

# CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

The casket flag of Lynda V. Buckley, U.S. Army, is raised by veteran Dave Twigg, left, and Tom Finan.



ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 9 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

## Local Traditions To Honor Veterans

NEWS, PAGES 4 AND 5

## Scouts Collect 70,000 Pounds of Food

NEWS, PAGE 3

## Private School Admissions

OH MY, PAGE 2

## Planet Fitness Opens

AGAIN, PAGE 12

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# Culture Shock of Private School Competition

Those unaccustomed to hyper-competitive education feel intimidated by the admissions process.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**S**chool tours, applications, teacher recommendations, test prep tutors and on campus visits. These are some of the topics of conversation in families who are in the midst of the independent school admissions process. For Sandy Adams, it conjures up memories of the time when her children had to adjust to a new academic environment. She and her family moved three times in six years, each time experiencing the shock of adapting to a new private school admissions process.



A private school graduation from before the pandemic.

“During my children’s elementary, middle, and high school, I moved my three children into three private international schools in Europe and Asia,” said the Potomac mother of three adult children. “My top advice for parents is: Be open minded and flexible.”

Those who are new to the Washington region can be caught off guard by the hyper-competitive independent school admissions process here. Families who were accustomed to a laid-back environment where school choices are plentiful and acceptance rates are high can experience culture shock. There are strategies for navigating the process and snagging a seat in the private school of your choice, say local education consultants.

Perseverance and expectation management are the top coping mechanisms that education consultant Alex Ross believes will make the process less intimidating.

“For parents unaccustomed to the rigors and ultra-competitive environment of certain private schools, their knee jerk reaction when they’re being thrown into such an environment is to shut down,” said Ross, an education consultant who serves clients in Alexandria and Arlington. “They see nothing but the obstacles and throw up their hands, thinking their children will just have to settle for public school.”

To be truthful, though, the toughest school to get into in the region is a public school, Thomas Jefferson. And the social environment and whiff of celebrity in other public schools in Fairfax County, Arlington and Montgomery County can match many private schools. The list of super talented and now famous people who graduated from the public schools in those areas, or the Alexandria City High School, is daunting.

Still Ross believes that dedication and determination can increase the chances of being accepted to the school of your choice. “My best advice would be to stay the course and acknowledge the investment you’re

making in your children,” he said. “Yes, the path to admission into such exclusive schools is tougher, but it is worth it in the long haul. Staying the course always pays dividends. Study after study shows that students coming out of private schools get admitted into more prestigious universities and ultimately are earning higher salaries.”

Self-acceptance is necessary when navigating an unfamiliar and daunting process. “You have to be comfortable with your child going to school where other students may be wealthier, more socially connected, or have celebrity parents,” said Great Falls education consultant Chris Perry. “If you are not comfortable, your child won’t be comfortable. If you are

intimidated, your child will be intimidated. If you feel inferior, your child will feel inferior.”

Taking time to attend open house events or take a tour of a school can put families at ease, continued Perry. “Putting a positive spin on a big change can set your family up for success by making it an adventure, rather than just a stressful, arduous move across the country or to a hyper-competitive school,” he said.

For those who experience financial roadblocks, Ross

says, “Don’t be shortsighted. Even though many people will tell you that you’re too late to the game to get in, there are always side doors. You never know where a well-timed donation, political favor, or act of volunteering might catapult your son or daughter into the admissions line.”

When selecting a school, the most important factors are finding an environment that is a good fit socially and academically, says Perry.

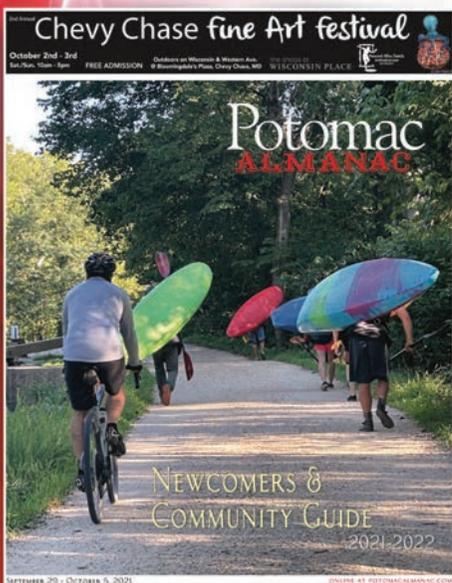
“The thing to ask yourself is, are you in love with the education your child will get at this school? If you are not, then you shouldn’t go,” And if you are truly in love with it, then nothing else, not money, not social status, not celebrity, should matter.”

**“Yes, the path to admission into such exclusive schools is tougher, but it is worth it in the long haul. Staying the course always pays dividends.”**

— Alex Ross

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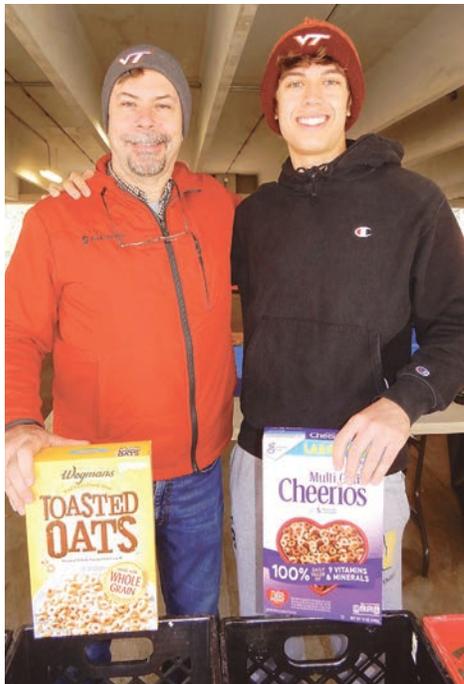
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Paul Ehrhardt and son Leo, a Westfield High senior, with some donated cereal.



Unloading a truck are (from left) Dave Weisz of Centre Ridge and Boy Scout Ricky Manzolina.



From left, Chantilly seniors Luis Martin Yap and Conor Keane carry a heavy box of canned goods to a pallet.

## 'We Thank Each and Every Family Who Donated'

On Saturday, Nov. 13, Sully District Boy Scouts collected 67,093 pounds of food – valued at \$120,096 – for Western Fairfax Christian Ministries' food pantry in Chantilly. "We thank each and every family who chose to donate to WFCM through the food drive," said WFCM Executive Director Harmonie Taddeo. "The food and toiletries collected will be distributed directly to families in need in our community."

