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CONNECTION

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Feeding The Hungry

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Food Corner organizers Jane Shafer, Bonnie Jamison and Amy Dannamiller at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church keep donated food organized and flying out the door to those in need.

Burn to Shine

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Lamb Center Looks Forward

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Dr. Jill Biden Comes to Town

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Project manager, ecologist Darko Veljkovic ignites burnable material to simulate a natural fire event in a section of Laurel Hill Park.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



In another section of the reforestation area a large debris pile is ignited after water is sprayed on the historic corn crib and surrounding ground to protect the structure.

Controlled Burn Cuts Path for Reforestation

Section of Laurel Hill Park was previously overgrown with Kudzu, Tree of Heaven, and other non-native invasive plants.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Park Authority's Natural Resources Branch took another step toward improving forest habitat on Nov. 9, conducting a controlled burn in a section of Laurel Hill Park. The target area was previously overgrown with Kudzu, Tree of Heaven, and other non-native invasive plants. The burn, which mimics a natural fire event, opens space for planting native tree seedlings.

The November burn timing clears the space in advance of a large scale tree planting planned for next month. In December, Lau-

rel Hill will receive 2,000 seedlings; part of a \$107,000 installation contract for 32,000 trees that will be placed in four park reforestation areas: Ellanor C. Lawrence, Ellick Woodlands Preserve, Frying Pan and Laurel Hill.

Project manager for the Laurel Hill effort, ecologist Darko Veljkovic said six tree species will be planted, four kinds of oak and two hickories. Fencing will be completed next week in advance of planting to protect new seedlings from deer browse.

Removal of invasive and overgrown plants by the county and park volunteers has made the historic corn crib and creamery buildings, built as part of the Occoquan workhouse/prison operation, visible to hikers.



After the burn, much green material remains and birds return quickly to the area eager to find insects caught in the flames for an easy meal.



Prior to the burn, the field area had been cleared of invasive Kudzu and hosted a tree planting celebration symbolic of the extensive planting planned for December (see Connection, Springfield, November 4-10).

Centreville Man Killed in Motorcycle Crash

A 21-year-old Centreville man was killed last Friday, Nov. 5, when the motorcycle he was driving crashed into a car in Fairfax Station. Fairfax County police say Andrew Paulucci was pronounced dead at the scene.

The crash occurred around 7:07 p.m. According to police, a 2020 Buick Enclave was traveling northbound on Ox Road when its driver tried to turn left

onto westbound Henderson Road on a flashing yellow signal.

At the same time, Paulucci was traveling southbound on Ox Road on a 2021 Kawasaki motorcycle. Police say he "proceeded through the intersection on a green signal and struck the Enclave." The impact caused him to be thrown from the motorcycle.

The driver of the Enclave, along with a ju-

venile passenger, remained at the scene. The Enclave driver sustained minor injuries, but the juvenile was uninjured. After crashing, the motorcycle became engulfed in flames, but arriving fire and rescue personnel extinguished the fire.

Police say "speed may have been a factor for the motorcycle," and detectives from the Crash Reconstruction Unit are continuing to investigate. Details of their findings will be

presented to the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office for review.

Meanwhile, anyone with information about this crash is asked to contact the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips may also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by calling 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477).

— BONNIE HOBBS

‘We Welcome Anybody – the Broken, the Wounded’

The Lamb Center honors its guests, looks to the future.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Serving the poor and homeless, The Lamb Center in Fairfax is a daytime, drop-in shelter offering hot meals, showers, laundry services, clothing, haircuts, dental services, Bible studies, job and housing searches, plus recovery and employment counseling. And while it had to alter its operations because of the pandemic, it never stopped doing whatever it could to help its guests.

Each year, The Lamb Center (TLC) celebrates its achievements, and this year’s recent banquet – attended by more than 265 friends and supporters – was no exception. With the theme, “Hope and a Future 2021,” it honored its guests’ achievements and looked forward to several new initiatives on the horizon. It was part in-person speeches and part video – and 100-percent warm and heartfelt.

“I felt hopeless and worthless,” said former guest Georgette. “But once I got connected with The Lamb Center, I had a lot of hope. I know I’m worthy, I’m somebody and I can do this, with the help of others.”

“Homelessness is not something that has an easy cure, because people are homeless for reasons beyond what they can fix and we can fix,” said TLC Board member Linn Williams. “But they’re not beyond what God can fix; our role is putting all that together.”

Former guest Donald called TLC “a place for us to get peace of mind. You come here, get a prayer, a bite to eat and move forward every day.”

Guest Peter said his biggest challenge was getting a job. “Being homeless, I had no resources or ways to look for training,” he said. Now part of City Jobs – the Lamb Center/Fairfax City program which pays TLC guests to work on Fairfax’s Parks and Recreation Department maintenance crews – Peter thanked TLC for giving him the opportunity to work.

“We welcome anybody who comes to the door – the broken, the wounded,” said TLC staff member, the Rev. Patti Brown. “And we all gather and support one another.” An example was former guest David, who told how TLC helped him and said he now has just one year left of nursing school.

TLC Interim Executive Director Tara Ruszkowski noted that, like every organization during the pandemic, TLC made difficult decisions to keep people safe. “We’ve had to make tough choices about when and to whom we should provide services,” she said. “This was painful; we missed our community. This fall, we’re excited to return to what I’ll call a new normal.”

Indeed, in mid-October, TLC began launching several, dedicated, support and interest groups that welcome guests and



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE MALONEY

Some of The Lamb Center’s staff and volunteers are (from left) Evan Reyle, Candice Stancil, Deb Haynes, the Rev. Patti Brown, Max McLean as the lamb, Anna Howell, Angela Castaneda and Gloria Kasey.

safely rebuild the community at the center and beyond. “We’re introducing Lamb Center Women’s Group, led by our own licensed, clinical social worker, Gloria Kasey,” said Ruszkowski. “This small group is dedicated to meeting the increased vulnerabilities and needs of homeless women.”

Case manager Candice Stancil will lead TLC’s Housing Support Group – because, explained Ruszkowski, “The solutions to ending homelessness go well beyond giving someone a place to live. In addition, our partners at the Christopher Atwood Foundation will kick off Trauma 101, a peer-to-peer group to help our guests recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and hold a gentle space for discussion.”

And some of the guests’ favorite programs will return. They include AA meetings, Art Club and Arm & Arm – a peer-support group that empowers individuals returning home from traumatic experiences, such as incarceration, military service, homelessness and substance abuse. With these groups, said Ruszkowski, “Not only are we giving our guests the tools and skills to be successful,

but a safe and loving community that supports their journey.”

TLC Board Chair Cathy Liverman discussed TLC’s vision for the future and highlighted some of the opportunities it’s exploring in housing, the jobs program and case management. “You’ve seen and heard about the importance of housing – it’s really the bedrock for transforming lives,” she said. “Once someone has a safe place to live, they can move on to think about other ways to stabilize and grow – whether through a job, a support group or whatever is next for them.”

Liverman said TLC has an active, supportive, housing initiative. “We’re exploring a range of possible locations for building or renovating 50-80 studio apartments that would offer supportive housing – with case-management services,” she said. “We want to bring The Lamb Center’s culture and ethos – centered on Christ’s call to love our neighbors – to supportive housing.”

Currently, she said, TLC is actively looking at properties in Fairfax City and Fairfax County and welcomes any ideas or leads on

an available location. It could be a hotel to refurbish, land on which to build, a church with a large amount of property or an office building to renovate.

