staff Sergeant Darin Taylor Hoover of Utah," Draffen said, recalling her time in San Diego. "He was a mentor to a couple of my other Marine brothers."

Draffen also knew Marine Corp Sergeant Johanny Rosario-Pichardo. "During battalion PT in the mornings, she always had a smile on her face. ... Both Marines were amazing people to be around," said Draffen.

Visit <https://semperfifund.org/donate/> to donate.

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LUIS GONZALEZ

Record-breaking Haircut Alone Does Not Cut It

Local woman fuels good on two fronts, loses an 18-year identity.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Hair and identity are closely intertwined. If you or someone you love has ever cried after a haircut, you understand. According to the American Hair Loss Association, hair loss, temporary and permanent, takes an emotional toll on individuals, and “children’s hair loss can be an extremely devastating issue.”

On Aug. 26, Zahab Kamal Khan, a 30-year-old Pakistan-born professional squash player residing in McLean since 2018, nodded to stylist Gregory White, an artist at a local Hair Cuttery. In seconds he would lower his scissors and participate in the final moments of Khan’s 18-year commitment to set a Guinness World Record. Her hair, at its longest length, measured 6-feet-2 inches that morning.

If successful and White cut carefully, Khan would hold the record as Most Hair Donated by an Individual, 5 feet 1 inch.

Before the big chop, Khan said she was quite nervous. “I love my hair.” Not counting Khan’s semi-annual 1-inch trims, this would be her first real hair cut in eighteen years.

Khan said that when she was 13, her father said, ‘If you keep growing your hair, one day you can become a Guinness World Record holder.’

After she moved to the United States, Khan’s new friend and fellow squash player Riya Saran suggested a plan greater than setting the World Record. Saran suggested that Khan should donate her hair to a cause, Children With Hair Loss. Khan took her advice. “It is more meaningful for me to donate to them.”

Saran is a 2020 alum of George C. Marshall High School in Falls Church. Saran and Khan met on the squash courts. When she learned that Khan and her sister founded the Zahab, Neha Foundation, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan [April 2018], a switch flipped in Saran’s brain. She saw something more significant, a multi-prong effort.

The Zahab, Neha Foundation supports students and players of any sport who want to study but cannot continue because of poverty and lack of resources. Saran saw that Khan was committed to social purpose, evident by her foundation.



Zahab Kamal Khan takes her first look at the length of her hair after her first real haircut in eighteen years, losing 5 feet 1 inch of length and breaking the Guinness World Record for Most Hair Donated by an Individual.



Zahab Kamal Khan gives a thumbs-up go-ahead during a live event expecting to donate more than 5 feet of hair to break the Guinness World Record for Most Hair Donated by an Individual.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



A chance encounter between two local athletes Riya Saran (left) and Zahab Kamal Khan, led to a Guinness record for one and support for two organizations, Children with Hair Loss, United States and the Zahab, Neha Foundation, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.



Zahab Kamal Khan needs high heels to keep her ‘mane’ from touching the ground before her Guinness World Record Official Attempt at Most Hair Donated by an Individual.

According to Saran, Khan could leverage the media power of setting a Guinness Record to fuel fund-raising for her foundation in Pakistan, donate her hair to a worthy cause, and fulfill her childhood dream and that of her father’s.

The price to achieve all would be Khan’s identity, her Rapunzel length hair.

Emotional about the pending cut, Khan struggled to speak during the event’s open-



Zahab Kamal Khan wipes tears from her eyes before her Official Attempt to break the Guinness World Record of Most Hair Donated by an Individual.

ing remarks. Her father’s hug helped. When she went to squash practice in Pakistan, Khan said she saw many other children with old shoes and broken rackets who still wanted to play.

“I would help these kids by giving them

my own shoes and rackets and hope that they could be able to continue playing. ... Many kids, especially girls who wanted to go to school, were unable to because their family could not afford the school fee, so I began giving them books to further their studies. ... Guinness will give me a platform to connect with more people around the world, and I hope to serve as a role model to encourage more girls to come forward and fulfill their passions,” said Khan.

Ahn Phan, Outreach Representative for U.S. Senator Mark Warner, read a letter from Warner during the media event held at the McLean Community Center. “This achievement is a testament to your determination, your commitment to donating your hair in order to help those who have experienced hair loss is truly commendable,” said Phan.

Amber Glenn, director of communications for Hair Cuttery, said, “We believe in the power of community, the power of women to break down barriers, and the power and competence that hair can grant to us all.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF GIANT

Local mobile health clinics can help to make receiving flu and COVID vaccines as well as COVID booster vaccines convenient.