"We appreciate the Scouts and key organizer, Michael Adere, as well as all the volunteers who worked at the sorting site and/or in WFCM's warehouse and pantry, sorting and stocking the donations. It's through events like this, when we come together as a community, that we have the biggest impact."

In addition, the Scouts collected nearly 3,000 pounds of food for the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry at St. Timothy Catholic Church in Chantilly – for a grand total of almost 70,000 pounds.



From left, Chantilly High students Alanis and Enya Tiew, Micaela Bravo and Alexis Huff hold some of the donated items.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Lending a hand are (from left) sisters Aiko Conaway, Centreville High sophomore, and Mai Conaway, Union Mill Elementary sixth-grader; their mom, Noemy Conaway, and Chantilly junior Tara Sankner.



Unloading soup cans from a shopping cart are (from left) Chantilly students Sai Shriya Seenuthoju and Sameera Pasham.



Volunteers from Centreville Presbyterian Church, (from left) Janet Merritt, Jean Hartman and Nancy Anthony, unload a box full of pasta together.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HARMONIE TADDEO  
WFCM staff in their warehouse; (from left) are Tom Needham, Harmonie Taddeo, Pamela Montesinos, Debbie Culbertson and Kristine Hurt.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HARMONIE TADDEO  
Michael Adere inside a truck full of food for WFCM.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

As dusk approaches, Mayor Sheila Olem of the Town of Herndon joins others in folding the coffin flags into triangles and storing them in their clear plastic cases until Memorial Day 2022, when the Avenue of Flags will be raised once more.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Sgt. Wayne M. Kidwell, U.S. Army, of Herndon, was the 19-year-old for whom Post 184 was renamed. Veterans from Post 184 gather at his gravesite to honor and remember him. Kidwell was an American Gold Star casualty who died on March 8, 1968, due to hostile action and small weapons fire in South Vietnam's Thua Thien province while serving in the Vietnam War.

# Veterans Day Ceremonies of Honor and Remembrance

The Wayne M. Kidwell American Legion Post 184 of Herndon-Reston hosts two activities for Veterans Day, the first being the Avenue of Flags, consisting of sixty-six coffin flags that fly from dawn to dark. It is a patriotic symbol used to remember and honor interred veterans. In collaboration with the Town of Herndon, the Post hosts a Veterans Day Observance at 11 a.m.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**O**n Veterans Day 2021, Thursday, Nov. 11, communities across Fairfax County, like the Town of Herndon and the village of Great Falls, held ceremonies, as did communities across the United States.

Fairfax County is home to almost 80,000 veterans and their families. There are over 700,000 living veterans in Virginia, or 8 percent of the population, while the United States has about 19 million living veterans, or 6 percent of the population.

The Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial Foundation presented the Veterans Day ceremony with featured keynote

speaker Major General George Francis Close Jr. of McLean. Andy Wilson, president of the foundation, introduced Close, a retired senior U.S. Army officer currently acting as a senior corporate executive.

In his remarks, Close said that veterans were “in the midst of it,” whether in peacetime or war. He spoke of veterans’ various roles in the country, their professionalism, and how they were selected for promotions, schooling, and assignments based on their performance and potential, a true meritocracy.

A similar event co-occurred five miles away in the Town of Herndon. Held by The Wayne M. Kidwell American Legion Post



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

A name stake marks a casket flag.

184 of Herndon-Reston and the Town of Herndon, David Womack, post commander, welcomed guest speaker Harvey “Barney”

SEE VETERANS DAY, PAGE 5



MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

The casket flag of Lynda V. Buckley, U.S. Army, is raised by veteran Dave Twigg, left, and Tom Finan.

“We are here to pay tribute to the veterans who have hung up their uniforms in one way or another.”

— DAVE TWIGG, MEMBER OF THE WAYNE M. KIDWELL AMERICAN LEGION POST 184 OF HERNDON-RESTON



MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

After raising one of the 66 casket flags that will fly on Veterans Day 2021, Ben Durham, 15, of Herndon, and a student at Virginia Academy, pauses as his father, Scott Durham, salutes.

“These veterans sacrificed their lives and deserve to be honored and have their flags flown.”

— SCOTT DURHAM, U.S. ARMY VETERAN



MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Shortly after daybreak, one side of the Avenue of Flags nears completion.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

A stream of cars drives through the Avenue of Flags.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

(Second from left) Former Herndon Town Councilmember and veteran Richard Downer of Herndon waits for the ceremony to begin.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

As dusk approaches, Mayor Sheila Olem of the Town of Herndon joins others in folding the coffin flags into triangles and storing them in their clear plastic cases until Memorial Day 2022, when the Avenue of Flags will be raised once more.

# Veterans Day Ceremonies

FROM PAGE 4

Curtiss Barnum Jr., a retired United States Marine Corps officer who received the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. Barnum said that we owe our veterans a “debt of gratitude” for the freedoms the United States holds so dear, from freedom of speech to freedom of the press. He said that our veterans are on the front lines, protecting us.

But no matter which of the Veterans Day ceremonies one attended, there were similarities: the impressive postings of the nation’s colors, veterans and guests reciting the pledge of allegiance, and choral groups singing the national anthem and other patriotic songs. Speakers acknowledged the veterans who stood between us and ever-present danger.

According to Close, the Army has over 100,000 troops deployed or forward stationed in approximately 80 nations. “The scope of the effort to support the global war on terrorism, provides support to our allies, and keeps our other enemies contained as part of our country’s engagement strategy is tremendous,” he said. Close went on to say that without veterans, “there would be no United States of America.”

While the local ceremonies of honor and recognition, the kind words of thanks by residents, and the one-day freebie at local restaurants are appreciated by the veterans, they are not enough. Questions remain, including how the county is helping to repay the “debt to our veterans,” about what veterans say is needed, what the Virginia legislature might do in the next session, and how veterans want to be remembered by others after their casket flag is handed to a loved one.

According to the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, representatives from 66 companies interviewed job-seekers one week before Veterans Day at the Veteran and Military Career Fair at Fort Belvoir on Nov. 4, 2021.