At the same time, TLC is building partnerships with housing-development organizations and talking with City and county officials about bringing this type of much-needed housing to the community.

“We hope Fairfax can be a model for quality, supportive housing that’s an integral part of who we are in Fairfax,” said Liverman.

She said the focus of TLC’s work is case management – developing relationships with guests and helping them walk the next step of their journey. It can involve helping guests obtain an ID, deal with social-services paperwork and address housing, job and other issues.

“During the pandemic, the case-management team has worked tirelessly,” said Liverman. “Thanks to their dedicated efforts, over 80 of our most vulnerable guests got into the county’s hotel-stay program, and over 40 guests obtained supportive housing. We’re now exploring how to continue to improve and strengthen our case-management services, possibly with more of a focus on mental-health services.”

Case manager Angela Castaneda introduced a video showing former guests in their new apartments. “I’m looking forward to relaxing and getting my mind together so I can really focus on life,” said Arrick. “And hopefully, I can get myself in a position to help somebody else. The Lamb Center gave me hope. I was in a dark time in my life, and it’s been a big light so I could see.”

“Having your own place, it’s just a joy,” said Donald. “This place means the world to me – I really want to be here.”

Eldrick loves cooking and baking in his own kitchen. “Company comes over and we play cards,” he said. “And friends come sit on my couch and watch a game on TV.”

“I’m able to come home, shut my door and open it when I want to,” said Georgette. “Having something of my own has changed me and my attitude toward life.”

Kate proudly showed off the basil and peppermint plants she’s growing on her patio and said, “I love it in the mornings when I can sit outside and read. It’s so peaceful, and it now feels like home. I have a cat and I can sing out loud. I’m feeling stronger and gaining more courage, every day. I’m just so excited to have a place to live.”

As the banquet ended, Board member Lori McLean said TLC’s mission is central to her beliefs as a Christian – “To live the Gospel, feed the hungry and treat every person as Christ, Himself. But all the things we do take money.” And since the event was also a TLC fundraiser, she encouraged the attendees to give generously.

The public may also lend a hand. Tax-deductible donations may be made at www.TheLambCenter.org/hopeandafuture or send checks payable to The Lamb Center, to: The Lamb Center, P.O. Box 1385, Fairfax, VA 22038.

— ANNA HOWELL CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

'Families Working Hard But Struggling to Make Ends Meet'

Britepaths needs donations to feed hungry residents.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax-based nonprofit Britepaths helps local people in need in many ways. It gives them the tools they need to obtain jobs and manage their financial obligations. It also feeds them when they're hungry – but with so many people to feed, Britepaths can't do it without a hand from the community.

"Britepaths' Food Bridge Program provides regular deliveries of food and/or grocery-store gift cards to 80 families in the Fairfax County area, for six to nine months, while they work to overcome a financial crisis," said Executive Director Lisa Whetzel. "Most are working with mentors and coaches in our Financial Literacy and Workforce Development programs."

"We also assist approximately 300 families per year with emergency food when their cupboards are bare," she continued. "Many of the families we serve are working hard but struggling to make ends meet in our expensive area."

As a result, Britepaths is seeking an assist

from area residents, businesses and organizations. "Our greatest need is grocery-store gift cards to help our families purchase fresh foods that meet their children's dietary needs," said Whetzel. "A large number of our families also receive financial education through Britepaths, and grocery cards help them put the budgeting skills they are learning to work."

Anyone wishing to help may make a secure donation via <https://britepaths.org/civcrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=7>.

Monetary contributions enable Britepaths to purchase gift cards for groceries at a bulk discount. All funds donated on this secure page will provide these cards to local families to help fill gaps in Britepaths' food-delivery calendar, assist those who are on the waitlist for its delivered-food program and provide emergency assistance.

Donations may also be made by mailing a check payable to "Britepaths" to Britepaths, 3959 Pender Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030. Be sure to write "Food Bridge" on the memo line.

Other Ways to Help:

❖ Run a grocery-store, gift-card drive. Go to <https://britepaths.org/Food-GCDrive20>



BONNIE HOBBS/
THE CONNECTION
Lisa Whetzel

for information on running either a gift-card or food drive virtually or in your neighborhood/organization to help Britepaths' client families. However, at this time, Britepaths does not recommend collecting at grocery stores.

❖ Be a Food Bridge supporting organization. "We need local organizations to collect and mail grocery cards to Food Bridge families each Sunday," said Whetzel. "If you are interested in learning how your organization can be a

Food Bridge Supporter, once or twice a year, contact cgarris@britepaths.org.

❖ Donate to Britepaths' food pantry. Britepaths is at 3959 Pender Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax. The pantry is in its office near Route 50/I-66. It generally accepts pantry donations and gift cards on weekdays between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

However, those wishing to bring food to the pantry are urged to call ahead because office hours can sometimes vary. "We cannot promise to be available to receive your donation if we don't know in advance that it's coming," said Whetzel. "Please call 703-273-8829 or email info@britepaths.org to coordinate the time and date of your delivery."

Another option is to order Britepaths' most-needed items through its Amazon Wish List, and they will be delivered straight to its

pantry. Even if ordering something else through Amazon, people may log in via Britepaths' Amazon Smile page, and they'll help even more – for any Amazon purchases they make.

Currently Needed Food Items

At the present time, Britepaths is very low on several food items in its pantry, plus other supplies, including reusable grocery bags to send the food home with its families.

The most-needed food items: cereal (healthy, low-sugar), cooking oil, jam/jelly, pancake mix, syrup, rice and healthy snacks such as crackers, pretzels, popcorn and granola/cereal bars. The pantry also has an ongoing need for pasta and pasta sauce, Parmesan cheese (shelf-stable), fruit cups in 100-percent juice, dried/canned beans, peanut butter and oatmeal in canisters. (Anything already opened, dented cans or any food past its expiration date cannot be accepted.)

Needed household items: paper towels, laundry detergent (liquid or pods), all-purpose cleaners, Windex, toilet-bowl cleaner, Clorox wipes, sponges and cleaning supplies. Hygiene items needed: toilet paper, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, bar soap, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes and razors. Note: For hygiene products and toiletries, full-sized products are preferred.

Baby Items needed are diapers, sizes 5 and 6; and Pull-Ups, sizes 3T-4T and 4T-5T; Baby Wipes, baby shampoo and baby lotion.

Thank You Board of Supervisors!

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Schools Lost on Nov. 2

BY PAT HYNES

The winner of the Virginia governor's race, Glenn Youngkin, would have you believe that teachers can't be trusted to teach historic truth or inclusive literature without victimizing white children. He would have you believe that school librarians push pornography on children and that parents have no right to challenge books. He wants you to think that school principals can't support trans students and keep girls safe in the bathroom at the same time.

None of that is true. The vast majority of parents know that none of that is true. Polls show that parents overwhelmingly trust their children's teachers and school leaders to provide safe, effective learning environments for their children. And every day, in classrooms across

every part of Virginia, educators earn that trust.

Unfortunately, most media and Democratic politicians failed to effectively challenge these destructive, divisive lies. Bullying school boards, teachers, librarians, and our most vulnerable students worked for Youngkin and the GOP. They are already doubling down for the 2022 midterm elections.

It's time for public school teachers, parents, and students in Virginia to get organized and get loud. We have to assume that politicians, parties, and many in the media will do no better going forward. We must make our own voices too loud to ignore.

Here's the truth about schools in Virginia:

Teachers empower students when we teach the whole, unvarnished truth about U.S. and Virginia history, from the first slave ships at Point Comfort, through the Capital of the Con-

federacy and Massive Resistance, to the systemic inequities that remain today.

