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Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 2, 2021

LA Musician Got Her Start in Mount Vernon

Fort Hunt alumni Julie Gigante started playing the violin at age 5 and now is featured on an 11,000-square-foot mural in Los Angeles.

BY MIKE SALMON
GAZETTE PACKET

It's a long way from the hallways of Fort Hunt High School to a huge mural on the 110 freeway near downtown Los Angeles, but that's where Fort Hunt alumni Julie Gigante's picture is, representing the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. The 8-story-tall "Harbor Freeway Overture," is a mural painted by Kent Twitchell that pays tribute to the orchestra.



Julie Gigante started her musical aspirations growing up in Mount Vernon.

"It is a little embarrassing for me, I didn't know it was going to be so big," Gigante said. Thousands of drivers see it on the way to work every day, and some let her know they saw her on the building. "I get that a lot," she said, but it's all part of the professional musician's life in LA.

It all started in Alexandria when she was a 5-year-old, taking lessons and getting encouragement from her mother who is also a musician. It took years of practicing and climbing the musical success ladder from the Mount Vernon Chamber Orchestra to the Fairfax Symphony, and the Arlington Symphony. "My mother was a founder of the Mount Vernon Symphony," she said.

Gigante went to the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in New York where she met her husband Tom Rizzo, a jazz musician. She moved with Rizzo out to the west coast in 1985, landed a spot on the orchestra and grew from there. They have two children, James, 28, and Annmarie, 25. The musical side of the family didn't transpire to the children, although Annmarie was into opera at first, but both are now employed in the tech world.

They live in a mountainous part near Los Angeles, and she loves to hike and engage in other outdoor activities when she's not playing music. "There's a lot of cultural activities out here," she said.

Westward Expansion

Being in LA, it isn't unusual for people to come from all over the country to make it in



Julie Gigante warms up on the violin prior to a Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra concert at the Alex Theatre in Glendale, California.



Julie Gigante speaks to the audience before a show in California.

the entertainment world. Gigante landed the position on the orchestra shortly after moving and has excelled since then.

"On top of her natural musical ability and stellar technique, Julie is able to improvise and immediately render on the spot what the conductor/composer demands during a rehearsal or recording session," said Los An-

geles Chamber Orchestra Executive Director Ben Cadwallader. "Julie and her colleagues at LACO are among the most talented musicians in the country, and we are incredibly fortunate to have an ensemble comprised of such brilliant performers," he said.

The orchestra has provided soundtracks for more than 2,000 movies since Julie has



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSA VAZQUEZ

Julie Gigante is front and center on a famous mural showcasing Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra visible to millions of daily commuters on the 110 freeway near downtown Los Angeles.

been with them, and the last three Star Wars films were part of that, with composer John Williams leading the way musically. On a few occasions, director Stephen Spielberg showed up at the recordings, tweaking it for the movie. "He's very specific," Gigante said.

"While the film & TV recording industry and classical music are tremendously challenging and competitive fields, Julie's music career has thrived," Cadwallader said.

The Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra was impacted by the pandemic and adapted to the situation by launching Summerfest in 2020, and then Summerfest 2021 to stream music to thousands. On Nov. 13, they started playing live again and their season will run until May 15, 2022. They did play one live show last summer at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Julie loves the live audiences, and the first show back in front of a live audience stood out to her. "It was lovely to play, I'm thankful we can," she said.

She does have fond memories of her life in Mount Vernon though. "I really miss Virginia, love Northern Virginia, love California as well," she said.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSA VAZQUEZ

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Senate Committees to Take Spotlight

Democrats plan to block Republican bills from reaching Senate floor.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Now that Republicans are about to take control of the Executive Mansion and the House of Delegates, many are hopeful that they'll be able to accomplish some of the things they talked about on the campaign trail — rolling back environmental regulations, undoing gun-violence prevention efforts and allowing the attorney general to take over prosecutions in cases where local commonwealth's attorneys haven't acted with enough force.

But in order to accomplish any of that, they'll have to get those bills through a series of Senate committees. And Senate Democrats are already mapping out a strategy to keep many of the top Republican priorities from reaching the Senate floor.