“We believe that Fairfax County can be a proving ground for how we get our nation’s veterans working in the private sector,” said Jeffrey C. McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

David Womack, post commander of Wayne M. Kidwell American Legion Post 184 of Herndon-Reston speaks, with members of The Reston Chorale to his right.

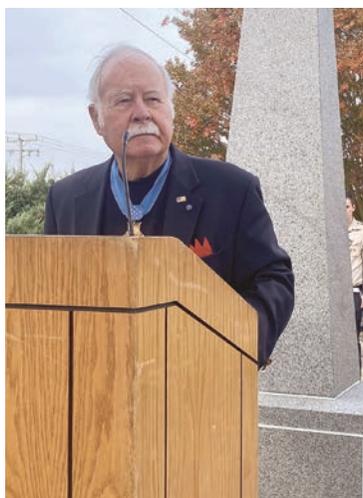


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Keynote speaker, Colonel Harvey Curtiss Barnum Jr., retired United States Marine Corps officer who received the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

A World War I helmet rests against the Veterans Memorial in the Town of Herndon at 11 a.m., Nov. 11, 2021. It reminds people that the Allied powers signed a ceasefire agreement with Germany at Compiègne, France, bringing the war to a close on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in the year 1918.

MORE VETERANS DAY, PAGE 7

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### Compton Road Shared-Use Path Fairfax County

Virtual Public Information Meeting

Thursday, December 9, 2021, 7 p.m.  
<https://www.virginiadot.org/ComptonRoad>

Find out about plans to construct a ten-foot-wide shared-use path along northbound Compton Road (Route 658) from the Bull Run Special Events Center Access Road to just south of the I-66 bridge, and from just north of the I-66 bridge to a connection with the existing Cub Run Trail. The project also includes widening the Compton Road bridge over Cub Run to accommodate the new shared-use path. The portion of the shared-use path under the I-66 bridge is being constructed separately as part of the Transform 66 Outside the Beltway Project.

The meeting will be held as a virtual/online meeting. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at <https://www.virginiadot.org/ComptonRoad>. 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 (PCE) is being prepared under an 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 PCE.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by December 20, 2021 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](mailto:meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov). Please reference “Compton Road Shared-Use Path” in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775.

State Project: 0658-029-461, B652, C501, P101, R201  
UPC: 115604  
Federal: CMAQ-5B01 (106)

In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held Monday, January 10, 2022 at the same time.

## Children's & Teens' Connection 2021

Please send all submissions via email by Friday, Dec. 3. This edition publishes Dec 15.

During December of each year, this newspaper devotes its pages to the creativity of local students and children. The results are always remarkable. It is a keepsake edition for many families.

We welcome contributions from public and private schools, art classes, families, individuals and homeschoolers. We publish every kind of artwork that can be submitted to us as a jpeg, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts.

Pandemic planning has made for a short deadline, and, like everything else, the 2021 Children's Connections will be different than in the past.

For 2021, please send a curated collection of art from your class. We will do our best, but we are unlikely to be able to print every item submitted. Please include the first and last name of the student with each submission.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they

can be sent through email. Writing should be submitted in .docx format or in google doc. If you are sharing a google doc with us, please turn on link sharing so that anyone with the link can edit the document and share with kimm.mary@gmail.com. Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format.

Some suggestions, but different ideas are welcome:

Drawings or paintings or photographs of your family, friends, pets or some favorite activity. These should be photographed or scanned and submitted in jpeg format. Photos of sculpture or larger art projects are also welcome. Holiday themes are also encouraged.

Short answers, 100-200 words on: If you could give your parents, family or friends any gift that didn't cost money what would that gift be? What are you most looking forward to in the upcoming year? What do you want to be when you grow up? What is your favorite ani-

mal or food or toy? Describe a good friend. Describe one of the best gifts you've ever given or received. Discuss a hobby or sport that you are involved in. Your opinion about any topic.

Poetry or other creative writing.

To be published, we must have the full first and last name of the student artist or writer.

Identify each piece of writing or art, including the student's full name, age, grade and town of residence, plus the name of the school, name of teacher and town of school location.

Home schoolers' contributions are welcomed.

Please send all submissions via email by Friday, Dec. 3, 2021. The Children's & Teens' editions will publish on Dec. 15, 2021.

You can see the 2019 editions (pre-pandemic) by visiting [www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/) and scrolling down to Children's Edition. You may also see the 2020 editions at the bottom of this email.

Email submissions for the Children's Editions to [kimm.mary@gmail.com](mailto:kimm.mary@gmail.com).

For advertising, please email Debbie Funk at [debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com).

MARY KIMM  
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

## Reform Not Revenge

It appears that in the House of Delegates the Republicans will have a 53 to 47 majority.

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM



When the final recount of votes in the two districts that were within a percentage point difference between the candidates are finally certified, it appears that in the House of Delegates the Republicans will have a 53 to 47 majority. Such a shift in partisan control is often referred to as "flipping the House" or "turning the House from blue to red." Democrats who took control of the House in 2019 were not able to withstand the shifting winds as the string of Democratic governors was broken when former Governor Terry McAuliffe who had been out of office for a term as required by the State Constitution was not able to win a second term. Some have observed that the Virginia governorship election that is held the year after the presidential election is most often won by the candidate of the party opposite that of the president. The Youngkin win to be governor after the Biden win followed that pattern.

With the change in partisan control of the House of Delegates, members will find themselves having different roles. The Democratic Speaker of the House and the first woman and first Jewish person to be speaker will lose her position to a new speaker elected by the majority Republican caucus. At the time of writing this column the rumor is that Delegate Todd Gilbert who represents a part of the Shenandoah Valley will be the new speaker. The Speaker of the House has total control over appointing members to committees. Too often including in the recent past the practice has been to take members of the minority party off the key committees on which they may have had the most influence. The shuffling of members on committees has been a way for the majority to solidify its power.

The way in which the transition of power has been handled in the past by both parties has led to many inefficiencies in the legislative process. Rather than a continuous process responding to the needs of the

Commonwealth there have been many fits and starts that delay needed legislative ac-

tion.

Of course, the winning party always wants to assert its power. I understand that "to the victors go the spoils." But much of what the legislature does should not be partisan. Virginians showed again in this election cycle that they are not clearly blue or red. No Democrat celebrated more than I did the transformative actions taken by the legislature over the past two

years. Hopefully the new governor and the new House leadership will not throw out all that work and start over. We can build on those things for which there are areas of agreement.