Teachers empower students to think critically and empathically by exposing them to traditionally under-represented voices and stories in literature.

Teachers create safe, joyful learning environments for all students when they respect preferred names and pronouns.

Parents and students in Virginia overwhelmingly expect teachers to do these things because it's just good teaching.

Schools lost in Virginia on Nov. 2.

It's time for educators, parents, and students to speak up and protect our most important public institution.

Pat Hynes is a former member of the Fairfax County School Board, a teacher in Arlington and a Reston resident.

Redistricting Moves to the Supreme Court of Virginia

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

While the Nov. 2 election has dominated recent headlines, the process to redraw state and federal legislators' districts has been moving along six months late due to delays in receiving U.S. Census data.

Ever since Elbridge Gerry signed a bill to draw several Federalists out of their seats in 1812, gerrymandering has been a problem in the United States. I have always believed that redistricting is one of the most significant fundamental problems in American democracy, and it has become especially problematic with the power of computer-aided mapping coupled with Big Data. Voters should pick their elected officials instead of elected officials picking their voters.

Based on this principle, I have always supported nonpartisan redistricting. In the 2019 Virginia General Assembly session, several members introduced a constitutional amendment requiring nonpartisan redistricting, but after it emerged from rewrites in the legislative process it became bipartisan redistricting, which is very different. In 2020, legislators approved the measure a second time. I was one of two Senators who voted "no" because I do not support the involvement of elected officials or partisans in redistricting and I believe the proposal was inadequately thought out. The amendment was placed on the ballot and approved by voters 65.6% to 34.31% in November 2020.

This summer, the Virginia Redistricting Commission was created and began work redrawing state Senate, House of Delegates and Virginia's Congressional districts

after census data became available in late August. Four senators, four delegates and eight citizens were appointed, equally balanced between Democrats and Republicans. The Commission gridlocked on every important vote from the first day. It had two chairs, two lawyers and two map drawers. They could not agree on a committee process, on Virginia law or the requirements of the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965. They produced multiple separate maps for every district and were unable to reconcile any of them because they ostensibly disagreed on the law and would not negotiate.

Once the commission process fails, the Constitution requires the Supreme Court of Virginia to draw districts. Democrats and Republicans are required to submit three or more proposed special masters, legal representatives of the court who have no "conflicts of interest." The Supreme Court is required to pick one person to serve as a special master from each list, people who will be charged with putting together the maps within 30 days of their appointment. No one knows how that will work given that courts typically only pick one special master in court-administered proceedings.

Last week, the House and Senate Democratic Caucuses submitted three names. Each were experienced academics who had been previously selected by judges to redraw districts that suffered from legal or constitutional violations. The Republican Caucuses took a different tack. They proposed three partisans who have never been appointed by any court in America to serve: (1) the Executive Director of the National Re-

publican Redistricting Trust; (2) a Republican consultant who drew the hotly litigated 2010 Wisconsin Senate map for the Wisconsin Republicans and is now drawing maps for Texas Republicans; and (3) a data researcher who was paid \$20,000 by the Virginia Senate Republican Caucus two months ago for "consulting services."

The Senate and House Democratic Caucuses asked the Court to set deadlines for all caucuses to submit maps and for public hearings before and after the maps are proposed to give the public an opportunity to comment on the proposals. We also asked the Court to set up an online commenting system so that all comments can be filed and accessed electronically instead of submitted on paper and only reviewable in the Supreme Court Clerk's office in Richmond. The Republican Caucuses refused to join our request.

No one is really sure what the

process will be at this point. However, the Supreme Court is accepting comments in writing at its clerk's office. Please stay tuned to my Facebook, Twitter and Blog for information about how to participate. Redistricting now will happen very fast and these districts will be in place until after the 2030 census.

Many predict that there will be major changes to state Senate and U.S. Congressional districts in Northern Virginia given their current boundaries and population changes since the last census. Major changes are possible for some House of Delegates districts. The proposals and comment process, as allowed by the Supreme Court, will take place between Thanksgiving and Christmas or maybe beyond.

Please stay tuned and contact me if you have any questions at scottsurovell.org. It is an honor to serve in the Virginia Senate.

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BULLETIN BOARD

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

NOV. 12-13

Distribution of Poppies for Veteran's Day. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Kingstowne Shopping Center, Giant and Safeway, Alexandria. Deloris Buettner has secured both grocery stores for distributing Poppy flowers. She is looking for volunteers, contact her by email if you are interested in participating in this event. Her email address is dlucas2@verizon.net

SATURDAY/NOV. 13

Second Saturday Art Walk at the Workhouse Arts Center 6 – 9 pm on the Second Saturday of each month to discover all the Workhouse Arts Center and meet nearly 100 Resident and Associate Artists, creating art in the studios or exhibiting in galleries. Performances of dance, cabaret, comedy, big band, jazz, and theater. Indulgent classes in the art of mixology or cuisines from around the globe. Art exhibitions in nine galleries of the region's finest sculpture, painting, glass, ceramics, and fiber art works. <https://www.workhousearts.org/>

SATURDAY/NOV. 13

Using Swedish Records. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Virtual lecture by Janet Johnson, sponsored by the Fairfax Genealogical Society (www.fxgs.org.) The talk will include Swedish Parish Records and Swedish Immigration Records. Venue: Virtual <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86598314866?pwd=bUNEc3UybDZXZ2w1SXR1YU4wUHFsdz09> Free and open to public, registration is required. Visit the website: www.FairfaxGenealogicalSociety.org.

THURSDAY/NOV. 18

"Cherokee Ancestors." 7:30-9 p.m. Virtual lecture by Kathie Forbes, citizen of the Cherokee Nation, sponsored by the Fairfax Genealogical Society (www.fxgs.org.) Learn about the history of the Cherokee and the resources to find and document a possible Cherokee ancestor. Venue: virtual:Use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82082791831?pwd=RHcwL2pNMENCaFdSVjgxK1lyRnpJUT09> Free and open to the public, but registration is required. Visit the website: www.FairfaxGenealogicalSociety.org.

NOW THRU NOV. 18

Free ESL Classes. 7-9 p.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. In-person placement testing for free on-line ESL classes. Classes are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7-9 p.m., on-line using Zoom, 9/14-11/18/2021. Placement testing is in-person at Lord of Life Lutheran Church 9/9/2021, 7 p.m. Must register at www.lordoflifeva.org/ESL. Class sizes limited. Visit the website: www.lordoflifeva.org/ESL

SUPPORT GROUPS

Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke sponsors a monthly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, noon-1:30 p.m., for caregivers to learn and to share with others experiencing similar challenges. Before attending, contact the facilitator, Eileen Thompson at 703-451-8626 or eileen.thompson1@gmail.com.

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Parking lot volunteers manage multiple lines of traffic while other volunteers bring food boxes to cars as food corner clients queue up for the Tuesday afternoon food pick-up

Springfield Church Feeds Hungry Year Round

Volunteers at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church help feed hungry people week after week.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Once a month for 30 years, “Magic Mike” Robertson, and his changing brigade of about 45 volunteers, have been clapping together sandwiches at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church, at the impressive rate of about 3,000 sandwiches per day. Aromas tempt the taste buds over the three hours it takes to make so many tuna fish, peanut butter & jelly, and meat and cheese constructions that are individually bagged and then boxed in banana crates for transport to So Others Might Eat (SOME).