"Any initiatives considered leaning right or right initiatives are going to be stopped in the Senate, and they're going to be stopped mostly in committees rather than on the full floor," said David Ramadan, a former Republican delegate now at George Mason Uni-



Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw chats with reporters in the Senate chamber.

versity Schar School of Government. "The Senate caucus has more room to play in committees than they do on the Senate floor."

Democrats hold a one-vote majority in the Senate, and they'll no longer have the tie-breaking vote of the lieutenant governor. Because a handful of conservative Senate Democrats often break with their caucus, that could theoretically result in some Republican legislative victories next year. But that's only in theory. In reality, they'll only be able to win victories on the Senate floor if they are able to get bills through committees that are lopsided in favor of Democrats.

"Getting rid of the grocery tax, for

Senate to be the chamber where everything goes to die," said Stephen Farnsworth, director of the Center for Leadership and Media Studies at the University of Mary Washington. "But I do expect Democrats to exert their ability to serve as a check on the governor in the Senate."

ROLLING BACK ENVIRONMENTAL regulations in the Virginia Clean Economy Act is a topic that has animated many Republican voters, especially now that the Virginia Clean Economy Act has put Virginia on track to ban fossil fuels by 2050. Many Republicans have criticized the mandates for investments into wind power and solar power. Now that Republicans will be in control of the House of Delegates, many are expecting action to undermine the Clean Economy Act.

"The Clean Economy Act is definitely something that people want to revisit and amend. Whether they want to repeal it outright, that's another question," said Stephen Haner, senior fellow at the Thomas Jefferson Institute. "But amend-

ments for sure, and I think the amendments can get through the House."

Passing a bill out of the Republican-controlled House is only half the story in the General Assembly. Assuming that the new Repub-

lican majority sends legislation rolling back the Clean Economy Act to the Senate, its

first stop will be the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee. That's a panel that's stacked in favor of the Senate majority with 12 Democrats and only three Republicans.

"If the bill, a bill, does come over backing down on some of the climate change types of things from the House, and it's certainly possible it will, I think we have the ability to deal with it in the Senate and box it up and it'll probably never get to the floor and have the bill basically defeated in the committee," Sen. George Barker (D-39) told members of the Alexandria City Council last month.

GUN RIGHTS ADVOCATES are interested in rolling back some of the gun-violence prevention measures Democrats were able to pass since they took control of the General

I was going to meet somebody in the park. Oh, can I carry a gun there?' That's only a recipe to get someone like me, who doesn't commit any crime, inadvertently into trouble," said Philip Van Cleve, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League. "You're disarming me. So that if something did happen in the park that day, I would be helpless when I didn't need to be helpless."

Advocates for preventing gun violence say local governments should be able to determine what's in the best interest of their local communities. If the House passes a bill to roll back local authority to ban guns, they'll be making their case before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has nine Democrats and six Republicans. That's the same committee that approved local authority to ban guns last year, so the odds of it getting to the Senate floor seem slim.

"Gun owners, for the most part, are law-abiding citizens," said Lori Haas, senior director of advocacy at the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. "And I believe they are more than capable of learning the laws of whatever jurisdictions they're planning to visit."

DURING THE CAMPAIGN, Republican candidate for attorney general Jason Miyares said one of the things he wanted to do if elected was take over local prosecutions in cases where local police chiefs or sheriffs didn't believe local prosecutors were serving the community. Now that

he's been elected to the office, Miyares has already started talking to lawmakers about getting a bill through the General Assembly to the governor's desk.

"In all of this discussion about criminal justice reform the media talks about, you know the person they never talk about? Victims. They don't talk about the vic-

tims. And that has been a central plank of why I ran and a central plank of what got me elected. So I am going to end the criminal-first, victims-last mindset and have a victims-first, criminals-last

mindset."

In order to make that happen, though, the bill will have to get through the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"There's no chance at all that's going to pass," said Sen. John Edwards (D-21), chairman of the Judiciary Committee. "He has no authority under the Constitution, and the likelihood of the General Assembly granting him that authority is zero."

