

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

## Electrical Event Cause of Mount Vernon House Fire

**O**n Wednesday, Aug. 25, at approximately 6:39 p.m., units from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and the Fort Belvoir Fire and Emergency Services responded to a house fire in the 8100 block of Orville Street in the Mount Vernon area of Fairfax County.

Units arrived on the scene of a two-story, single-family home with thick, black smoke showing from all sides of the house. Crews worked quickly to control, and eventually extinguish, the fire. There were no reported civilian or firefighter injuries.

Two occupants were home at the time of the fire. The occupants discovered the fire and evacuated. 9-1-1 was called. Smoke alarms were present and sounded after the occupants discovered the fire.

Fire Investigators determined that the fire was accidental in nature and started in the living room. The fire was caused by an unspecified electrical event involving the wiring for a table lamp.

Two occupants have been displaced because of the fire. Red Cross assistance was offered and declined. Damages as a result of the fire are approximately \$208,412.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Fire in Mount Vernon last week displaces family.

## Lorton Fire Station Gets a Makeover

Station just off Lorton Road is upgraded to meet the expanding population in the area.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he Lorton Volunteer Fire Department is getting an expanded fire house with modern accommodations in a \$14,790,000 makeover to bring firefighting capabilities in the eastern Lorton area up to meet the needs of a growing population.

The new two-story station is an approximate 23,000 square-foot facility, with four drive through apparatus bays to accommodate their equipment and a larger staff to support the Fire and Rescue operations, along with a volunteer firefighters space. The facility provides expanded living and support spaces, along with a training tower.

To accommodate the construction and renovation activities, the crew moved out of their former quarters in 2018 into temporary accommodations and a temporary station on the same 3.3-acre site. The project is scheduled to be completed soon so the crew can move back into their permanent spaces. The project is scheduled to receive LEED Silver



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

Lorton Fire Station upgrades include spaces for the county staff and the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department.

Certification, said Sharon North, communications representative at the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

This improved station in eastern Lorton will soon be providing public service in the area alongside the new South County police station and animal services shelter which is under construction further west on Lor-

ton Road, between Hooes and Workhouse Roads. County officials broke ground on that \$30 million dual-use facility last May. It includes 34,000 square feet for police, 23,000 square feet for animal services, and 20,000 square feet of outdoor space for use by animals, a fuel island, and parking. The facility, a two year project, is scheduled for completion in spring 2023.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Chairman Jeff McKay at the groundbreaking of the South County station last May.



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#WeAreAlexandria



OPEN SAT 9/4 & SUN 9/5, 2-4

### Wilton Woods | \$1,100,000

Charming house built by renowned architect Charles Crain & updated for today's lifestyle. 6 bedrooms, 4.5 baths, kitchen with breakfast area, bright family room, and fabulous office. Beautiful landscaped yard with swimming pool set on almost 1/2 ac. 6009 Beech Tree Dr  
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[www.MPHometeam.com](http://www.MPHometeam.com)



### Stratford Landing | \$1,074,000

Charming craftsman-style home with over 4,500 SF of living on a double lot. Nestled beside Little Hunting Creek this 5-bedroom, 4.5-bath home features a 2-car garage, a graciously sized finished lower level, and a flat, oversized yard. 8826 Camden Street  
**Kristen Jones 703.851.2556**  
[www.KristenJones.com](http://www.KristenJones.com)



### Riverside Gardens | \$759,000

This home has it all - location, condition, and price! The charming front yard and entry welcomes you into the bright living room with large picture windows, wood burning fireplace, and open to the dining space. 3 bedrooms and 2.5 baths. 1907 Old Stage Road  
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[www.AlexisBogdan.com](http://www.AlexisBogdan.com)



### Stratford on the Potomac | \$729,900

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**Chris Hayes 703.944.7737**  
**Gordon Wood 703.447.6138**



### Glenmore | \$660,000

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**Lynn Cooper 202.489.7894**  
[www.LynnCooperHomes.com](http://www.LynnCooperHomes.com)



OPEN SUN 9/5, 2-4

### Hawthorne Manor | \$640,000

Terrific split foyer on a non-thru street with five bedrooms and three full baths. Master bedroom with ensuite bath and generous closet space. Large corner lot with composite deck in the backyard. 6202 Thornwood Drive  
**Sandy McMaster 571.612.9018**  
[www.McEneaney.com](http://www.McEneaney.com)



### Hybla Valley Farms | \$620,000

One level home has been lovingly maintained and updated! Living room with wood-burning fireplace, hardwoods throughout except carpet in bedrooms, beautiful updated kitchen, year-round sun porch off dining area. 2804 Woodlawn Trail  
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### First River Farms | \$559,900

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[www.KimFazio.com](http://www.KimFazio.com)



COMING SOON

### Belle View | \$310,000

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# Crisis in Afghanistan Reverberates Locally

## Afghan Americans speak out.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he 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 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 Afghanistan 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."

"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.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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



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.**

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. ... 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."

## 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](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.

"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 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





Smooth sumac has bright red fruits or drupes that grow in conical clusters.



The group studied New York ironweed, a plant with magenta flowers.

# Despite Summer's Swelter, Dyke Marsh Attracts Plant Lovers

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

**More Information:**  
[www.vnps.org/potowmack/](http://www.vnps.org/potowmack/)  
[www.fodm.org](http://www.fodm.org)

**I**t was a steamy, 90-plus-degree day, but Dyke Marsh's plants were center stage, as 20 enthusiasts had a sweaty, three-hour, multi-sensory immersion in the preserve's diverse vegetation on Aug. 28. Understanding plants involves seeing, touching, smelling and maybe even tasting nature's botanical bounty, demonstrated leaders Margaret Chatham and Alan Ford of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS).