Since 1970, SOME and Martha’s Table before it, have been providing sandwiches to the hungry in the area with the help of other area charities, and providing other services needed due to homelessness and poverty. The church invites volunteers to join them in sandwich making the first Thursday each month starting at 9 a.m.

In another section of the church’s large social hall, Jane Shafer’s idea is “flour-ing” with pantry items in the church’s food corner. During the 2019 government shut-down, “People needed food. Single moms were working two jobs but not making enough to eat,” Shafer said. The church began providing four to five hot meals per week for a growing number of clients who heard of their efforts through social media, the church website, and by word of mouth.

Covid-19 considerations forced a change in their offering model. They started taking food out to clients, instead of bringing clients in for meals. Organizer Amy Dannamiller says they track the number of clients, but take no identification information to preserve confidentiality. During 2021, the church has been making food available, weekly, for as many as 102 families.

Where does all the food come from to provide for those experiencing food insecurity?



First time volunteer sandwich maker Matthew Brough, 3, with his mother Rachel, concentrates on moving peanut butter to bread, contributing to the 3,000 sandwiches donated to SOME each month by Sydenstricker United Methodist Church

Bonnie Jamison, wife of church pastor Don Jamison, credits the generosity of local grocers at several locations of Giant Foods, the Aldi in Springfield, and the volunteers who visit those stores, often making multiple trips per day to collect offered items. The stores provide food nearing but not yet at expired dates, end of season products, and overstocked items.

Needed items that are in low supply are ordered from the Capital Area Food Bank in Newington. Shafer adds that a very

supportive congregation donates funds for purchase of eggs and meat from places such as Restaurant Depot. And if the food corner has more of a food item than needed, it is donated to Arlington or Fairfax County food pantries. As a result, Shafer adds, “almost nothing goes to waste.” The Sydenstricker food corner is open for

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Food Corner operation organizers Jane Shafer, Bonnie Jamison, and Amy Dannamiller keep donated food organized and flying out the door to those in need.



“Magic Mike” Robertson, in his 80s, has been running the monthly sandwich mission at the church for 30 years.

pick ups on Tuesdays from 3:30-6:30 p.m.

For the holiday period, food operations mostly will continue as usual, except clients may find the addition of a festive cookie mix jar added to pick up boxes. The congregation also typically collects for 50 families in need at Crestwood Elementary School, in honor of a deceased congregant who taught there.

What does it take to provide this level of community support? A large church kitchen and assembly hall, nine freezers, three commercial-sized refrigerators, and a generous congregation and community adding to “blessing boxes” for donations or pick up of needed items when the church is not open. Of course, most of all it is the willingness of community members, many who are

not members of the church, to donate their time. Whether it’s “Magic Mike” in his 80s or first time volunteer Matthew, aged 3, all volunteers are valued.

For more information about donations or volunteering, see www.SydenstrickerUMC.org or call 703 451-8223; church location 8508 Hooes Road, Springfield.

Creating a Holiday-Ready Kitchen

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

As the holiday season begins in less than two weeks, a home's kitchen is the center stage for holiday parties and even casual gatherings with friends. But many people feel that their kitchen could use an overhaul. Local designers offer suggestions for making the best of your space.

"Though a remodeling project is unrealistic given the time constraints, minor tweaks can spruce up or refresh a kitchen," said Angela Morrison, designer and founder of Morrison Style in Vienna. "You don't have to redo your entire house for the holidays. You can easily do a few easy things to make it look updated for the holidays."

After giving her kitchen a quick makeover in advance of a Hanukkah party that she hosted for her children's friends and their parents three years ago, Linda Goldstein, a Bethesda based mother and interior designer, says that she developed several strategies for making a big impact on a dated kitchen in a minimal amount of time.

"I tried several design tricks, so I know that they work," she said. "I have shared these with my clients who have short lead times, but they want to have a kitchen that looks decent for the holidays. You can make mini adjustments that have a big impact and don't cost a lot of money."

Before tackling any design project, Fairfax based designer Julia Tull of Tull and Foley Designs believes in starting with the basics.

"During the holidays we are cooking a lot more food at one time, it's important to make a note of the things that are currently on your countertops and see what can be packed away to free up much needed space. Crockpots and waffle irons can be stored elsewhere."

Something as simple as a fresh coat of paint can transform a kitchen with a minimal investment in time and money. "Over even just a few years, paint can start to look dingy and dirty, and this can really bring down the look and feel of your kitchen," said Jennifer Moriarty, an interior design student who lives in Alexandria. "Instead of leaving it, take a day or two and add a fresh coat of paint to your cabinets and kitchen walls."

Updating hardware can give an outdated kitchen an updated look. "Replace the kitchen pulls and handles," said Moriarty. "It's not a bad idea to splurge on them and reuse them if you decide to remodel your kitchen in the near future."

Replacing a kitchen's window treatments can transform a room instantly, easily and inexpensively suggests private interior designer Anita Stanley of Woodbridge. "The design options are plentiful," she said. "Very few things transform the style of a room like window treatments."

Replacing outdated or worn flooring might be a long-term project, but Chris Katkish, general manager, InSite Builders & Remodeling in Bethesda suggests a quick fix.

"Consider using Peel and stick tile for flooring," he said. "Not a permanent solution but could be just enough to get through the holidays."

Replacing lighting will brighten a kitchen space and create an updated look. "Add inexpensive under-counter LED lighting," said Katkish. "Toe kick lighting is not very common, but a great way to make a space pop."

Lighting can make even the most dated cabinets look chic, said Linda Berkson of Berkson Interiors in Vienna. "Under cabinet lighting brings attention to the beautiful tile work of your backsplash and adds a festive glow to your kitchen," she said. "Under cabinet lighting kits are easy to install and can be found on Amazon."



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Adding holiday accessories to a kitchen counter-top can create a festive space.

Holiday lights are for more than trimming the tree. "As the days grow shorter, lighting becomes more comforting," said Morrison. "Put mini lights on top of your cabinets. You buy different color lights and swap out the color for the particular holiday. Orange lights work for Thanksgiving, blue for Hanukkah and red and green for Christmas."

Try adding accessories in holiday colors, suggests lead designer Jen Patton of Patton and Patton Interiors. "You can swap out things like potholders, vases, dishware, and candles from everyday patterns to holiday-inspired ones," she said. "Add a few cheerful touches of red, green, and silver. Maybe you could add a garland on the wall or a small vase with pinecones, festive berries, and candles for a centerpiece."

"If you have the space, you can hang a wreath on one of your walls or drape garland on top of a cabinet," said Patton.

"Do you get a lot of cards?" asks Berkson. "Perhaps attach them to cascading grosgrain or another type of ribbon and turn a plain wall into a festive display."

Even those with Formica countertops that are reminiscent of the 1970s, can create the illusion of elegance and festivity. "If you don't like your counters and don't have the time or money to redo them, you can always cover sections with holiday placemats or nice cutting boards," said Patton.

When the counters are satisfactory, they can be versatile. "Take one section of a countertop and make it the drink center," said Tracy Morris, Tracy Morris Design, based in McLean, VA. "That way, you will not have guests making drinks where you are trying to cook. Line up the bottles, fill a decanter and show your guests a great time."

Use the space to create stations that are streamlined and inviting. "It's a quick way to update the kitchen for the holidays and keeps [guests] out of the work space, but still part of the conversation," said Allie Mann, designer and senior interiors specialist with Case Architects & Remodelers in Falls Church, VA.

Those fortunate enough to have a kitchen island can enjoy the luxury of an additional canvas on which to express holiday creativity. "Consider using it to lay out a buffet," said Nadia Subaran of Aidan Design in Bethesda. "It could also serve as a great kids' table."