I will be pleading with the new administration that we view the next several months as time to look at reforms in the process on which we can agree. We need not spend time on seeking revenge on those who have been in office in the past. The winners in such an approach will be the people of Virginia and not a single political party.

### Let Us Know Your View

Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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# Centreville Man Killed in Motorcycle Crash

A 21-year-old Centreville man was killed 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 juvenile 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

VIEWPOINT

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/  
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

## Remembering Deceased Veterans

The veterans of The Wayne M. Kidwell Post 184 Herndon-Reston raised 66 casket flags that families of interred veterans donated for the Avenue of Flags erected on Memorial Day and Veterans Day each year. Seeing the veterans and volunteers working in teams of two to erect each casket flag, and after they raised it skyward, giving it a long salute to remember the service member and say thank you.

**Q: Veterans of Post 184 Herndon-Reston were asked: How do you want to be remembered as a veteran [when your casket flag is raised and flies as part of the Avenue of Flags]?**



"I want my son [Ben] to remember when he puts my casket flag up to fly that I was an honorable man, and I showed it every day in my actions. My other son, Alex, is serving in the U.S. Army, 101st Airborne Division."

— Scott Durham, U.S. Army veteran



"I want others to know that I appreciate my country. I was young when I enlisted and [later stationed] inside communist East Germany, in West Berlin, I got to see what Communism was about. I came home and realized freedom is sacred."

— Chris Cutler, U.S. Army veteran



"I want others to know that I appreciate my country. I was young when I enlisted and [later stationed] inside communist East Germany, in West Berlin, I got to see what Communism was about. I came home and realized freedom is sacred."

— Chris Cutler, U.S. Army veteran



"I was in Istanbul with the Turkish NATO Army, and we were with nuclear artillery. When you are from northern Maine and end up in Turkey, it opens you up historically to the world. I'm going to be buried right up the hill there, with my wife and my mother-in-law."

— David Lacombe, veteran



## Public Notice

### Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
MONTGOMERY	12355	787	DRY VALLEY RD./ROUTE 787	MEADOW CREEK	10/28/2021
DINWIDDIE	6063	631	CLAIRBORNE RD.	HATCHER RUN	10/23/2021
CARROLL	4640	620	FOREST OAK RD./ROUTE 620	CROOKED CREEK	10/22/2021
SCOTT	16924	796	GILLENWATER LOOP	BIG MOCCASIN CREEK	10/20/2021
LUNENBURG	11609	626	DOUBLE BRIDGES RD.	LEDBETTER CREEK	10/12/2021

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth, but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact, [haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov).

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During her solo exhibition, “Good Juju,” Julia Tova Malakoff takes a few of her works outside onto the walkway in front of the Lake Anne Gallery & Studio.



Julia Tova Malakoff, a mixed media artist, creates works to spread ‘good juju’ as she struggles with COVID-19 smell and taste loss.

# Artist Reimagines Smell and Taste Lost to COVID

## “Good Juju,” a sense-sational exhibition.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**R**eston Art Gallery and Studios featured the solo exhibition “Good Juju” by local artist Julia Malakoff. Juju is the energy, the positive or negative vibe, which surrounds us. Held in October 2021, Malakoff is one of many people infected with COVID-19 who experienced the loss of her senses of smell and taste as a result.

Olfactory and gustatory dysfunctions, as this symptom can be called, is a key symptom of the infection.

A study published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings looked at data from over 8,000 people with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and found about 41 percent lost their sense of smell. Losing the sense of smell impacts taste. About 38 percent reported loss of taste. A second study, published on Sept. 21, 2021, by the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, discovered that roughly 80 percent of people infected with

COVID who lost sense of smell recover smell function within six months.

Malakoff is one of the 20 percent whose impaired senses have yet to return.

Malakoff said that before COVID, she relied on her five senses to interpret observations, which she translated into artwork. Now, forced to deal with the practical and psychological effects of losing her sense of smell and taste, Malakoff took her frustrations into the art studio.

“I imagine what food tastes like as I play with my paints, mixing up a variety of colors to whet my visual appetite. I want to dive into a delicious paint palette and paint sweet flavors to distract myself from my own debilitated, dysfunctional palate,” she wrote in her artist statement.

The loss of one or more of our senses can have an impact on how we interact with the world and engage in the environment. Their loss can have a negative impact on mental health and quality of life, resulting in feelings of loneliness, fear, and depression. Unlike the loss of sight and hearing, the loss of



Julie Tova Malakoff assists with the installation of one of her works for the exhibition “Good Juju.”



smell and taste is invisible, a hidden disability. It breaks people’s links to places and emotional experiences, leaving them without the memories smells evoke. People may also lose interest in cooking or socializing while eating out. Taste disturbance or loss can also have a negative impact on nutrition. Finally, there is the loss of a hazard perspective, such as the smell of gas, smoke and foods that have gone bad.

In an interview at the art studio last month, Malakoff said that the mixed-media works for “Good Juju” began from a positive place. She took a Crayola crayon after gessoing her wood panels. Malakoff said, “I write HOME SWEET HOME in large capital letters because I want to make sure that my art is coming from a positive place.” Malakoff added that she takes the graphics and paints them in to make a palette, which she uses to fill the background of her wooden panels. “I then begin working on my collage.”

Malakoff’s mixed media collages are flowers, evocative of healing gardens. They are textured, with layers of hand-painted papers mixed in with markers and crayons. Stems and leaves are cut into whimsical shapes inspired by Matisse cutouts, her own photography, and inorganic objects.

Malakoff hopes that by reflecting on the magic around us and creating “good juju,” she will be able to heal herself, at least in spirit, as well as other people who are dealing with their adversities.

For an appointment to view the works, email [juliatova@gmail.com](mailto:juliatova@gmail.com), or contact the gallery by visiting [RestonArtGallery.com](http://RestonArtGallery.com). Reston Art Gallery and Studios is a privately owned cooperative gallery located at 11400 Washington Plaza West at Lake Anne Village Center near the lake’s fountain. All artwork displayed is marked for sale by the individual artist. The gallery advertises November’s artist as Marthe McGrath, Title: “Abstract.” It is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays.