Get Your Flu Shot

Local health officials say it's important to get both flu and COVID vaccines, and CDC says they can be given at the same time.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

As students return to in-person learning while social distancing and mask mandates are less in evidence, local health officials are urging residents to get a flu shot to prevent an uptick in the number flu and COVID-19 cases.

"We could be in for a more serious flu season compared to last year, which saw record-low flu-related deaths, thanks in large part to people wearing masks and maintaining social distance," said Kurt Larrick, Assistant Director, Arlington County Department of Human Services.

"This year, people are out and about more, so getting a flu shot is important."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), September and October are generally good times to be vaccinated against flu. Ideally, everyone should be vaccinated by the end of October.

"While we all are focused on COVID-19, flu can also cause severe illness and death, particularly in people who are older and have underlying medical conditions," said Dr. Benjamin Schwartz, Fairfax County Health Department's Director of Epidemiology and Population Health.

"As many people will be getting COVID boosters in the fall, if they haven't received their annual flu shot yet it, that would be a great time to do so."

— Dr. Benjamin Schwartz,
Fairfax County Health Department's Director of Epidemiology and Population Health

Population Health. "The CDC recommends that the COVID vaccine can be given at the same time as the flu shot. This can make it more convenient for people to get protected against both infections. As many people will be getting COVID boosters in the fall, if they haven't received their annual flu shot yet, that would be a great time to do so."

"Since the flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine do not contain any live virus, there is no chance of getting infected from either one," Schwartz said.

In an effort to maximize the number of patients who can receive both vaccines, local pharmacies have set up mobile clinics where flu, COVID-19 and COVID-19 booster vaccines can be administered.

"Giant's pharmacies throughout the area are ready to help residents get their seasonal flu vaccine with no appointment needed, and often covered in-full

by most insurance plans," said Sujin Roberge, Manager of Clinical Programs at Giant Pharmacy. "Giant pharmacists will continue administering COVID-19 vaccines, including a third dose of either Moderna or Pfizer vaccine for immunocompromised individuals. Booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines will be available at Giant pharmacies once approved by the CDC."

Health officials say that some have questioned the necessity of receiving both vaccines. "Even if you have received the COVID vaccine, you should still get a flu vaccine," said Larrick. "Neither protects from the other. The flu vaccine will not protect you against COVID, and

the COVID vaccines will not protect you against the flu. Both flu and COVID are potentially deadly diseases that are preventable with vaccinations."

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html>

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NOW THRU SEPT. 5

"An Act of God." At NextStop Theatre Company in Herndon, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. The season opens with "An Act of God," a funny comedy in which God, along with his two "wingmen," answer some of the most pressing questions that have plagued mankind since Creation. By David Javerbaum and directed by Tuyet Pham. Season subscriptions are available by calling the NextStop Box Office at 703-481-5930x0 or by visiting www.nextstoptheatre.org.

SEPT. 1

SPARC Grand Opening. 12-2 p.m. At The Church of the Good Shepherd United Methodist, 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. SPARC, a non-profit that provides day programs for adults with disabilities, will celebrate the opening of its new administrative office in Vienna with festivities that include a ribbon-cutting ceremony followed by a talent show at 1 p.m. The Sept. 1 festivities will include networking and vendor tables from noon to 12:30 p.m., followed by the ribbon-cutting ceremony and remarks from SPARC Executive Director Debi Alexander, Good Shepherd Pastor Eric Song and Fairfax Board of Supervisors John Faust, Walter Alcorn and Dalia Palchek. The talent show begins at 1 p.m. The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce and the SPARC Advocates Advisory Council, made up entirely of club members, support the event.

FRIDAY/SEPT. 3

Friday Night Live. 6:30 p.m. At Herndon Town Green, Herndon. Popular free outdoor concert series returns to regular performances. This will be the 27th season for the concert series which is produced by the Herndon Chamber of Commerce.

Schedule

Sept 3 -- Shake the Room;

Sept 10 -- keeton + 8 Track Jones;

Sept 17 -- The Reflex;

Sept 24 -- Screaming Mönkeys.