Chatham squeezed together three, half-inch, spicebush twigs and walkers took a sniff. "The twig smells spicy. The fruit tastes like black pepper," said Chatham.

Sassafras, a woodland understory tree with three different kinds of leaves, was the original source for root beer, Chatham said. Not only can plants flavor human beverages, they can give our avian friends a high.

Pokeweed, a herbaceous perennial plant five-to-10 feet high with drooping stems, has deep purple berries devoured by some birds. The berries become fermented and can addle avians like catbirds and mockingbirds, Chatham said.

Speaking of eating berries, Ford said that arrowwood "makes a great landscape plant that will survive in shade and part sun. "Its black berries are lipid rich. Fall migratory birds fuel up on them to make it to Costa Rica."

Pointing out a waist-high bushy plant with pale green leaves and trumpet-like, orange

flowers, Chatham told the group that legend has it that jewelweed sap is a topical treatment for poison ivy's itch. The wild lettuce plants were reaching for the sky, but no one recommended them for dinner salads.

A widespread wetland plant in Dyke Marsh is the narrow-leaf cattail, a semi-aquatic plant with erect stems and hotdog-shaped flowers that grows in shallow water or very wet soil. "Pollen cores of Dyke Marsh show that they have dominated parts of Dyke Marsh for thousands of years, since the gla-

SEE PLANT LOVERS, PAGE 5



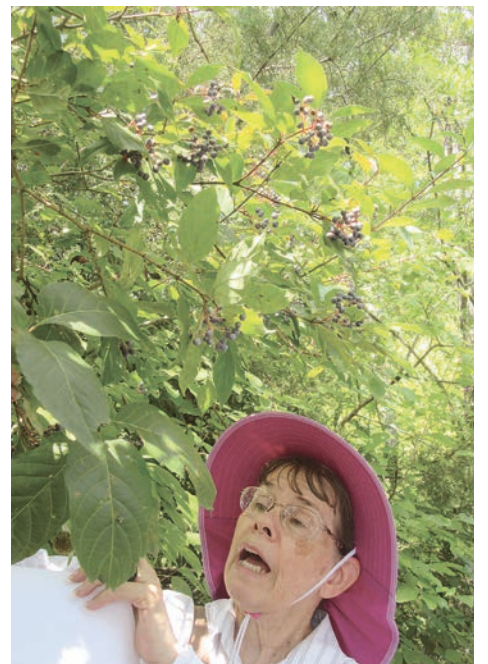
Native grape clusters hang down; invasive porcelainberries reach up.



Eastern gamma grass has male and female parts on the same plant.



The buttonbush has ball-like flowers and fruit heads.



Margaret Chatham examines the swamp dogwood's dark blue berries.



# Summer Plant Lovers

FROM PAGE 4

chiers melted and raised the sea level to the current level of Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River,” local botanist Elizabeth Wells has written. Chatham said that cattails are very salt tolerant and because of widespread winter salting to de-ice roads they are spreading across the country

Accurately identifying some plants requires eyeballing them up close, Chatham said. She and Ford are part of the chapter's Grass Bunch, members who specialize in hard-to-identify grasses, sedges and rushes. These enthusiasts can spend 45 minutes analyzing the stem, spikes and other parts of a plant. Describing Indian love grass, Chatham said, “For some you have to get a magnifying glass to look at the tips.”

They pointed out a bullrush along the shoreline called common three-square that was traditionally used for caning.

The leaders also ventured into plant reproduction. Directing the group to a stand of eastern gamma grass, Ford said that it has both male and female parts. “The squiggles on the bottom are female; the danglies on top are male,” clarifying with a snicker, “Those are not scientific terms.”

The group learned that some plants are host plants for butterflies, the only plant species that certain butterfly caterpillars use to lay their eggs and feed. A common example is monarch butterfly caterpillars that feed exclusively on milkweed leaves. Dyke Marsh's water hemlock near the boardwalk is the host plant for the black swallowtail butterfly. Chatham cited University of Delaware entomologist Dr. Douglas Tallamy who says that oak trees support more life than any other North American tree. “Oaks are important larval hosts for over 500 insects; tulip trees, for over 350,” said Chatham. Both tree species are in Dyke Marsh.

The Virginia Native Plant Society, founded in 1982, seeks to further the appreciation and conservation of the state's native plants and habitats. Explaining why native plants are important, chapter President Ford

told the group, “We should respect the web of life. It all works together. When you take out a part, you don't always know the consequences.” He elaborated that introduced plant species that did not coevolve with native insects and wildlife usually lack native controls and can outcompete native species.

The VNPS chapter and the Friends of Dyke Marsh hosted the walk in memory of Patricia Salamone, an officer in both organizations who passed away on March 19, 2021.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Alan Ford points out the bladder nut's capsule-like fruits.



FODM Board member Carolyn Bednarek showed walkers the fallen fruit of a yellow buckeye tree.



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and easy access to Little Hunting Creek to launch your kayak and enjoy the spectacular wildlife up and down the creek. 5 minutes S to Fort Belvoir - 2 minutes to Mount Vernon Estate & GW Parkway - 15 minutes N to Old Town - 25 Minutes N to National Airport and approximately 35 minutes to DC and the Pentagon.



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LUIS GONZALEZ



## Open the Gates

It is now well known that Enid Annenberg Haupt saved River Farm from a possible sale to the Soviet Union by making a donation of \$ 1 million to the American Horticultural Society (AHS) in 1973 that allowed them to purchase River Farm with the understanding, and on the condition, that the property would be open to the public.