As with other facets of the impending holiday festivities, practicing expectation management with kitchen design is essential for a peaceful Yuletide season. "You have to be realistic about what can and can't be done," said Berkson. "You can embellish your kitchen table and counters with simple seasonal décor, but you can't redesign it in two weeks. Try to get easy kitchen maintenance done now and make a mental note of any bigger projects you'd like to complete next year."

Post Forest Drive and Random Hills Road Shared-Use Paths Fairfax County

Virtual Design Public Hearing

Tuesday, December 14, 2021, 7 p.m.
<https://www.virginiadot.org/PostForest>

Find out about planned improvements along Post Forest Drive from West Ox Road to Random Hills Road, and along Random Hills Road from Post Forest Drive to Monument Drive to improve bicyclist and pedestrian safety, accessibility and connectivity to the I-66 bicycle/pedestrian network. The sidewalk along the south side of Post Forest Drive will be upgraded to a ten-foot-wide shared-use path from just west of Black Ironwood Drive to Random Hills Road. In order to accommodate the ten-foot-wide shared-use path, Post Forest Drive will be restriped without bicycle lanes, and curb and gutter will be modified as needed. The existing sidewalk along the east side of Random Hills Road will be upgraded to a ten-foot-wide shared-use path from Post Forest Drive to the existing shared-use path just beyond the Monument Drive overpass. The project also includes pedestrian improvements at the West Ox Road/Post Forest Drive and Post Forest Drive/Random Hills Road intersections.

The public hearing will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at <https://www.virginiadot.org/PostForest>. The project team will make a short presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and answer questions for about an hour after the presentation.

Review project information and meeting details on the webpage above or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2907 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 23 CFR 771, a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion is being prepared under agreement with the Federal Highway Administration. Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 and 36 CFR 800, information concerning the potential effects of the proposed improvements on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places will be included in the environmental document.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by **January 3, 2022** via the comment form on the project website, by mail to Ms. Hong Ha, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or by email to meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Post Forest Drive and Random Hills Road Shared-Use Paths" in the subject line.

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State Project: 9999-029-457, C501, P101, R201
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*In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held
Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at the same time.*

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Be Dazzled: Family Entertainment for Thanksgiving Weekend

Lightwire Theater presents 'A Very Electric Holiday'

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Looking for a family friendly event to enjoy after Thanksgiving dinner is done? Something out-of-the-ordinary? How about Lightwire's "A Very Electric Holiday," with positively luminescent puppets?

"Honestly one of the best performances for young audiences I had seen. Their use of electroluminescence creates such a unique experience, and they are gifted storytellers," said Adrienne Bryant Godwin, director of programming, Center for the Arts.

"A Very Electric Holiday" follows the story of a young bird named Max and his family as they begin their journey south for the winter. When Max gets blown off course and ends up at the North Pole, his adventure begins.

"I think what makes 'A Very Electric Holiday' different than most shows is the medium that we use to tell the story because we're all electric or glowing in the dark, and we also tell most of our stories with animals which gives a unique perspective," said Ian Carney, Lightwire Theater.

"People will also love it because it's got traditional wonderful holiday things that go on in it, and it's an underdog story," added Carney. Max, the young bird, "meets all different kinds of different animals and creatures, some bad and some good and because

of those traditional elements it's like a warm blanket that you put on by the fire side. But it is told in a way that you've never seen before with edgy cool electronic lights and a varying musical score."

Asked to explain a bit more about electroluminescent puppetry, Carney explained that lots of AA size batteries are involved, and hundreds of hours to create what the audience sees. "Electroluminescent puppetry is really based on the electro part; it all glows in the dark."

"There are rod puppets to costume oriented puppets, some marionettes, everything is electrified so really the only thing that makes it different is that you can't see any of the

humans behind the puppets," said Carney. "That's where the darkness and the L wire (electroluminescent wire) really come into play and you get a giant contrast between the light and the dark; it's something unique that you probably have not seen before."

Lightwire Theater is eager to connect with audiences at the Center for the Arts. "We're just very, very thrilled," said Carney.

Get ready for a magical family-friendly show with the artistry and poignant storytelling of "A Very Electric Holiday," done in darkness.

Note: Tickets will be offered in seating groups of varying sizes in order to maintain

Where and When

Center for the Arts presents Lightwire Theater "A Very Electric Holiday" at 4400 University Ave. Fairfax, VA 22030. Two matinee performances at 1 p.m. and at 4 p.m. on Sunday, November 28, 2021. Running time about one hour. Suitable for all ages. Tickets: \$15 for adults; \$10 for children. Call 703-993-2787 or visit www.cfa.gmu.edu.

3-feet of physical distancing between parties. Proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test result required for audience members. Health and safety details at:

www.cfa.gmu.edu/plan-your-visit/vaccination-policy.

'The Heidi Chronicles' at Lake Braddock

BY PRANAV CHOUDHARY
LANGLEY HIGH SCHOOL

What does it mean to make history? In an ever-changing society, can one art historian overcome the odds and chart a path for herself in twentieth-century America? Lake Braddock Secondary School's production of "The Heidi Chronicles" was a testament to the idea that making an impact takes grit, resilience, and people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work to make change possible.

Written by Wendy Wasserstein, "The Heidi Chronicles" depicted the life of art history professor Heidi Holland as she embarked on a pursuit for a fulfilling life. The production premiered on Broadway in 1988, later garnering a Tony Award for best play and a Pulitzer Prize for drama. As kind-hearted Heidi worked to attain her goals, she found herself entrenched in a journey of life, love, and ardor.

Grounding the production in strength, Liesl Winternitz played the eponymous Heidi with pronounced fortitude. Fortright in her speech, Winternitz infused a thought-

ful and caring demeanor into her character, bringing a relatable, poignant, and often humorous delivery across decades of Heidi's life. Winternitz deftly brought careful, detailed thought into Heidi's varied interpersonal relationships, establishing subtle but distinct connections with each character she encountered.

Executing cheeky quips at every turn, Linus Brannam's portrayal of Peter Patrone, a gay pediatrician, brought an invigoratingly positive presence to the stage. Brannam's heartfelt, witty spirit and larger-than-life physical presence fused with Winternitz's intrepid curiosity to build an intricately intimate dynamic. As Heidi and Peter aged, Brannam and Winternitz artfully built off one another, with their friendship growing more jaded and nuanced as they began to grow up together.

Standing in contrast to Heidi's cheerful poise, Josh Reiff's Scoop Rosenbaum was a walking ball of cynicism. Fraught with a wry sense of humor, Reiff exuded the essence of a narcissist with ease. As he and Heidi interacted, Reiff's witty delivery charmed Heidi, spurring a brief fling before the two break



PHOTO BY DAVID MASSARIK

From left: Soeun Lee (Claire), Mackenzie McGee (Debbie), Liesl Winternitz (Heidi)

up as a result of Scoop's egotistical actions.

The boisterous Susan (Lake Rusch) helped Heidi find love. Rusch tactilely emanated the excitement of a young woman, adopting an excited presence as the character helped push the protagonist out of her comfort zone. Furthermore, Rusch utilized reactive facial expressions throughout the interactions with others, enhancing each interaction Susan took part in. Rusch worked attentively to evolve the reactions as the character aged, transitioning from an upbeat demeanor to a serious one as time moved forward. Each

actor placed thoughtful attention to detail in every aspect of their characterization, carefully weaving together individual character traits with collaborative ensemble-building in order to convey an alluring and cohesive storyline.