FRIDAY/SEPT. 3

Broadway in the Park. 8 p.m. At Wolf Trap Farm Park. Presented by Signature Theatre and Wolf Trap. Celebrate the return of live musical theater with a joyous evening of Broadway's greatest hits under the stars. Starring Broadway's Renée Elise Goldsberry (Hamilton, The Color Purple) and Brian Stokes Mitchell (Ragtime, Man of La Mancha) and a cast of Signature favorites, enjoy tunes



The Indigo Girls will appear at Wolf Trap on Sept. 22, 2021.

such as "Don't Rain on My Parade," "I Am What I Am," "The Schuyler Sisters," "You'll Never Walk Alone" and so much more. Visit <https://www.sigtheatre.org/events/202122/broadway-in-the-park/>

SEPT. 3-30

Transitions to Abstractions -- Five Painters. Exhibition at the Great Falls Library, Large Meeting Room, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. A collective of local painters show their work at the Great Falls Library. The show features a group of experienced artists who began working in more abstract painting after exploring other mediums and styles. Featured artists include two sculptors and an architect. We are a part of the Great Falls Studios group.

SEPT. 4-5

Middle Eastern Food Festival. 11-8 p.m. Saturday and 12:30-5 p.m. Sunday. Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church will host its 28th annual Eastern Food Festival, at 8501 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Guests can expect to enjoy the following traditional favorites: Hummus; Baba Ghannouj; Spinach Pies and Meat pies; Mujaddara (rice with lentils); and the following sandwiches: Falafel; Kafta; Chicken Shish Kebab; Chicken Shawarma and Beef Shawarma. A variety of homemade Middle Eastern pastries also will be served. In years past, the festival featured children's games and a petting zoo, along with a variety of vendors. Call 703-734-9566 or visit www.MiddleEasternFoodFestival.com.

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

are encouraged to bring portable chairs.

SEPT. 14, 28

Great Falls resident and expert on native plant gardening Meghan McGinty, Ph.D., will be offering five free clinics in September and October at Freedom Memorial in Great Falls from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. Following are the dates: September 14 and 28 October 5, 19, and 26. If interested, please register at CultivateNature@gmail.com. The clinics will be held rain or shine, except for extreme weather. They will be casual, question-driven sessions. Meghan is a botanist with a Ph.D. in Ecology and Environmental Biology from Columbia University. In 2013, she and her husband purchased a five acre property in Great Falls where

she has slowly been restoring native plants. In addition to planting native trees in a meadow to restore forest on her property, she also has removed lawn to establish a fenced native plant garden. The garden has thrived and is now home to butterflies and songbirds, skinks, toads, native insects, hawks and so much more.

Check out Meghan's Instagram account @cultivatnature to follow the seasons of her garden and to pick up gardening tips and advice. EP members may remember Meghan's Zoom presentation in October 2020.

SEASONAL FLU VACCINATIONS AT GIANT FOOD

Giant Food announces that seasonal flu vaccinations are once again available at all 152 of its in-store

pharmacies for both adults and children with no appointment required. The vaccinations are administered by Giant's certified in-store pharmacists and are often covered in-full by most insurance plans.

New this year, COVID-19 vaccines and other flu and non-flu vaccines including tetanus, shingles, pneumonia, meningitis, hepatitis and many more, can be administered together as the 14-day waiting period between COVID-19 and other vaccines is no longer recommended by health experts. Giant is also currently offering a third dose of Moderna and Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccinations for immunocompromised individuals as defined by the CDC.

To help customers stay healthy throughout the flu season, Giant

SUNDAY/SEPT. 5

Concert on the Green. 6-8 p.m. At the Village Centre Green, behind the Old Brogue, Great Falls. Featuring Hello Cleveland. Sponsored by John Nugent & Sons.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 9

Reston and Mid-Century Modern. 7-9 p.m. At 1639 Washington Plaza, Reston. All virtual program. This presentation showcases early Reston interiors, exploring how mid-century modern style and architecture influenced their look and use. Learn about Reston's early designers, see how interiors were furnished, and how Registration Required. Free.

SEPT 10-19

Ken Ludwig's Sherwood: "The Adventures of Robin Hood." At NextStop Theater Company in Herndon. NextStop will create an open-air theatre in the parking lot of the Northwest Federal Credit Union headquarters in Herndon. This production will give audiences the chance to come together with their neighbors for a rip-roaring romp through Sherwood Forest, featuring all the thrills and romance you could possibly ask for. Flying arrows, clanging swords, and perilous feats of daring fill this not-so-ye-olde tale of everyone's favorite hero outlaw and his noble quest to steal from the rich and give to the poor.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 11

Storytime Live. 10:30-12:30 p.m. At Kiddie Academy South Riding, 43060 Edgewater Street, South Riding.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 11