Why then are the gates still



This plaque is located next to the front of the main house at River Farm and acknowledges Enid Annenberg's gift to AHS in 1973.

closed to the public?

**Anne Wilson Fafara**  
Save River Farm Committee  
Alexandria, Va.



Signs located outside the front gates of River Farm on Aug. 10, 2021.

## Detailing Relief in Dollars

BY SEN. ADAM EBBIN

On Monday Aug. 2, the Virginia 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 admission 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 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 affordable 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 non-payment 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.

It is my continued honor to serve the 30th District.

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## Body of Virginia Woman Found in Potomac River

The United States Park Police (USPP) located the body of Antika "Katie" Junrakan, age 27, in the Potomac River near Waynewood Boulevard in the afternoon of Aug. 31.

On Aug. 30, 2021, Junrakan was reported missing along the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The investigation remains open as USPP detectives follow up on active leads.

If you have information about this incident, please contact the tip line at (202) 610-8737, USPP\_tipline@nps.gov. You can remain anonymous.

## COVID Case at Mount Vernon High School

An employee at Mount Vernon High School reported testing positive for COVID-19, the school administration said in an email to parents.

The Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) will identify and communicate with close contacts of this individual and tell them what action to take, such as testing or quarantine.

If you do not receive a call from the Health Department, you have not been identified as a close contact to this case.

When the FCHD has completed its contact tracing and investigation of this case, FCPS will send an email to notify you the FCHD has closed the case.

If you have questions, you may contact the Fairfax County Health Department at 703-267-3511 or email [ffxcovid@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:ffxcovid@fairfaxcounty.gov) (monitored 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays).

FCPS maintains a COVID-19 Dashboard that shows daily cases at <https://www.fcps.edu/return-school/fcps-confirmed-covid-19-case-reporting>. This provides information on our division health metrics and COVID-19 cases.

This information is being shared to keep families informed and aware as we all work together to stop the spread of COVID-19. Learn more at <https://www.fcps.edu/blog/stop-spread>.

For more information on COVID-19 Supports and Resources, please visit <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/#-COVID-19-resources>

**Good Shepherd International Festival**  
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# Facing Eviction

Virginia has new protections for renters, but temporary measures expire next year.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
GAZETTE PACKET

The clock is ticking for renters across Virginia who are in danger of being evicted. Now that the federal moratorium on evictions is over, landlords are finally able to start filing paperwork at the courthouse. That means a wave of evictions could be on the horizon for people of color and low-income Virginians who have been disproportionately hit by job and income loss during the pandemic, according to data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.

“People are worried,” said Jon Liss, executive director at Virginia New Majority. “There’s a huge concern about a massive wave of evictions, both nationwide and in Virginia.”

Last month, members of the General Assembly approved a new protection for renters who are struggling to make ends meet. Landlords who want to evict tenants for non-payment of rent are now required to apply for federal relief before evicting anyone. That’s just one of the many new requirements on landlords, who must wait 45 days to move forward with an eviction if a rent relief application is under consideration. Ultimately, though, those temporary protections will run out June 30, 2022.

“We’re concerned that the lifting of the CDC moratorium will embolden landlords to increase their mass eviction filings,” said Larisa Zehr, a legal fellow at the Legal Aid Justice Center. “Mass eviction filings are always a problem in Virginia, but that will be an increased problem right now because so many people are still struggling to pay rent because of the pandemic.”

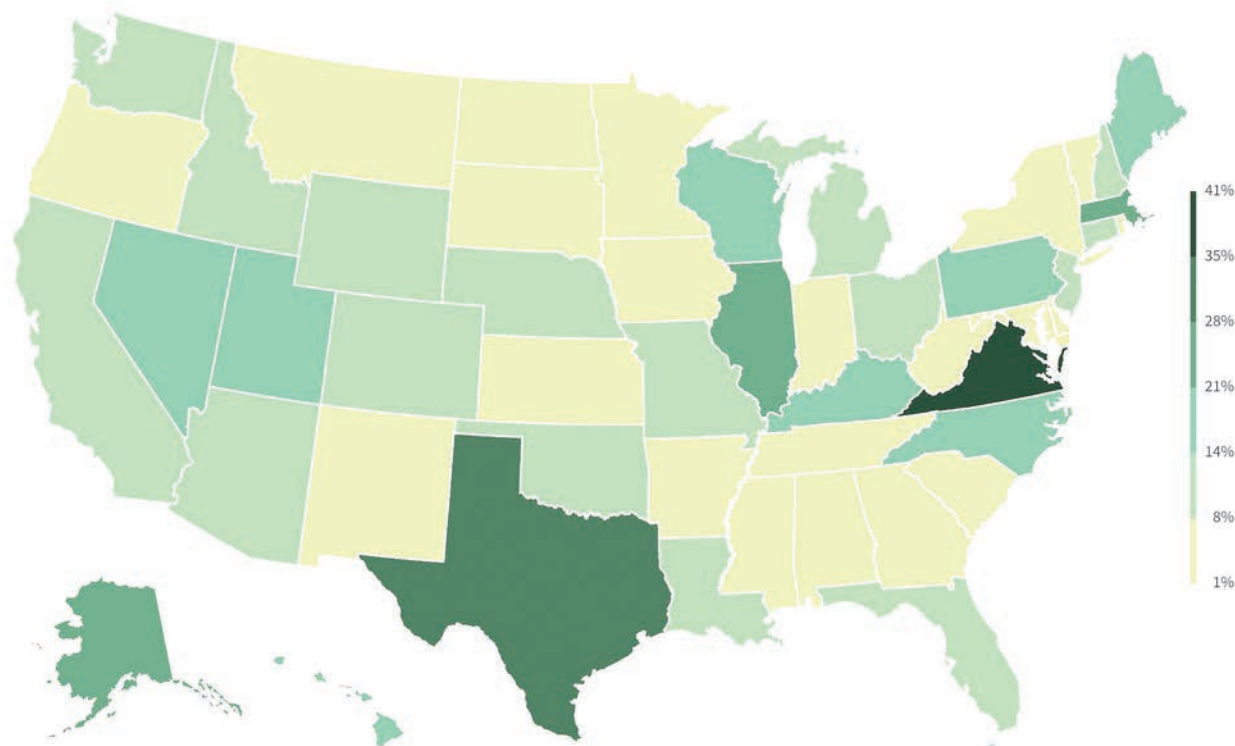
**THE FEDERAL MORATORIUM** on evictions was issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in September 2020. The United States Supreme Court struck down that moratorium last month, opening the door to landlords across the country evicting people who have not been able to pay the rent. Here in Northern Virginia, low-income people are likely to spend 50 percent of their income on rent. The Department of Housing and Urban Development suggests households spend no more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, which means many people in Northern Virginia were caught in a trap.