The play's versatile set, designed by Sunghah Kong, was skillfully adapted to communicate the show's various settings and themes over time. Scenery included platforms and a backdrop of rectangular frames that fit an array of environments. Additionally, Katie Brusseau's meticulous lighting design shone through every moment of the performance, including a natural wash deliberately designed to match the production's setting, a realistic rain effect on the cyclorama, and targeted spotlights cast upon seats in the auditorium during Heidi's university lectures. Most impressively, Brusseau's design lit up the squares along the backdrop in order to reflect the profusion of different locations presented throughout the show.

With soul, love, and humanity, Lake Braddock Secondary School's production of "The Heidi Chronicles" brought to light how harrowing journeys fought by fearless individuals can bring society forward.

CALENDAR

THURSDAY/NOV. 11

Flag Retirement Ceremony. 7:30-8:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit School Gym, 8800 Braddock Road, Annandale. The Knights of Columbus Assembly #2996 invite everyone to attend a special patriotic evening where we will properly retire several hundred U.S. Flags. All are invited to attend and participate in this solemn occasion where U.S. and state flags are retired by incineration while patriotic music is performed by the West Point Alumni Glee Club.

NOV. 12-15

"All Together Now." 8-10 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, W-3 Theatre, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center announces a production of MTT's All Together Now!: A Global Event Celebrating Local Theatre. Songs in this musical revue from shows including Rent, Mamma Mia! and more. Cost: \$30. Shows are Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday November 12, 13, 14 and 15 at 8 p.m. and will take place in Workhouse's black box style, W-3 Theatre. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/event/all-together-now/2021-11-12/>

SATURDAY/NOV. 13

Adult Heath Cooking. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Lorton. Join the hearth kitchen at Gunston Hall for the ultimate experience in slow food as you learn to employ 18th-century cooking techniques and recipes to create period dishes. Registration includes all materials and lunch.

Cost is \$125. Visit the website: <https://gunstonhall.org>

SATURDAY/NOV. 13

Second Saturday Art Walk. 6-9 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center has over 60 resident artists. Each month, it features artists from each building to exhibit a current body of work during the Second Saturday Art Walk. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/resident-associate-artists-2/monthly-featured-artists/>

NOV. 13-14

La Bohème: Rodolfo Remembers. Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Virginia Opera returns to the Center for the Arts stage with a condensed version of Giacomo Puccini's La Bohème: Rodolfo Remembers. The perfect way to reunite with opera and to welcome newcomers to the art form. Based on the episodic novel "Scènes de la Vie de Bohème" by French writer Henri Murger, the plot follows a band of passionate young Parisians seeking higher aspirations than material wealth through the pursuit of their art. Cost \$110, \$70, \$40, half-price for youth through Grade 12.

SUNDAY/NOV. 14

Norwegian Christmas Festival. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Norway House, 3846 Meredith Drive, Fairfax. Huge array of traditional and imported food, giftware, décor, imported sweat-

ers and more. Additional dates: Dec. 3 and Dec. 4. Reservations Required at www.norwaydc.org/upcoming-events/norwegian-festival-2021.

SUNDAY/NOV. 14

Model Trains and Accessories Estate Sale. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The sale will feature HO, O and G scale model trains and accessories that have been donated to the Museum. Many of the donated items are in very good condition and are priced below comparable items listed on Ebay. The Station's Gift Shop will feature a variety of new items celebrating the history of Fairfax Station and railroading.

Admission is free and open to the public. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

MONDAY/NOV. 15

Mason Vocal Jazz Night. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Dewberry School of Music, Fairfax. Join Dr. Darden Purcell, the Mason Jazz Voice studio and Mason Jazz Vocal Ensemble for an evening of swinging standards and classic hits from the Great American Songbook. Tickets \$12 adult, \$8 senior, \$5 youth (through Grade 12).

THURSDAY/NOV. 18

Jazz Combos Concert. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Free. Performance by the Mason Jazz Combos, under the direction of jazz pianist, Wade Beach.

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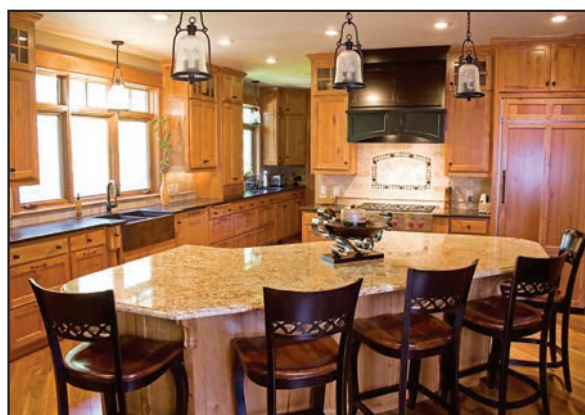
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Fairfax County Park Authority Recognizes Youth Volunteers

Two Springfield parks benefitted from the teens' skills and efforts.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

It takes a lot to keep the Fairfax County Parks an asset to the area, and many times the volunteers are there to put the shine on the parks. Fairfax County Park Authority recognizes these volunteer efforts with the Elly Doyle Park Service Awards. This year, the two youth honorees were Maddie Sizer and Nicole Wargel, both working at parks in the Springfield area.

Maddie, 14, is a young volunteer with a big responsibility in the visitor support area at Hidden Pond, and she relies on a King Snake named Arthur sometimes to break the ice with the children she's teaching.

"I love snakes," she said, and Arthur "is a friendly snake."

Maddie was honored for being the go-to person to assist with programming, showing a genuine appreciation for the topics she discusses, providing visitor support, removing invasive plants and helping to set the standard for animal care volunteers at Hidden

Pond Nature Center in Springfield.

Handling Arthur and talking to the children comes naturally for her but there was a time when she had to step up and take control. It was a birthday party, and the party attendees were all there, and Maddie was ready to assist, but when the lead instructor didn't show up, she was the center of attention. It was a lot of responsibility for a 14-year-old, but Maddie went on and conducted the animal presentation herself. It was a learning opportunity for all. "I became a lot more comfortable with animal talks after that," she said.

Across Springfield, Nicole Wargel was also recognized with a youth honoree award for her work with the Friends of Lake Accotink Park group. Nicole manages to take on the communications duties for the Friends group while going to law school and doing her two-month internship with the Office of the Navy Judge Advocate General. She continues to perform her duties as FLAP's communications director without missing a beat.

Nicole also led teams of volunteers in the



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Maddie Sizer was recognized for her efforts at Hidden Pond Park in Springfield.



The dam at Lake Accotink where Nicole Wargel helped the "Friends" group.

removal of trash at Lake Accotink and her nomination noted that her work has "contributed to the removal of more trash, leading to a cleaner, more attractive and a safer place for people and wildlife."

Value of Volunteers

Volunteers offer invaluable services at county parks, recreation facilities, golf courses, nature centers and historic sites, said FCPA. "Each year, our volunteers are recognized for their service to our park system, and the award is a simple expression of gratitude and appreciation for their enormous contributions," said FCPA spokesperson Judy Pederson. "Every chance we get we want to honor these young volunteers who find time in their busy schedule to balance school and family and volunteer service," she added.