Clifton Caboose 5K and 1 Mile Fun Run. 1 Mile Fun Run/Walk starts at 6 p.m. 5K Run starts at 6:30 p.m. Intersection of Clifton Rd, Newman Rd, and Main St, Clifton. A 5K Run and 1-Mile Fun Run/Walk beginning in Clifton. The scenic course winds down a gently rolling country road, across a creek, and past a horse or two. Early Pick-Up/Registration: Cash/Check only. Friday, September 11, 5-7 p.m. at the Barn 7139 Main St, Clifton. Race Day Registration and Pick up packets (cash/check only) from 4:00-5:30 pm at the Barn, 7139 Main St., Clifton. Cost: 5K Run - \$25, One-Mile Fun Run/Walk - \$20. Visit the website: <https://c25k.redpodium.com/clifton-caboose-5k-run-c25k>

SUNDAY/SEPT. 12

Concert on the Green. 6-8 p.m. At the Village Centre Green, behind the Old Brogue, Great Falls. Featuring Four Star Combo Band. Sponsored by Rossen Landscape.

RCC OFFERING ESPORTS

Reston Community Center is excited to offer participation in an esports league this fall. Teaming with GGLeagues, a new national program for recreation departments, will

give gamers of all ages access to affordable, socially distanced competition.

RCC is teaming with GG Leagues to create esports teams that will virtually compete against other players. Players, divided into age groups, will play on their own consoles and from their own homes. They may choose from several popular games, including Madden, FIFA, Fortnite and Super Smash Bros., among others.

Esports has expanded to become a sanctioned high school and college sport -- with colleges now offering more than \$16 million in scholarships, according to a recent NPR report. Beginning this year, the Virginia High School Sports League will offer esports on a pilot basis to determine if it should be included among official competition sports.

Here are the details gamers need to know to play through RCC:

Players may choose to play in Rocket League, FIFA, Madden, Fortnite, NBA2K and Super Smash Bros. leagues.

Each league will run for six weeks. To register for RCC's GGLeagues teams, please visit the RCC team page on the GGLeagues website. Registration ends September 22. Play begins October 4.

Divisions available will be Youth (8 -- 12 years old), Teen (13 -- 18 years old) and Adults (age 18 and older).

Cost: \$30 for a season esports pass (the price is the same for Reston and Non-Reston).

Prizes for the top team include in-game currency and a GGLeagues champion shirt and medal.

RCC WELCOMES BACK PATRONS

Reston Community Center announces that several of its most popular Lifelong Learning programs will return to the schedule this fall. Registration and reservations are now open for both Reston and Non-Reston patrons to attend:

Bridge -- Intermediate and advanced players are invited to play Mondays at RCC Hunters Woods (10:00 a.m. -- 2:00 p.m.) and Tuesdays at RCC Lake Anne (10:00 a.m. -- 1:00 p.m.) Free, but registration is required.

Trips -- Take a day trip, and let RCC handle the driving, parking and other details. On the schedule this fall are the Museum of the Bible (September 16), the International Spy Museum (October 14) and a trip to Toby's Dinner Theatre to see Irving Berlin's White Christmas (November 17). Prices vary. Advance registration is required.

American Mah Jongg -- Work on your game at RCC Hunters Woods Wednesdays (1:15 p.m. -- 3:45 p.m.) or Thursdays (9:30 a.m. -- 12:00 p.m.). Free, but registration is required.

RCC's formerly drop-in programs such as Bridge now require advance registration. To register, please ensure you have a myRCC account. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com, or call (703) 476-4500, and press 8.

has made getting vaccinations simple and easy with no appointment needed. Insurance companies, including Medicare, are billed directly, often at \$0 copays. The flu vaccines offered this season will cover four strains of the flu virus and Giant will again offer high dose flu vaccines for adults aged 65 and older.