“You took a very vulnerable population that was walking a financial tightrope every month to get the rent paid, and you just pulled out tightrope,” said Christie Marra, director of housing advocacy for the Virginia Poverty Law Center. “If these tenants get evicted for not paying their rent, that becomes what I call the Scarlet E.”

Marra says don’t expect a sudden rush to evict tenants based on violations of leases that have nothing to do with non-payment of rent. Landlords who wanted to get rid of a tenant for damage or drugs have been able to evict those problem tenants all along, which is why Marra bristles at the word

## Texas and Virginia have distributed the largest percent of funds

2021  
Percent of first round emergency rental assistance money spent by local and state governments, as of June 30th

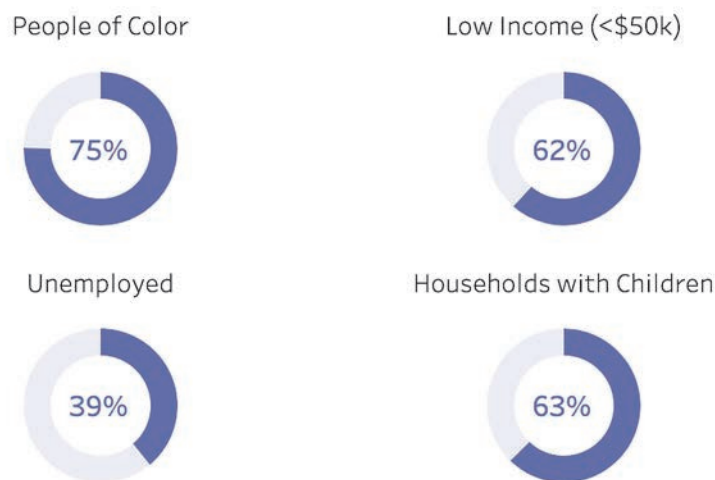


USAFacts

Virginia has spent more than a third of its federal rental assistance funds, a much higher percentage than most states in the race to get the funds to renters who are facing eviction.

## Those behind on rent are overwhelmingly low-income households who have experienced job and income losses during the pandemic.

Characteristics of Renters Behind on Rent



NATIONAL EQUITY ATLAS

People of color and low-income people in Virginia are disproportionately more likely to have experienced job and income losses during the pandemic.

“moratorium.” The CDCs order applied to people who were unable to pay their rent, not for other reasons. That means the people who are now at-risk of being kicked out of their homes are low-income people struggling to make ends meet during a pandemic.

“There has never been 100 percent protection for tenants,” said Marra, noting that Virginia ranks poorly in terms of protections for renters.

**LANDLORDS AND TENANTS** have been in a state of suspended animation since the

pandemic struck. Normal rules of economics no longer applied, and evictions were put on the back burner to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Many landlords are eager to get rid of renters they view as deadbeats, holding down a property without paying the bill. During the Virginia Senate debate on the new requirement for landlords to seek federal assistance before evicting anyone, state Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) argued that he didn’t want to require too much of property owners.

“We’re changing the terms of the con-

“If these tenants get evicted for not paying their rent, that becomes what I call the Scarlet E.”

— Christie Marra,  
director of housing advocacy for  
the Virginia Poverty Law Center

tracts. These people already have written leases,” said Petersen, who is often an outlier in the Senate Democratic Caucus. “They have residential leases, and to try to add these additional obstacles, it’s not correct.”

Here in Alexandria, city officials are planning to invest in a workforce of people known as “navigators” who can work with landlords and tenants to help apply for federal rental relief. Eventually, though, all that federal assistance will dry up. Tenants who have not been able to pay the rent since the pandemic struck will be facing eviction, and then the challenge of finding a new place to live with a paper trail that includes nonpayment of rent.

“I think there’s a big backlog of cases, and the first period will probably be a bit rugged,” said Stephen Haner, senior fellow at the Thomas Jefferson Institute. “In the long run, I think the changes Virginia has made will make eviction harder two years from now, five years from now, six years from now. And you will see fewer evictions.”