The Elly Doyle Park Service Awards were established in 1988 and recognize Ella-

mae Doyle's many years of service and accomplishments as a member and chairman of the Park Authority Board. In fiscal year 2021, more than 4,000 volunteers provided 71,467 volunteer service hours to the Park Authority, even as volunteer service opportunities were limited by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other Elly Doyle awardees this year included the Chairman's Choice award winners Bryan Hill, County Executive, and Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, the Fairfax County Director of Health; the Eakin Philanthropy Award went to Wayne and Angela Valis at the Fairfax Memorial Park and Funeral Home and the Friends of Colvin Run Mill; and Dr. Jeffrey Kretsch, Church of the Latter Day Saints and Friends of Accotink Creek were awarded with Elly Doyles as well. There is also a Sally Ormsby Environmental Award, the Mayo Stuntz Cultural Stewardship award and the Harold L. Strickland award.

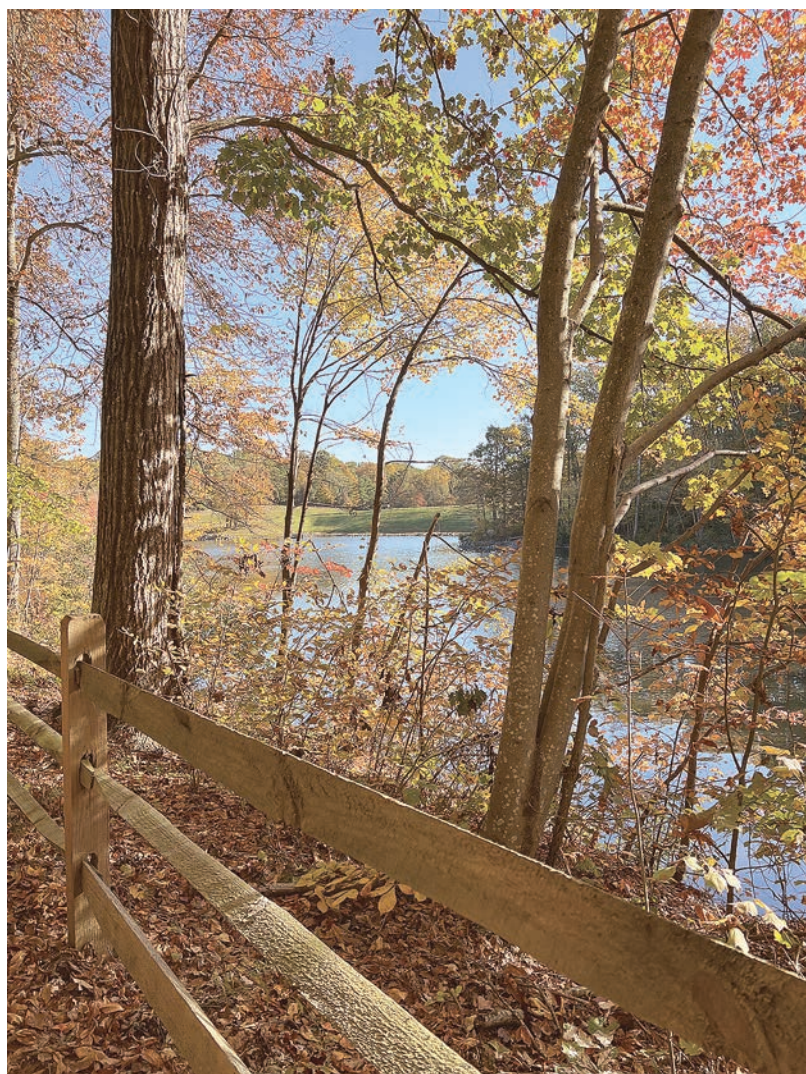


PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Northern Virginia finally gets the changing leaves and cooler temperatures befitting its pumpkin lattes.

Huntsman Lake, 9150 Dorothy Lane, Springfield.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/small-lakes>



Nicole Wargel's efforts at Lake Accotink "contributed to the removal of more trash, leading to a cleaner, more attractive and a safer place for people and wildlife."

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Real Estate tax bills have been mailed and are due
Monday, December 6, 2021

LATE PAYMENT PENALTY

To avoid incurring a 10%, \$10 minimum, late payment penalty and interest of 10% per annum, **payment in full must be received or postmarked by close-of-business on Monday, Dec. 6, 2021**

Taxes may be paid online, by mail, or in-person to the City Treasurer's Office (City Hall, Suite 234)
 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding holidays)

IMPORTANT

Even if you do not receive a physical bill, to avoid late payment penalties you are still responsible for requesting a copy and remitting payment by **Monday, December 6, 2021**

For Additional Information, please check the City website at www.FairfaxVA.gov or call (703) 385-7900

"I Hope Nothing Bad Has Happened"

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



As heart-warming and sincere as this sentiment is, it's a bit of a window into my presumptive future. Similar in effect to the obituary I happened upon once in The Washington Post years ago. Randomly perusing the Obituary section, my eyes wandered up and to the right, and there it/he was: Samuel Tyson. You don't know him? Neither do I. But there it was beneath his photo, my exact date of birth including year: 9/30/54. It shook me up, I can tell you that. Seeing one's date of birth in the agate type of an Obituary section does give one pause: so that's what my date of birth is going to look like in the Obituary section. Yikes. It wasn't exactly a look into my future, but it was my birthdate.

This title was part of an email sent to our publisher inquiring about my whereabouts since the sender/reader hadn't seen my column for a few months. Again, so this is how some people might react when my column is no longer being printed, as in I'm no longer writing it, or anything else for that matter because I'll be "gishtorben," (Yiddish for dead). Again, a slice of death. It reminded me of a voice message my oncologist left me June of '20 - during the height of the pandemic. Because of an internal mechanism at my HMO, files on the computer are shrouded/darkened to indicate a patient's death. My oncologist came upon my computer file and it exhibited these patient-died clues. Shocked. My oncologist called my cell phone - hoping to talk to my wife, Dina, and when no one answered, proceeded to leave a nearly minute-long condolence message concerning my surprise death. Hearing that message was uncomfortable, sort of. Again, another slice of death moment. And not that we all don't occasionally have these near-misses in life, but when you're a cancer patient who originally received a "13 month to two year" prognosis, a "terminal" diagnosis if there ever was one; death/people dying/your proximity to any of it takes on an entirely new life - so to speak. You try not to get consumed by it, but when you've been told - quite unexpectedly, at age 54 and half that your life expectancy has just taken a 30-year hit, given your parent's age when they both died, the news tends to attach itself to you. As much as you try to be normal/you're pre-diagnosed self, after the medical facts are presented, jokes just aren't as funny, music isn't as uplifting and dancing - for me anyway, seemed particularly pointless. But since that's no way to live, I made a conscious effort to try to find humor in all of it and be as positive and upbeat as I could. Easier written than done.

That's because cancer/a serious medical condition is no laughing matter; "serious as a heart attack" to invoke an all-too-familiar refrain. But unless you find a way to navigate the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (make that misfortune) to quote Cephie from his old "WHFS" days, life becomes dreary and not worth living. Somehow, one must find light in the all-encompassing darkness and push back against the forces of negativity/death. There's a spiral out there and the more you're able to fight back - emotionally, and not become a victim of your own circumstances, the greater your chances of finding some kind of happiness/accommodation/assimilation in your life. Still, having a less-than-ideal medical prognosis/diagnosis is all it's cracked up to be. Nevertheless, making the best of a bad situation seemed the only logical option for me. My diagnosis was bad enough on its own, I didn't need to make it any worse by droning on about it. I had to accept it and move on, which is exactly what I did. And now I find humor in the blackest of contexts.

Unlike the popular country-music song from a few years ago that sang "Live like you were dying," I want to live like I was living. I don't want to be affected by my disease. I've found a way to live with it, not simply to die from it. Life's too short. Don't I know it.