ONGOING

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

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BULLETIN BOARD

SATURDAY/SEPT. 11

Sept. 11 Remembrance Ceremony. 9 a.m. At Great Falls Freedom Memorial, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Great Falls lost six residents to the attacks on September 11. The ceremony will honor them and all who sacrificed on that day and in its aftermath. The event will include a color guard, patriotic songs, remarks by retired Army three-star general Robert Wood who was present at the Pentagon on 9/11, and a candle-lighting for each of the September 11 victims from Great Falls. The Freedom Memorial is located behind the Great Falls Library at 9830 Georgetown Pike. The ceremony is open to all. Ample parking is available in the library parking lot. In case of rain, the ceremony will move to the library meeting room. Limited seating will be provided. Attendees

Detectives Investigate Fatal Crash on Dolley Madison Boulevard

A 31-year-old man died following a crash that occurred just prior to 2 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 29, near the intersection of Dolley Madison Boulevard at Waverly Way. Detectives from the FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit have preliminarily determined Curtis Mathia Rustin IV, of McLean, was the driver and lone occupant of a 2005 Nissan Altima. Rustin was traveling northbound on Dolley Madison Boulevard when he lost control of his vehicle near the intersection of Waverly Way, according to police reports. The vehicle left the roadway and crashed into two trees.

Fire and rescue personnel pronounced Rustin IV dead at the scene.

Detectives believe speed may have been a factor of the crash and continue to investigate to determine if alcohol was also a factor. At this time, there is nothing to indicate any other vehicles were involved in the crash.

Anyone with information about this crash is asked to contact our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.

This is the 8th non-pedestrian related fatality in the County to date in 2021.

FCPD Calls for Service

Date Covered: 8/20/2021 – 8/26/2021

Total Calls for Service: 8,781
Total Domestic Related Calls for Service: 218
Total Persons Experiencing Mental Health Crisis Calls for Service: 359
Total Crash Calls for Service: 614

MCLEAN DISTRICT STATION:

ROBBERY: 8600 block of Westwood Center Drive, 8/24/21, 5:27 a.m. The victim agreed to meet an acquaintance in a hotel room. After a dispute, a man entered the room, displayed a knife and

took property. No injuries were reported.

RESTON DISTRICT STATION:

BANK ROBBERY: 11100 South Lakes Drive (BB&T Bank), 8/24/21, 9:58 a.m. A man entered the bank, forcefully grabbed the manager and demanded cash. The man left the area on foot. No injuries were reported. Through surveillance video, detectives identified the suspect as a 31-year-old man of no fixed address. On Aug. 26, the suspect was arrested in Richmond on unrelated charges and also charged with two counts of robbery. He awaits extradition back to Fairfax County.



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Crisis in Afghanistan Reverberates Locally

FROM PAGE 3

refugees, my brothers and sisters, who only wanted peace in a world of greed and violence.”

Aurozo Niaz said she and other Afghan Americans are angry and experiencing survivor's guilt. They can freely walk down a street in the U.S. without a man beside them and have access to all the resources offered here.

“The reason I’m a refugee right now is complete luck. I was born in America and not one of the most overexploited, destabilized countries in the world... I think that’s why we put so much effort into having these donations.”

She said the U.S. goes into countries “under the guise of freedom and defense, and it conquers, leaving the country in absolute chaos, abandoning the promises to take care of it. ... Now our government destroys and destabilizes these countries, then pats itself on the back accepting the refugees that they displaced.”

Aurozo Niaz said the withdrawal is not a partisan issue; blame is not for one President or another but on the U.S. empire as a whole. The United States had been intervening in Afghanistan since the Carter administration, Aurozo Niaz said.

“We just failed the people of Afghanistan.”

Ebbin

FROM PAGE 4

General Assembly allocated \$700 million to bring high-speed broadband to every home and business in the state by 2024. (Currently some 234,000 still remain unconnected!)

Small businesses can also expect \$250 million in relief via RebuildVA grants and \$50 million in tourism and marketing grants to draw customers back in and start to make up for the incredible impact the pandemic had on hospitality and destination based small businesses in Virginia. To prevent future tax increases on small businesses and ensure Virginians get the help they need if they are or become unemployed, the General Assembly deposited \$862 million into the depleted coffers of our Unemployment Trust Fund. We also allocated \$91 million to improve the efficiency at which the Virginia Employment Commission processes, adjudicates, and disperses unemployment benefits. The current system was overwhelmed during the peak of COVID-19, and continues to fail many Virginians in getting the help they deserve. I am hopeful that these investments will finally bring a resolution to this issue.

Finally, the General Assembly continued to work on a core priority of mine: preventing evictions and increasing af-

Kerrie Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Cornerstones said: “We’re worried about the families that we serve here who have relatives that are coming over or still stuck there [in Afghanistan] ... We work with our partners to direct people to the right places, Catholic Charities, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Lutheran Social Services, and some of the other groups that have been the frontline ... They are the organizations that have always worked with immigrant refugee families. [They] are set up to help the process, help them connect with relatives, or help them connect with other short stay places.”