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# 'Celebration of Trees' Campaign Starts Sept 1

By Susan Laume  
The Connection

Local environmental organizations want you to know how important it is to plant and preserve native plants. The new region-wide public education effort, beginning Sept. 1, Plant NOVA Trees, includes this year's Celebration of Trees. Many events are planned September through November. In a collaborative effort, numerous organizations are pooling their resources to offer hosted events with the aim of reversing the decline of native plants and wildlife in Northern Virginia.

Celebration of Trees, part of a five year focused drive, seeks to reach out to residents, businesses, communities in general, and to climate vulnerable communities in particular, to significantly increase and preserve native tree canopy in northern Virginia. The hope is that the campaign will encourage everyone to install native plants as the first step toward creating wildlife habitat and functioning ecosystems on their own properties.

A key knowledge point in understanding the importance of native plants is the recognition that native plant species co-evolved with native animal species over many millions of years. Plants provided food and shelter for animals creating a complex, interdependent relationship between many species.

The relationship between native milkweed plants and Monarch butterflies is just one of many such dependent relationships in the natural world. A high percentage of insects are known to specialize in particular host plants and cannot eat, grow or reproduce on non-native plants. If host native plants are pushed out by over competing invasive plants, the related native insects could die out. Scientists have already documented a significant decline in insect populations in our part of the world, referred to as the "insect apocalypse."

Not a fan of insects and wondering why you should care about their loss? Take a moment to consider insects' role in assuring the continuation of our plant food resources and the lives of animals that sustain human life. Birds depend on insects to survive and raise their young. Studies document bird and animal species decline in areas overcome by non-native, invasive plant species.

What can you do to help? Plant at least one native tree now, and replace non-native trees when they die with native species. Consider converting some lawn areas to beds of native plants. Your conversion to a



Native Plants for Northern Virginia

native landscape can be gradual. Experts say, every native plant helps.

Not sure what to plant? For a list of native trees, shrubs, and perennials and their preferred growing conditions, go to [www.plantnovanatives.org](http://www.plantnovanatives.org). Need help on tree basics? Read more at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/trees](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/trees)

Report your planting at Virginia Forestry's My Tree Counts <https://arcc.is/WryDG>.

Consider volunteering in your community to plant trees or remove non-native plant species. A calendar of events is available at <https://www.plantnovatrees.org/calendar>.



Native Black Cherry trees, with Eastern tent caterpillars. These do little damage to the tree and provide a food source for Robins, Blue Jays, Red-winged Blackbirds and Cardinals



Non-native invasive vines were cleared from this mulberry tree in Dec 2020 by volunteer O. Alabi. ... By August 2021 the same tree was reclaimed by invasive vines. Without determined vine removal efforts this and many native trees would die. Its fruit is a valuable food source to foxes, raccoons, squirrels, and several varieties of birds.

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# 3 Dates to Circle in September

BY HOPE NELSON  
GAZETTE PACKET

**C**ookies, dining out for charity and a three-pronged pub crawl: It's shaping up to be a September of varied events in Alexandria's food and beverage arena. Here are some can't-miss activities to keep on your radar.

## Fraternal Order of Eagles "Dining for Charity" event, Sept. 11

The Fraternal Order of Eagles #871 is taking over several restaurants around town in the name of fundraising for an injured Virginia veteran. Bella Napoli, the Fish Market,

Café 44, Michael's Little Italy, Murphy's, Old House Cosmopolitan and Mamma's Kitchen are all donating a portion of their proceeds from Sept. 11's sales to the FOE, which will in turn use the fundraising mission to help build an accessible home for a veteran in need.

## Port City Old Town Pub Crawl, Sept 11, 18, and 25

The eighth annual Port City Brewing pub crawl is back in action after a virtual year – and in the spirit of the changing landscape, the brewery has another little trick up its sleeve. Instead of one uber-day of pub

crawling, this year's event is divided up into three crawls across three weekends – Sept. 11, Sept. 18 and Sept. 25, respectively, to keep crowds down. Each weekend features a distinct set of four restaurants, plus participant gear such as shirts and pint glasses.

The four-hour tour will budget for 50 minutes at each location, plus 10 minutes' travel time. Reservations are required; tickets are \$25.

## APPETITE

## Fall Cookie Decorating Class at Lost Boy Cider, Sept. 28

What better way to get into the autumnal spirit than with some fall-inspired cookies?

The folks at Sugarcoated Bakery will teach you how to decorate your own at a class hosted at Lost Boy Cider, 317 Hoofts Run Drive. The class, aimed at beginners of all ages, will go over a number of decorating how-tos. And don't fret – if your decorating skills don't present themselves in a timely fashion, you can always drown your sorrows with a pint of cider after class is finished. \$45.

*Hope Nelson is the author of "Classic Restaurants of Alexandria" and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at [www.kitchenrecessionista.com](http://www.kitchenrecessionista.com). Email her any time at [hope@kitchenrecessionista.com](mailto:hope@kitchenrecessionista.com).*

## CALENDAR

### SEPT. 3-25

"Stigma" Art Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. The STIGMA exhibit at Del Ray Artisans Gallery features art that shines a light on stigma — how it feels, how it affects lives, and how it can be overcome. Stigma affects many different people in many different ways. These art works include viewpoints on mental health disorders, HIV, homelessness, disabilities, sexual orientation, bullying, race and ethnicity, and more. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. Visit <https://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits>

### SATURDAY/SEPT. 4

Saving Garden Treasures: Taking Plant Cuttings. 1:30-3 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Learn how to propagate plants from cuttings following simple techniques demonstrated by Green Spring staff. Gain strategies to overwinter your favorite tender perennials so you can add them to your garden next year and save money. Take home a starter collection to begin your own saved treasures. \$22 per person. Register online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

### SATURDAY/SEPT. 4

Garden Talk: Rocks Rock. 10:30-noon. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Explore the beauty of rock gardens as Extension Master Gardeners host "Garden Talk: Rocks Rock!" Learn how to design and plant a beautiful display resembling an alpine meadow or a mountain garden with fabulous small and dwarf perennials and evergreens. Not only do these plants boast great longevity, they require little maintenance. This program for adults costs \$12 per person. Call 703-642-5173.