## Hannah Barco appointed Associate Curator & Festival Director of Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art

Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) announced the appointment of Hannah Barco as the Institute’s new Associate Curator & Festival Director. The appointment comes at an important time in the institution’s nearly five decades, almost one year into rebranding from its former name, Greater Reston Arts Center, as it continues to shape its identity as a prominent contemporary arts institution in the DC metropolitan region.

“Artists are vital to our society because of their capacity to engage and absorb the world, in all of its complexities, and through their creative practices make things that can provoke and inspire artworks that can change how others see the world,” says Barco. “I’ve always been passionate about the work of supporting

artists in manifesting their vision, and I am thrilled to be joining Tephra ICA, an institution that so clearly takes great care in supporting artists and creating opportunities for audiences to meaningfully engage with contemporary art.”

Barco received a BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston and Tufts University and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is the former Director of Exhibitions and Associate Curator at the School of Art Institute of Chicago.

“I have learned so much from the extraordinary artists and colleagues I have worked with in Chicago over the last ten years, especially in addressing the exclusionary history of the white box gallery and creating welcoming experiences for diverse audiences to come together around art. I am excited



Hannah Barco

to be moving to the DC metropolitan area and will be bringing with me this incredible network of creative practitioners and my commitment to social justice and equity in the arts.”

Barco will lead creative direction in planning and implementation of the Institute’s largest fundraiser, the Tephra Fine Arts Festival, formerly the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Festival.

Tephra ICA is a non-profit, non-collecting institution committed to promoting innovative contemporary art. Tephra ICA is supported in part by ArtsFairfax, Reston Community Center, Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## NOW THRU NOV. 21

"Fully Committed." At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. This funny show follows a day in the life of Samantha, an out-of-work actress who works the red-hot reservation line at Manhattan's number-one restaurant. Coercion, threats, bribes, histrionics—a cast of desperate callers will stop at nothing in their zeal to land a prime reservation or the right table.

## NOW THRU NOV. 28

Artworks by David Alexander. At the Jo Ann Rose Gallery, 1609-A Washington Plaza N, Reston. "In Between: Phantom Algorithms Joining Worlds" artworks by David Alexander use the totem motif to bridge the digital, physical and spiritual worlds. Nov. 1 through 28 2021. Call 703-476-4500. Visit <https://enoarts.com/press>

## NOW THRU NOV. 30

"The Artist's Palette." At Great Falls Studios Gallery, 756 Walker Road, Great Falls. "The Artist's Palette" features the work of members of NOVA Plein Air Artists. Founded in 2016, NOVA Plein Air Artists (NPAA) was initiated due to a shared desire to explore the idea of painting outdoors. Since then, NPAA has evolved into a creative, educational and social network of local artists committed to painting weekly at organized "paint-outs." Plein air locations are chosen for their diversity, varying from state and county parks to rustic farms, vineyards, and urban settings

within the Northern Virginia and Greater Washington, DC area. NPAA is primarily a plein air group but members also engage in painting other subjects including still life, genre, and portraiture.

## NOW THRU JAN. 2, 2022

LuminoCity Festival. 6-9 p.m. At Roer's Zoofari, 1228 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. The LuminoCity Festival, a one-of-a-kind, immersive light display experience, will be a festive experience for guests of all ages. Be ready to enter a world straight out of your wildest imaginations as you step into an unforgettable spectacular night of lights. The festival includes African, Asian, Arid, and Ancient-themed exhibits of spectacularly lit art displays set up in the zoo's walk-through area. Visit the website: [www.roerszoofari.com](http://www.roerszoofari.com).

## NOV. 18-DEC. 12

"Secret Things." Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road in Tysons. "Secret Things," a deep and heartfelt story of truth, discovery, and romance imbued both with gorgeous magical realism and fascinating true history of Sephardic Judaism in the American Southwest. General admission tickets are \$50. Senior (65+) tickets are \$47. Student, educator, and military tickets are \$15. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org) or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.



**The women of the March Family: Meg (Kirsten Knight), Beth (Keira Murphy), Amy (Franny Hemsley), Jo ((Kylee Majkowski), and Marmee (Kirsten Tierney), at McLean High School Nov. 18-20, Nov. 20-21.**

## NOV. 18-20, NOV. 20-21

"Little Women, the Broadway Musical." Nov. 18, 19, 20 at 7 p.m.; Nov. 20, 21 at 2 p.m. At McLean High School, 1633 Davidson Road, McLean. Tickets: [www.Theatre-McLean.org](http://www.Theatre-McLean.org) or <https://tinyurl.com/7cxa8jnn>

## NOV. 19-21

"Catch Me If You Can." Nov. 19-20 at 7:30 p.m.; Nov. 21 at 2 p.m. At Seneca Ridge Middle School Theatre, 98 Seneca Ridge Drive, Sterling. Based on the hit film and the true story, "Catch Me If You Can" is the high-flying musical comedy about chasing your dreams and not getting caught. Tickets are

\$15 for general admission and are available at [SterlingPlaymakers.org](http://SterlingPlaymakers.org) or can be purchased at the door.

## FRIDAY/NOV. 19

Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony. 6-8 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean, in the Plaza. Tysons Corner Center will kick off the 2021 Holiday Season with its annual tree lighting ceremony. The ceremony will include a special appearance from Santa, community performances, live music complimentary s'mores, hot chocolate station, kids crafts, outdoor specialty pop-up market featuring mall retailers, holiday sips from Barrel + Bushel, giveaways, and more.

## NOV. 19-20

JAM Christmas Show. 8-10 p.m. At Fredgren Studio Theatre at Ballet Nova, 3443 Carlin Springs Road, Falls Church. Created by choreographer Jeremy A. McShan, JAM 12 Days of Christmas, is a crowd-thrilling Christmas musical spectacular that mixes favorite Christmas carols along with favorite pop songs of all time. These dance-floor favorites are sure to leave audiences dancing in their seats as we count down the days 'til the arrival of good ole St. Nick. Cost is \$25. Visit the website: <https://jam12days.bpt.me/>

## SATURDAY/NOV. 20

The Dancing Light. 8 p.m. At Reston Community Theater's CenterStage. Celebrating the Warmth of Winter; Akua Allrich and The Tribe. Come share an evening filled with music from around the world celebrating the wonder of the season and joy of living. Cost is \$15 Reston/\$20 Non-Reston. Visit [www.restoncommunitycenter.com](http://www.restoncommunitycenter.com).