Right now, it is “triage,” Wilson said. “The first thing you do is make sure they are fed and have a safe place to stay. Then you can begin your wraparound services.” Several faith groups and congregations, like St Mark’s Orthodox based in Fairfax, have connected with Cornerstones.

Cornerstones and some other county providers offered safe, short-term quarantine sites for refugees to isolate if needed due to COVID. Organizations like Cornerstones are the backbone of human service that would be here for families as they settle in.

“We are the second wave... We will embrace those families and individuals in our programs, as we would any other families,” said Wilson.

fordable housing. We appropriated a combined \$750 million in housing assistance, \$250 million of which will be used to cover overdue mortgage bills, taxes, insurance, and HOA fees. To learn how to access these funds, visit <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp>. Because of this major influx in rental relief, and the end of the federal eviction moratorium, we also prohibited landlords from taking any action to obtain possession of a rental unit for nonpayment of rent unless they have first applied for rental assistance and their tenant refused the assistance or did not qualify for the funding. This is one of the most important actions we have taken this special session, and will protect tenants and landlords alike from the painful, economically devastating process of evictions.

With the Governor’s signature, these historic investments will begin flowing, shovels will go into the ground, businesses will continue opening, and Virginians will begin to feel some weight lifting from their shoulders as a more robust safety net is constructed. A firm base has been laid for the future of our Commonwealth, and I look forward to building on it in the years to come.

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Weight For It ..., Weight



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Speaking of side effects (at least I was in last week’s column, “Enough Already”) being a regular part of chemotherapy, targeted therapy and immunotherapy; the big three non-surgical options for cancer patients, I am currently experiencing a new side effect which as it happens is a dream come true: weight loss. Which has enabled me to eat to my heart’s content without your typical consequences. Meaning for now, I can be comfortable in whatever food I eat. As Curly Howard of The Three Stooges might say: “What an experience!”

For my entire life, I have not been thin. Growing up all my clothes were purchased in the “Husky Department. In spite of that accommodation, my clothes always had to be let in or let out and nothing ever fit. I’ve stood over so many piles of clothes in store dressing rooms which didn’t fit, and made so many “walks of shame” out of the dressing room and onto the floor (where my mother would look me up and down to determine if the shirt, sweater, pants or short I was wearing had any redeeming qualities) that it has left a permanent mark. Most of the time, it was hopeless and I was forced to retreat back to the dressing room with even more clothes to suffer yet another indignity. To this day, some 60-odd years later, I am still traumatized by the years of suffering and humiliation I endured as an overweight child/adolescent forced to buy clothes for the fall/winter and the spring/summer. Oh, how I dreaded those shopping trips into Boston to visit Jordan Marsh, Filene’s and Kennedy’s. If it wasn’t for the two Joe & Nemo’s hot dogs I was promised, the day would have been a total loss - for me.

However, after years of being fat, tubby, obese (per the health and fitness charts), slow-footed and unable to do even one chin-up during those annual phys-ed exams in secondary school; and moreover, never being able to lose any weight or change my diet to facilitate losing a few pounds, I have stumbled onto a surprising and quite unexpected remedy (of sorts): lenvima, my thyroid cancer medicine. A 10 mg pill I take once a day, rain or shine seems to induce weight loss. Now that’s a side effect with which I can live. In fact, for an eater like me (challenging), living a scan-to-scan existence when the quarterly results determine my immediate future and/or whether my life hangs in the balance, it doesn’t get any better than that.

After nearly nine months on this treatment, in speaking to my endocrinologist last week, she happened to mention in response to a question I asked concerning my shortness-of-breath side effect, about another side effect: weight loss. Ding, ding, ding. We have a winner (without the chicken dinner). The patient (yours truly) who was apparently originally misdiagnosed with a terminal form of lung cancer (stage IV) instead of what would have been a very treatable and curable form of papillary thyroid cancer, known as “the friendly cancer,” finally got some good news. Unfortunately, the re-diagnosis came too late and I’m still on a limited schedule, if you know what I mean? (F.Y.I.: the nickname given to papillary thyroid cancer as being friendly is because it’s very curable.)

Not that I don’t already eat my share of “comfort” food, but by consuming it so regularly, I usually pack on a few pounds and rarely if ever lose weight. My entire life, until this recent lenvima revelation, food had never been just for thought. As a result, lenvima has become my second favorite word after “stable,” (scan results). Now it seems, so long as scan results continue to be stabilizing, I’ll be able to eat what I want and let the chips fall where they may, literally and figuratively.

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



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