### SUNDAY/SEPT. 5

Old Town Festival of Speed & Style. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will feature more than 100 rare and unusual supercars and vintage motorcycles from around the world for up-close viewing enjoyment. It will span across three blocks on lower King Street, and around Market Square - near Old Town's waterfront. Presented by Burke & Herbert Bank. Will also feature a fashion demonstration in which local boutiques, salons, and area retail brands will showcase styles from the themed cars on display. The fashion demonstration will take place from 12 to 1 p.m. Visit the website: <https://www.festivalspeedstylealex.com/>

### THURSDAY/SEPT. 9

Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society Virtual Trivia Night. 7-8:30 p.m. Grab your favorite beverage and settle down for some trivia fun (with prizes) that will test your knowledge of



The Old Town Festival of Speed & Style will take place on Sunday, Sept. 5, 2021 in Old Town Alexandria.

American history, the Presidents, Alexandria, and the American work force throughout the years in honor of Labor Day. You'll learn some fun and interesting facts as we reveal the answers! Tickets are \$20 per household, with all proceeds benefiting Gadsby's Tavern Museum. To register, visit [gadsbystavernmuseum.us](http://gadsbystavernmuseum.us).

### FRIDAY/SEPT. 10

Art on the Rocks. 5 to 8 p.m. At Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Experience the exciting kickoff to Old Town Cocktail Week. Join the Art League in tasting cocktail creations and small bites crafted by competing bartenders from favorite local establishments. Find out who will win Judges' Choice and cast your own vote for the People's Choice award. Admission: \$55 per person. Visit [Oldtownbusiness.org](http://Oldtownbusiness.org)

### SEPT. 10-12

Stonebridge Artists Tour. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At three locations: 1234 Shenandoah Road, 2100 Mason Hill Drive and 2219 Martha's Road, Alexandria. The show will feature the work of nine prominent local artists with displays of painting, prints, bronze, ceramics, and photography, all in three relaxed residential settings. Friday time is 5-8 p.m. Saturday

and Sunday are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### SEPT. 10-18

By the Seashore. At Leonadus K. Plenty Amphitheater at Lee District Park, 6601 Telegraph Road, Alexandria. This sensory-filled production specifically designed for children ages 0-3 uses an imaginative mix of puppetry, movement, and sound to take children on a magical journey to the beach. Dates: Friday, September 10 at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, September 11 at 10am and 11:30 a.m. Sunday, September 12 at 11 a.m. Thursday, September 16 at 10:30 a.m. Friday, September 17 at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, September 18 at 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Visit the website: <https://www.artsonthehorizon.org/by-the-seashore-2021.html>

### SEPT. 10-19

Old Town Cocktail Week. Guests can celebrate the world of cocktail innovation enjoying unique libations at Old Town Alexandria restaurants, bars, and as well as themed events at boutiques, historic sights, and other places. The week will kick off with Art on the Rocks on Friday, September 10, 5-8 p.m. at Waterfront Park, held by The Art League

at the Torpedo Factory Art Center. The week will conclude with a Meet the Makers Tasting Event at Market Square.

### SATURDAY/SEPT. 11

Plants & Design: Perk Up Your Fall Garden. 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. (Adult) September is a great time to inject some autumn beauty into your home garden. Green Spring horticulturist Brenda Skarphol discusses dividing perennials, planting cool season plants, and beautifying your garden with fall season show-stoppers so it looks its autumn best. Special emphasis placed on plants for pollinators and other wildlife. \$18 per person. Register online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

### SUNDAY/SEPT. 12

Tall Ship Providence with Captain Gregory's. 1 Cameron St., Alexandria. Sail Times: 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. and 3 - 5 p.m. Be immersed in the seaside culture and history of rum as we learn the history of a maritime favorite. Guests can come aboard the Tall Ship Providence for tastings and sailing with entertainment by Captain Gregory's. Tall Ship Providence Happy Hour Cruises. Friday evenings throughout the fall, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Admission: \$45 per person. Call 703-772-8483. Visit [Tallshipprovidence.org](http://Tallshipprovidence.org)

### THE BIRCHMERE

All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com). Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or [www.Birchmere.com](http://www.Birchmere.com). Wed/Thu. Sept. 1 & 2: Jeffrey Osborne \$85.00 Fri. Sept. 3: DANNY GATTON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION with Johnny Hiland, David Chappell, Tommy Lepson, Big Joe Maher, John Previti, Dave Elliot, Barry Hart, Bruce Swaim, Steve Wolf, Pete Ragusa, Rick Whitehead, Steven Windsor, & more! \$35.00 Sun. Sept. 5: The Marshall Tucker Band \$55.00 Wed. Sept. 8: Blue Oyster Cult \$65.00 Thu. Sept. 9: Julia Fordham \$29.50 Fri. Sept. 10: Al Stewart w/ The Empty Pockets \$35.00 Sat. Sept. 11: Madeleine Peyroux 'Careless Love Tour' \$55.00 Sun. Sept. 12: NAJEE \$45.00 Mon. Sept. 13: Frank Marino & Mahogany Rush w/ Patty Reese & Dave Chappell \$45.00 Tue. Sept. 14: Suzanne Vega – An Evening of New York Songs & Stories \$49.50 Fri. Sept. 17: Reckless Kelly w/ Tyler & The Train Robbers \$29.50

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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FROM PAGE 7

## MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT POLICE INCIDENTS

**MALICIOUS WOUNDING:** 7900 block of Richmond Highway, 8/20/21, 2:53 p.m. A man confronted the victim in the parking lot, assaulted him with a knife then ran away. The victim was taken to a hospital with injuries not considered life threatening.