## SATURDAY/NOV. 20

Vendor Fair and Marketplace. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Christ Church, 7600 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. The Clifton Community Women's Club will be hosting a Vendor Fair and Marketplace. The fair will feature 20 local vendors including the Fairfax Station Railway which will be selling trains. Additional vendors will feature products related to beauty, fashion, toys, antiques,

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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### Obituary



**William "Bill" Russell Lawson**, of Reston, Virginia, passed away at Fairfax Hospital On Thursday, October 14, 2021 with his family by his side.

Bill was born in 1943 in Washington, D.C., the youngest of three children, to LaMont Harris Lawson Sr. and Charlotte Hughes Lawson.

In the 1960's Bill was on the Reston Zoning and Planning Commission. He worked closely with Reston's Founder, Robert E. Simon, and was integral in the design and the continued development of Reston's garden city planning concept.

Bill was preceded in death by his Father LaMont Harris Sr., his Mother Charlotte, his Sister Brenda Lawson Brown, his Brother LaMont Harris Jr., and his beloved Wife Carol Kay.

He is survived by his two children, Son Derrick Mark Lawson and Daughter Leslye Michelle Lawson, his Daughter-In-Law Karen Beth Tatters Lawson, his Grand-Niece-In-Law Reiley Skye Tatters, and his faithful black labrador retriever Murdock.

Brother-In-Law of Louise "Tweedle" Lawrence, Uncle of Dawn Bailey, Great-Uncle of Storm Crook (LaMont Harris Jr.); Uncle of Courtney and Leigh Brown (Brenda Lawson); Brother-In-Law of David H. Cloud Jr., Uncle of Jeff and David Cloud III (Carol Kay).

Funeral Services will be held at the Money & King Funeral Home in Vienna, Virginia, on Saturday, November 20th at 10AM, with a viewing at the funeral home on Friday, November 19th from 6-8PM. In lieu of flowers, plants may be sent to Money & King Funeral Home or memorial gift donations may be made to the ASPCA.

For the guest book and obituary please go to [www.moneyandking.com](http://www.moneyandking.com).

### Obituary

### Employment

Transaction Network Services, Inc. has openings in Reston, VA for the following positions: Applications Development Engineer II (REQ #R166). Implement/improve deployment automation tools/processes. Req's BS/foreign equiv in CS/rtd & 2 yrs exp. Software Engineer (REQ #R202). Design/develop software systems. Req's MS in CS/CE/rtd. Other req's apply. May work remotely. Mail CV/CL to TNS Inc, S Carver, 10740 Parkridge Blvd, Ste 100, Reston, VA 20191. Must reference title/Req #.

### Employment

GNRSys, Inc. in Herndon, VA is seek'g 1) Business Consultants to Drive process optimizat'n for all IT dvlpmnt proj's. 2) Software Engineers (VM/Windows Administrator) to rsrch, dsgrn/ dvlp & test OP sys-lvl SW, compilers & ntwrk dist sftwr. 3) Oracle Application Database Administrators to administer, test & implmnt comp DB's. No trvl; No Telecomm. Job duties are proj-based & performed on long-term asgmts @ various unanticipated sites w/in the U.S. which may req relo @ the end of each proj. Applicants email resume to [gnrhumanresources@gnrsystems.com](mailto:gnrhumanresources@gnrsystems.com) & ref. specific job.

### Employment

Amazon Web Services Inc. seeks candidates for the following (multiple positions available) in Herndon, VA:

**Professional Services II (Job Code 150.6662.11).** Collaborate with external customers and partners on key engagements to develop and deliver proof-of-concept projects, technical workshops, and support implementation projects that focus on customer solutions, such as Machine Learning, Data and Analytics, and HPC that support and enhance data processing capabilities to allow customers and partners leverage data to develop business insights. Domestic travel required 50% of the time to Amazon offices and client sites. Telecommuting benefits available.

Mail CV to: Amazon, PO Box 81226, Seattle, Washington 98108, referencing job code.

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.

-Werner Heisenberg

### Obituary

### Obituary



**Geraldine ("Gerry") Mazziotta** died peacefully on October 25 at Tall Oaks Assisted Living facility in Reston, VA. Born in January of 1928 in Pittsburgh, PA, Gerry was 93 years old.

Gerry grew up in Allison Park, PA, a suburb of Pittsburgh and graduated from Hampton High School after which she enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh. It was during her college years that she met and then married the love of her life, the late Natale ("Nat") Mazziotta. She "tied the knot" with Nat in Pittsburgh on May 28, 1949; they were married for 65 years.

Immediately after their honeymoon, Gerry moved with Nat to his hometown of Nutley, NJ where she spent the majority of her life.

After raising her two sons, Gerry began a lifelong career as a grammar school teacher commencing in the early 1960s. Among a number of Catholic schools in which she taught, was Holy Family in Nutley, her home parish. Over the course of her career it is estimated that "Mrs. Mazz", as she was affectionately known, passed on her kindness, grace and "no such word as can't" attitude to over 1,000 students.

Gerry is survived by her sons, Peter and Paul, of Reston, VA and New Windsor, NY respectively, and their wives Jamie and Patti. Gerry had four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Grandchildren include Jamie ("Christina") Mazziotta, daughter of Peter and Jamie; Nicholas, son of Paul and Patti, and his wife Christine Mazziotta; Jenna Jonza, daughter of Paul and Patti, and her husband Ted; and Stephen Mazziotta, son of Paul. Great grandchildren include Aidan and Nathan, sons of Stephen Mazziotta, and Nicholas and Christine Mazziotta respectively. Gerry's extended family consists of many nephews and nieces and their families residing both within and outside the United States.

Funeral and burial arrangements are in progress. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to the VITAS Community Connection. **Checks should be made out to VCC** at the following address:

VITAS Health Care  
3251 Old Lee Highway  
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Fairfax, VA 22030  
Attention: Jennifer Lindsay

Through their understanding, compassion and guidance, the VITAS of Virginia organization was instrumental in helping our mom and our family get through the final weeks of her life.