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

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News

Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccines Available

Safe, effective, and free; how to schedule.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The COVID-19 vaccine authorized for the 5-to-11-year-old population is widely available in the community. According to the Virginia Department of Health, there will be enough vaccines for every eligible child.

On Friday, Oct. 29, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted emergency use authorization to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, making it the first vaccine approved for use in children aged 5 to 11 years old in the United States. According to Pfizer, the vaccination is over 90 percent effective in this age group. "In participants 5 to 11 years of age, the vaccine was safe, well-tolerated, and showed robust neutralizing antibody responses," states the company's news release, "Pfizer and BioNTech Announce Positive Topline Results From Pivotal Trial of COVID-19 Vaccine in Children 5 to 11 Years."

On Tuesday, Nov. 2, CDC's Director Rochelle Walensky endorsed the CDC's Advisory Committee Immunization Practices recommendation for using the Pfizer shot for children ages 5-11. This meant that children ages 5 to 11 were now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination.

The following is a list of resources to access the pediatric vaccine. While initial reports stated there might be a delay in appointments, as of Sunday, Nov. 7, Fairfax County Government Center reported they carried the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine (Adult, Pediatrics). The earliest date possible for appointments was Tuesday, Nov. 9.

For the younger set, smaller needles explicitly created for children are utilized. Unlike other vaccinations, which may vary in dosage depending on the patient's weight, the COVID-19 vaccine dose is determined by the patient's age on the day of immunization. The dose is one-third of the adult dosage. Children will need a second shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine three weeks after their first shot.

Many local parents, Kimberly Adams among them, have eagerly awaited vaccines for the age group. She posted on #vaccinatedandhappy, "COVID vaccination for the little one. So proud of him! Next stop: ice cream!"

"I got vaccinated because I wanted to be safe and I think other people should get vaccinated so they can be safe too," said her son

Ian, age 8. "It hurt less than I thought it would."

Adams is a librarian with Fairfax County Public Schools.

Parents and guardians can schedule a pediatric COVID-19 vaccine appointment through the Fairfax County Health District Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS). The District serves Fairfax County, the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church, and the towns of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna. If you need assistance in another language or have difficulty scheduling your appointment, call 703-324-7404.

According to Fairfax County Health Department's Director, Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, children have had the highest rate of COVID-19 infection in our community since late August. While children are less likely than adults to get serious illnesses, some have been hospitalized.

On Aug. 26, the Virginia Department of Health announced that a child died of COVID-19, marking Northern Virginia's first reported child death from the virus. At the time, State Health Commissioner M. Norman Oliver, M.D., M.A. said in the release, "Our hearts go out to the family and friends of this child for their tragic loss. The Delta variant is now the most predominant strain across the country, and it spreads more easily from one person to another. We urge everyone to take precautions to protect themselves and those around them."

As a second option, to schedule a pediatric COVID-19 vaccine, visit www.vaccines.gov. A quick search at that site brought up 45 locations within 25 miles of ZIP code 20170 with vaccines in stock and some offering free Lyft and Uber rides.

A third search of the Virginia Department of Health's website that included only vaccination clinics in ZIP code 22102 that use the VASE + Vaccine Appointment Scheduling Engine reported thousands of available appointments for the Pfizer-BioNTech (ages 5-11) beginning Nov. 10 and running through Dec. 19.

Gloria Addo-Ayensu, MD, MPH, Director of the Fairfax County Health Department, and Scott Brabrand, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, wrote in a letter to parents and caregivers on Nov. 3 that the health department is working with FCPS on strategies to ensure equity in access to vaccination for families who have difficulty scheduling an appointment for their child or getting to one of the other community options.

They say that several schools and community centers will host vaccination clinics after school in the coming weeks. Details will be released as soon as they are available.



VIA TWITTER

A Fairfax County child between the ages of 5 to 11 years receives his first pediatric COVID-19 vaccine.



Jack Taylor's

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First Lady Dr. Jill Biden talks with a Franklin Sherman Elementary School student in McLean.



Parents and caretakers accompany their children 5 to 11 years old for their first COVID-19 pediatric vaccine at the national rollout for the vaccination held at Franklin Sherman Elementary in McLean.

First Lady Dr. Jill Biden Comes to Franklin Sherman

Kicking off the national COVID-19 pediatric vaccine distribution at Franklin Sherman in McLean, where vaccines have a history.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Monday, Nov. 8, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden and U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy visited Fairfax County Public Schools, Franklin Sherman Elementary in McLean, to promote the pediatric COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11 years old.

The choice of Franklin Sherman ES allowed Biden and Murthy to kick off the national COVID-19 pediatric vaccination campaign at the same school where the first polio vaccine was administered 67 years earlier. On April 26, 1954, Franklin Sherman Elementary students became “Polio Pioneers,” the first children to receive the Salk vaccine, which started the United States on the path to eradicating polio.

“This vaccine is the best way to protect your children against COVID-19,” Biden told parents and their newly vaccinated children. “It’s been thoroughly reviewed and rigorously tested; it’s free, and it’s available for every child aged five and up.”

School Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand said that with the opportunity for widespread COVID-19 vaccination of younger children, it was hoped that students would learn in person, avoid school or division closures, and keep school staff and students safe. “We are proud to be leading the way in the vaccination rollout for children ages 5 to 11, just as we did with the polio vaccine in 1954,” Brabrand said.

A week before, on Tuesday, Nov. 2, CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky endorsed the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices’ recommendation that children 5 to 11 be vaccinated against COVID-19 with the Pfizer-BioNTech pediatric vaccine. The approval paves the way for the vaccine to be given to approximately 28 million children aged 5 to 11 in the United States. It was an important step forward in the fight against the virus.



First Lady Dr. Jill Biden comes to Franklin Sherman, here flanked by students and talking about the importance of vaccinating children ages 5 and up for COVID-19. Students received the first pediatric polio vaccines in 1954 at Franklin Sherman Elementary.

Biden and Murthy’s visit to Franklin Sherman comes after the virus claimed the lives of more than 5 million people worldwide, including more than 750,000 Americans and more than 1,200 Fairfax County residents.

More than 85 percent of Fairfax County students aged 12 and older have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. FCPS has successfully implemented layered prevention strategies since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and reports that it continues to have both an extremely low positivity rate (0.35 percent) and transmission rate (0.02 percent) in its schools.

FCPS will soon host school-based vaccination clinics evenings, weekends, and during the school day. The school division partnered with a private vendor to open in-school clinics where students can be vaccinated with



From left, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden and Gloria Addo-Ayensu, MD, M.P.H., director of health for Fairfax County, at the national rollout for pediatric COVID-19 vaccines.



From left, Fairfax County School Board Chair Stella Pekarsky (Sully District) and Fairfax County School Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand give thumbs up at FCPS’ Franklin Sherman Elementary in McLean.

parent or guardian permission and with or without their presence. It is partnering with Fairfax County Health Department, hosting several mass vaccination clinics, pop-up clinics at school sites in the evenings and/or weekends, and supporting school-based clinics during the school day.

Inova Children’s is holding weekend pediatric vaccination clinics at the Inova Center for Personalized Health and Inova Cares

Clinic for underserved communities. The Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics will deliver more than 3,900 vaccines per week through its pediatricians.

Fairfax County School Board Chair, Stella Pekarsky, said, “We are proud of the way the schools, the County, and our private partners have come together to ensure that everyone who wants the vaccination will be able to get it.”