**ASSAULT ON A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER:** 8300 block of Richmond Highway, 8/20/21, 11:13 p.m. Officers responded for complaints of a man acting disorderly. When the man saw officers, he threw a glass bottle shattering it on the ground in front of him and ran away. After a short foot pursuit, the 37-year-old Alexandria man was taken into custody. During the arrest police say the suspect assaulted two officers and was charged with two counts of assault on a law enforcement officer, littering and drunk in public.

**UNLAWFUL DISCHARGE/ASSAULT ON A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER/DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY:** 5975 Richmond Highway (Red Roof Inn), 8/21/21, 1 a.m. Officers responded for reports of loud noises and glass breaking coming from a room. When they arrived, a 39-year-old man, was discovered alone inside of a room. Officers learned that he had shot off several rounds causing significant damage to the room. The man was arrested and taken to a hospital for treatment. While at the hospital, the man assaulted an officer. He was charged with reckless handling of a firearm, two counts of destruction of property, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, possession of ammunition by a felon, possess firearm while protective order in effect and assault on a law enforcement officer.

**COMMERCIAL ROBBERY:** 7910 Richmond Highway (Walmart), 8/22/21, 9:47 p.m. A man attempted to exit the store without paying for merchandise. When an employee attempted to stop him, a 20-year-old Alexandria man, displayed a knife and took the goods. Officers arrested the man nearby, and he was charged with robbery.

**VEHICLE PURSUIT:** Richmond Highway at Fort Hunt Road, 8/23/21, 2:12 p.m. An officer attempted a traffic stop of a 2008 Honda for a registration violation. The driver sped off through a red light. The officer utilized a PIT maneuver to quickly stop the car from fleeing and the driver, a 28-year-old man of Alexandria, was charged with disregarding a police signal to stop.

## FCPD CALLS FOR SERVICE SUMMARY Countywide:

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

## CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

Sat. Sept. 18: James McMurtry  
\$35.00

\*All shows are at 7:30pm, unless otherwise noted.

## BIRCHMERE SHOWS SEPT-OCT. 2021!

Wed/Thu. Sept. 1 & 2: Jeffrey Osborne  
\$85.00

Fri. Sept. 3: DANNY GATTON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION with Johnny Hiland, David Chappell, Tommy Lepson, Big Joe Maher, John Previti, Dave Elliot, Barry Hart, Bruce Swaim, Steve Wolf, Pete Ragusa, Rick Whitehead, Steven Windsor, & more! \$35.00

Sun. Sept. 5: The Marshall Tucker Band \$55.00

Wed. Sept. 8: Blue Oyster Cult \$65.00

Thu. Sept. 9: Julia Fordham \$29.50

Fri. Sept. 10: Al Stewart w/ The Empty Pockets \$35.00

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Tue. Sept. 14: Suzanne Vega – An Evening of New York Songs & Stories \$49.50

Fri. Sept. 17: Reckless Kelly w/ Tyler & The Train Robbers \$29.50

Sat. Sept. 18: James McMurtry \$35.00

Sun. Sept. 19: Phil Keaggy \$29.50

Mon. Sept. 20: Amy Grant \$75.00

Wed. Sept. 22: Monster Energy Outbreak Tour Presents: Laine Hardy w/ Kylie Frey \$35.00

Thu/Fri. Sept. 23&24: The High Kings \$55.00

Sun. Sept. 26: Five For Fighting With String Quartet \$39.50

Mon. Sept. 27: Christopher Cross

"40th Anniversary Tour" \$59.50

Tue. Sept. 28: The Robert Cray Band

\$49.50

Wed. Sept. 29: Tommy Emmanuel,

CGP with very special guest Andy

McKee \$59.50

Thu. Sept. 30: Keiko Matsui \$45.00

Fri. Oct. 1: Preacher Lawson \$45.00

Sun. Oct. 3: The Stylistics \$65.00

Mon/Tue. Oct. 4&5: Toad The Wet

Sprocket w/ Althea Grace \$75.00

Thu. Oct. 7: Lori McKenna "The

Two Birds Tour" with Mark Erelli

\$29.50

Sat. Oct. 9: The Guess Who \$69.50

Sun. Oct. 10 Phil Vassar \$45.00

Mon./Tue. Oct. 11 & 12: An Evening

with Patty Griffin & Gregory Alan

Isakov \$95.00

Wed/Thu. Oct. 13 & 14: An Evening

with Damien Escobar \$59.50

Fri. Oct. 15: The Manhattans featuring

Gerald Alston \$55.00

Sat. Oct. 16: Raven's Night 2021

\$29.50

Sun. Oct. 17: An Evening with Judy

Collins \$59.50

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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.

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>

**"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

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

### GIRLS ON THE RUN REGISTRATION

As students prepare to head back to school throughout Northern Virginia, many parents are looking for afterschool activities that not only encourage physical activity, but also provide a safe and structured space to build their child's social-emotional toolbox. Children deserve to emerge from this crisis strong and hopeful, and at Girls on the Run we are prepared to nurture girls' strength and resilience, so they can thrive in all aspects of their lives. GOTR NOVA will be returning to a 10-week curriculum and offering all in-person teams for the Fall 2021 season. Currently, 66 sites throughout the Northern Virginia region are open for Fall 2021 registration through September 7, 2021. For more information about fall registration, visit [www.gotrnova.org](http://www.gotrnova.org).