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# CALENDAR

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collectibles, food stuff, health, wellness, travel and finance. The Clifton Community Women's Club is a service organization that supports a multitude of community needs and the Charitable Trust distributions support four local scholarships to colleges and universities, donations to local food pantries, and various other charities.

## SUNDAY/NOV. 21

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring Charlie Zahm and Tad Marks. All patrons must present a vaccination certificate with at least the first series completed for a minimum of 2 weeks, or a negative covid test within 48 hours. Tickets must be purchased in advance at [www.oldbrogue.com](http://www.oldbrogue.com) - \$20 general admission.

## SUNDAY/NOV. 21

Holiday Cooking Tips. 5-6:30 p.m. Virtual. At 8300 Greensboro Drive, Ste. L1, McLean. Join Seasons 52 Executive Chef for some tips and tricks on how to improve some of your favorite holiday dishes. Cost \$35. Tickets can be purchased here. [https://members.jlnv.org/?nd=ticket\\_list&fund-raiser\\_id=52](https://members.jlnv.org/?nd=ticket_list&fund-raiser_id=52)

## SUNDAY/NOV. 21

Winter Dreams. 3 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7750 Capital One Tower Rd., Tysons. The Washington Balalaika Society Orchestra concert's theme is "Winter Dreams." The program will include three pieces from Georgy Sviridov's suite "The Snowstorm," excerpts from "The Nutcracker," and a perennial WBS favorite, "Russian Winter." The soloists will be Peter Omelchenko, domra, and special guest artist, Elina Karokhina, balalaika. Visit <https://www.capitalonehall.com/>

## NOV. 19 TO JAN. 2

Ice & Lights: The Winter Village at Cameron Run, 4001 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria. Open nightly 5 to 10 p.m.; January 8 to February 27, 2022 (ice skating only), open Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Featuring an ice rink, multiple new holiday light displays perfect for Instagramming, a retail area, food, music and more. Admission: \$9 for general admission to Village; \$22 for village admission and skating; beginning Jan-

## HOLIDAY CALENDAR

### NOV. 27 TO DEC. 19.

Holiday Lights on the Farm. Fridays thru Sundays 5:30 to 8 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. What is "Holiday Lights on the Farm"? It's where you tour Frying Pan Farm Park in the safety and warmth of your car and see an amazing display of holiday decorations lighting up the 135-acre park. The cost is \$20 per private vehicle. Or you can take the tour on a tractor-drawn wagon ride with up to 20 of your family or friends for \$150 per group. Last year this event sold out, so get your tickets early at <https://bit.ly/FPLights>.

### NOV. 19 TO JAN. 2

Ice & Lights: The Winter Village at Cameron Run, 4001 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria. Open nightly 5 to 10 p.m.; January 8 to February 27, 2022 (ice skating only), open Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Featuring an ice rink, multiple new holiday light displays perfect for Instagramming, a retail area, food, music and more. Admission: \$9 for general admission to Village; \$22 for village admission and skating; beginning January 8, \$14 for ice skating; free ages 2 and under. Visit [novaparks.com/events/ice-lights](http://novaparks.com/events/ice-lights)

## FRIDAY/NOV. 19

Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony. 6-8 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean, in the Plaza. Tysons Corner Center will kick off the 2021 Holiday Season with its annual tree lighting ceremony. The ceremony will include a special appearance from Santa, community performances, live music complimentary s'mores,

uary 8, \$14 for ice skating; free ages 2 and under. Visit [novaparks.com/events/ice-lights](http://novaparks.com/events/ice-lights)

## SUNDAY/NOV. 21

Children's Holiday Shop. 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland Street, Falls Church. Children ages 2-13 shop for holiday gifts, Sundays, November 21, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Visit the website: <http://templerodefshalom.org>

## NOV. 27 TO DEC. 19.

Holiday Lights on the Farm. Fridays thru Sundays 5:30 to 8 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2739 West Ox Road, Herndon. What is "Holiday Lights on the Farm"? It's where you tour Frying Pan Farm Park in the safety and warmth of your car and see an amazing display of holiday decorations lighting up the 135-acre park. The cost is \$20 per private vehicle. Or you can take the tour on a tractor-drawn wagon ride with up to 20 of your family or friends for \$150 per group. Last year this event sold out, so get your tickets early at <https://bit.ly/FPLights>.

## SATURDAY/NOV. 27

Irish Dance Streaming. 11 a.m. Via Zoom. Enjoy your Thanksgiving leftovers while watching a "Best of Foley Academy of Irish Dance 2021" compilation video via Zoom. It features performances from the Reston Founder's Day event, the Foley Academy Spring Recital, Ballyshaner's Irish Festival in Old Town Alexandria and the Reston Multicultural Festival. Register at: <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/8506729>

## SUNDAY/NOV. 28

Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring IONA. Tickets must be purchased in advance at [www.oldbrogue.com](http://www.oldbrogue.com) - \$20 general admission.

## SUNDAY/NOV. 28

"The Elf on the Shelf." 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7740 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons. This touring stage production is a thrilling spectacle of music and dance that transports audiences to the North Pole to glimpse the magical lives of Santa's Scout Elves. Tickets start at \$32.95 with VIP packages available for \$87.95 at [CapitalOneHall.com](http://CapitalOneHall.com).

## SATURDAY/NOV. 20

City of Alexandria Tree Lighting. 6 to 7 p.m. At Market Square, 301 King St., Alexandria. Join Mayor Justin Wilson and a host of friends for the lighting of the city's 40-foot Holiday Tree at City Hall. Santa arrives at Market Square via the King Street Trolley to help light the tree, then will circle the block, waving at visitors as he passes on his way back to the North Pole. Enjoy a welcome from the Town Crier and a bit of live music to set the festive mood. Visit [alexandriava.gov](http://alexandriava.gov)

## SATURDAY/NOV. 20

"Snow Globe Series" Concert. 8 p.m. At Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria. The Alexandria Choral Society announces its return to live performances with a series of free, outdoor holiday pop-up concerts throughout the city of Alexandria, beginning with a kick-off outdoor performance. Accompanied by pianist Wei-Han Wu, ACS will perform a flurry of seasonal favorites from around the world, like 'Daa Naa Se (Oh, Give Thanks)', 'S'Vivon', 'Silent Night', 'Ose Shalom', 'Riu, riu, chiu,' and 'Christus Natus Est.' Additional pop-up performances will take place on November 23 at John Carlyle Square Park, November 30 at Casa Chirilagua/Four Mile Run Plaza and December 7 at Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden. All concerts begin at 8 p.m. Visit [alexandriachoralsociety.org](http://alexandriachoralsociety.org)

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## "One-Hundred Seventy-Three Minutes"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

That's exactly how long the pre-recorded, artificially-computerized voice said I would have to wait on the phone if I wanted to speak with an actual person. For those of you arithmetically challenged, 173 minutes is almost three hours. Seeing no point in holding that long, I hung up the phone.. EZ-Pass of Maryland is not as easy as I had hoped. Sure the transponder on my car has changed the way I toll around. I only wish I had been earlier to the party. But I waited until the monthly fees were eliminated before I joined. Had I been more on the ball, I would have been sailing through toll plazas up-and-down the east coast years ago. Nevertheless, I'm in the game now (last few years) and enjoying modern technology as it simplifies and eases the occasionally arduous task of driving through tolls - yours truly now being for whom the bell now calculates.

However, I needed to contact the EZ-Pass offices to question a \$25 "replenishment"/charge/debit to my EZ-Pass account. My car/transponder had been sitting in my driveway for most of the last week, undriven by anyone anywhere near a toll. Yet there it was in my email: a courtesy email advising of the \$25 charge/debit to my account. I was curious; having been told recently by my wife, Dina, of an EZ-Pass audit which showed phantom-charges (charges for roads not driven). As a result, I thought I would pursue the questionable debit to my account with a real person. I googled the EZ-Pass phone number and naively called it thinking I might get some satisfaction/resolution. Neither of which I did, but I did get a subject for this week's column.

To be fair-ish, the message does refer the caller to the EZ-Pass website, but that requires the caller to know their account number and password, which of course, I don't. As the message continued however, it spoke to this very circumstance and advised that if one didn't know their account number/password, press #2 I think it was, and then hang on to speak with someone. That's when I heard the 173-minute warning shot fired across my brow. That's when whatever hope I had of a reasonable reconciliation ended. I couldn't justify/tolerate the time it would take to possibly reconcile/credit my account the \$25. I figured my time was more valuable than that so I hung up. Alas, poor Yurik. It was not to be or be at all. I can't think of a more efficient way to solve a dispute in your favor: making callers wait three hours on hold just to talk to a person who might credit back an unnecessary debit into their account. Hardly a guarantee. More likely a definite maybe.

In effect: there's no dispute. There's no discussion and there's no reconciliation. The money's gone and I have absolutely no way/recourse to "replenish" my bank account. Sure, I could call back when the message advises due "to extremely high call volume," but when would that be? Midnight probably, on a weekend. But guess what? There's nobody home at that time. Apparently, the only time to get through to someone is when there's nobody around to be gotten through to. Granted, it's only \$25, but I'm entitled/deserving of an explanation. If I thought of it, I could certainly get paranoid about computers having access to my bank account and/or credit card information. I realize it's the way of the world to provide this information to total strangers/computer programmers, but if I have no real way to settle a dispute of a charge/debit, it makes me rather nervous. Dollars could very well disappear in the interests of whomever has access to the account. If I can't talk to a human being - in less than three hours, then in point of fact, I have no recourse. And no recourse is hardly the stuff from which dreams are made. It's the complete opposite, actually. It's a nightmare, and one from which we might never wake up.

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



About to cut the ribbon are (from left) Ali Walker, Pat Herrity, Hunter Wetzel, Celina Clavijo, Chamber of Commerce members Donna Stoll and Jennifer Rose, and Planet Fitness employees Emely Escobar, Isabella Quezada and JayJay John.



Some of the members working out on the ellipticals.

# ‘We’re Happy to Be in this Close-Knit Community’

## Planet Fitness opens in Greenbriar Town Center.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Planet Fitness opened in mid-September in the Greenbriar Town Center in Chantilly, but it held its official grand opening and ribbon cutting on Oct. 21. It’s the chain’s 12th of 13 fitness centers in Northern Virginia, and District Manager Hunter Wetzel is delighted about this new location.

“We didn’t have anything in this community,” he said. “We think it’s great and we wanted to be a part of it.”

In the building where Total Wine used to be, at the far-right end of the shopping center, Planet Fitness is open 24 hours during weekdays. It opens Monday, at 5 a.m., until it closes, Friday at 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday hours are 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

The one-story, 27,000-square-foot facility has a 359-person capacity and offers free fitness classes with all memberships. For specific details of each class, go to [www.planetfitness.com](http://www.planetfitness.com). It also provides state-of-the-art, name-brand, cardio and strength equipment, such as Matrix brand treadmills and ellipticals, as well as arc trainers, weight-resistance machines and a 30-minute, full-body, workout circuit.

So why should people choose this gym over others? “This is a judgment-free zone,” explained Wetzel. “We’re a non-intimidating

environment that welcomes people of all fitness levels and backgrounds. No matter their past journeys, we have a place for them and can help them.”

In light of the pandemic, at the present time, masks are highly recommended for people working out there. And, said Wetzel, “We have touchless check-in and we take cleaning very seriously.”

Amenities include heated, aquatic hydro-massage beds; zero-gravity massage chairs, and tanning booths and beds. There’s a fitness trainer, and the fully equipped locker rooms have day lockers, bathrooms, and individual showers and changing rooms.

“We’re super happy to be in this close-knit community,” said Wetzel. “We’ve received a warm welcome and are excited to give back to it, as well.”

Indeed, at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Planet Fitness donated \$2,500 to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, which has an office in central Fairfax. “And we established a partnership with George Mason University,” said Wetzel. “They give us free tickets to give away to their athletic events.”

A GMU representative attended the ceremony, as did Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield), plus members of the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, including Executive Director Jennifer Rose and Board President Doug Church.

“We’re very thrilled to be here in this beautiful facility,” said Rose. “It’s nice to have a place that’s safe, clean, modern and affordable to work out in.”

Herrity thanked Wetzel for “investing in Fairfax County. It’s a gorgeous facility that brings new jobs to the community.”



From left, Ali Walker, board chair of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, receives a donation from Planet Fitness General Manager Celina Clavijo and District Manager Hunter Wetzel.



People walking on the treadmills while watching TV.