### STEM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The AAAS STEM Volunteers Program, [stemvolunteers.org](http://stemvolunteers.org), needs STEM professionals to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in school districts in the D.C. metro area during the 2021-22 school year. If you care about K-12 STEM education and have time to share your knowledge with students and teachers, send a note to [bcalinge@aaas.org](mailto:bcalinge@aaas.org) with your home address.

### FREE CYBER TRAINING

The Virginia Cyber Skills Academies (VCSA) is a state-sponsored training program for NOVA residents financially impacted by COVID-19 that provides free cyber training to residents ready to start or boost a career in cyber. VCSA was recently launched to help current cybersecurity professionals with upskilling and those wanting to enter the sought after cybersecurity field with reskilling. The program is only open to citizens who are stationed in or permanent residents of Northern Virginia and is only funded for this year, so applicants should apply as soon as possible. Applicants can earn certifications from the SANS Institute, a highly regarded and well-recognized cybersecurity learning platform. Visit the VCSA website at [www.vacyberskills.com](http://www.vacyberskills.com).

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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

computer skills including MS Office, familiarity with office phone systems, and friendly and welcoming demeanor. Email [FWSLibrary@mountvernon.org](mailto:FWSLibrary@mountvernon.org) to learn more.

### ONGOING

Local, farm-fresh produce – including strawberries and asparagus – and more will be featured at the now-opened McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon Farmers Market. From 8 a.m. to noon every Wednesday (through Dec. 22), 16 local farmers and food producers will sell fresh, locally grown vegetables and fruits; meats; Chesapeake Bay seafood; breads and pastries; honey, jams and jellies; milk, cheese and eggs; herbs and plants; and more. The market is located at the Sherwood Hall Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. All of the items sold at the market are grown or produced by the vendors and come from within a radius of 125 miles.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT cards can be used. As a bonus, the market will match up to \$20 per market visit in SNAP dollars for fruits and vegetables.

This year's vendors are:

Arnest Seafood – crab cakes, scallops, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and more

Grace's Pastries - cakes, pastries and breads, with a Caribbean touch

Great Harvest Bread - breads and pastries

Honey Brook Farms - meats and vegetables raised with no chemicals, gluten-free baked goods

House of Empanadas –variety of empanadas

King Mushrooms –variety of locally grown mushrooms

Locust Grove Farm - vegetables and herbs

Misty Meadow Farm Creamery - milk, ice cream, cheese and eggs

No. 1 Sons – pickles, kimchi, sauerkraut and kombucha teas

Ochoa Produce - vegetables, herbs and flowers

Traveling Shepherd Coffee Co. – variety of freshly roasted coffee

Twin Springs Orchard - fruits, vegetables, cheese and more

Valentine's Bakery & Meats - meats and baked goods.

### ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia (LCNV) is hosting beginning-level adult English language classes from February to May. Due to the continued situation of COVID-19, classes for the spring semester will be held on virtual platforms only, which require students to have a computer, tablet, or smartphone and internet access to participate. Registration runs through February 5, with options to register via text message, phone calls, or in-person at certain locations and times. Classes offered this spring include:  
\* Beginning English Class: provides adult English language learners

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14







## 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; that 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): lelvima, 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 lelvima revelation, food had never been just for thought. As a result, lelvima 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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## News

# Crisis in Afghanistan Reverberates Locally

FROM PAGE 3

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."

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.

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 12

the fundamental skills to understand and communicate in English, helping them to better engage in the community and advance their careers.

\* Family Learning Programs (FLP): provides English language instruction for parents or caregivers, so that they can better communicate with their children and support their education.

Classes are \$85 with books and assessment included. Registration is required for enrollment. Please understand that no children are allowed at in-person registrations. If possible, please bring your interpreter for the process. Strict social distancing precautions will be enforced. Face masks will be provided. Registration times and dates are available at LCNV's distance learning page (<https://lcnv.org/distance-learning-session/lcnv-classes/>), or call 703-237-0866.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**STEM VOLUNTEERS.** The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) needs scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the Northern Virginia Area, during the 2016-17 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the numbers of STEM volunteers in Northern Virginia were: Fairfax County - 40, Arlington - 20, and Alexandria - one. Details of the collaboration are worked out between the teacher and the volunteer, and may involve giving demonstrations, assisting in lab experiments, lecturing on special topics, assisting with homework, etc. The hours are flexible, and volunteers attend a one-day training in September before being assigned to schools. To see how volunteers are assisting their teachers, view the video clips at [www.seniorscientist.org](http://www.seniorscientist.org). To volunteer, contact [donaldrea@aol.com](mailto:donaldrea@aol.com).

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](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

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

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

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](mailto:chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org) or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit [www.rsvpnoa.org](http://www.rsvpnoa.org).

Line Dance Instructor needed for the Gum Springs Senior Program once a week on either Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Volunteer Solutions, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711.

Volunteer Fairfax makes it easy for individuals and families, youth and seniors, corporate groups and civic clubs to volunteer. Fulfill hours, give back, or pay it forward through a variety service options. Visit [www.volunteerfairfax.org](http://www.volunteerfairfax.org) or call 703-246-3460.

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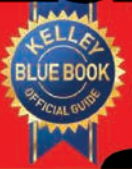




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