"It'll probably never get to the floor."

— Sen. George Barker (D-39) on Republican efforts to roll back the Clean Economy Act

"You're disarming me. ... I would be helpless when I didn't need to be helpless."

— Philip Van Cleve, Virginia Citizens Defense League

"I am going to end the criminal-first, victims-last mindset and have a victims-first, criminals-last mindset."

— Attorney General-elect Jason Miyares (R)

"I do expect Democrats to exert their ability to serve as a check on the governor in the Senate."

— Stephen Farnsworth, Center for Leadership and Media Studies, University of Mary Washington

example, will have some bipartisan support. And so I don't expect the

Teen Film Makes It to the Alexandria Film Festival

A story about friendship, schoolwork and assumptions was shot in Old Town.



The girls take a break in between scenes. "The Homework Club," landed a spot in the 2021 Alexandria Film Festival.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

There were four teenage girls embarking on a school project that turned out to be a small part of what they really learned about each other and relationships in general. This was the plot of a film called "The Homework Club," created by 15-year-old Hallie Crawford that landed a spot in the 2021 Alexandria Film Festival.

"We don't really know that we have things in common until we get to know each other," Hallie said.

Set on the streets and waterfront area of Old Town, Alexandria, the short film involved the girls doing the project as a punishment of sorts for doing something in school, similar to the brat-pack classic "The Breakfast Club," from the 1980s. "I love that movie," said Hallie. The girls went from the

waterfront to the Torpedo Factory, where they remembered an experience years ago when they were younger. An argument ensued, and the fledgling actresses gave stress on camera their best shot.

The cast included Sophia Webster, who is a sophomore at West Potomac High School, Jasmine Williams, who is home schooled, and Charlotte Benson who is a classmate of Hallie's at Bishop Ireton. The co-producer was Ella Schmutz, the screenwriter was Olivia Dedham, and Hallie's father, Brett Crawford, did some of the camera work and editing.

At school, the Cappies Theater Award program was announced, and it included an award for films too, so that gave Hallie the inspiration to make a movie and possibly submit it for a Cappie. "That got me really interested," she said.

Before shooting last winter, they planned it out, and held a casting call to find the rest of the cast,



A boom mike and jackets were needed items on the set. "The Homework Club," was created by 15-year-old Hallie Crawford.

and pulled it all together. It was a lesson in perseverance, her father Brett Crawford said. "A fun experience but a challenging one," he said.

For one thing, they started filming in February, but as they got into spring, flowers bloomed and trees got leaves, so the background was changing. This presented a challenge since the plot is all set in one day. "This required some creative editing," he said. "It was something that everyone enjoyed," he added.

There was a dance scene to some non-descript music so there weren't copyright issues, and arguments and thoughts that were ex-

pressed covertly, but all worked out in the end. One thing they didn't have was a stage director that ran around with a storyboard, mapping out the scenes. The cell phone worked for that. "We watched the dance scene on our phones," Hallie said.

Hallie noticed a film festival was happening in the city, so she looked into it. "I got excited about it," she said.

Cell Phone Cinema

Technology makes filmmaking more accessible to everyone these days, since just about everything can be captured with the cell phone. "Filmmaking is no longer

a Hollywood-studio-only enterprise," noted Patti North, executive director at the Alexandria Film Festival.

"That's one of the reasons the film festival exists--to give independent filmmakers an audience for independent films. Hence our motto 'celebrating independents,' North said.

Although Hallie has achieved a lot by being in the Alexandria Film Festival at the age of 15, another teen named Julia Hocker was in the festival a few years ago. Hocker's first film was a winner in the Burke & Herbert Bank "Lights, Camera, Save" competition, and she went on to produce others.



Dad helps shoot a scene out on the river. "The Homework Club," created by 15-year-old Hallie Crawford landed a spot in the 2021 Alexandria Film Festival.



A little rest in the sun for Aladdin.

Aladdin, Now 14, Is Back

In 1787, George Washington paid 18 shillings to bring a camel to Mount Vernon to entertain his guests. Now you can come to Mount Vernon and meet Aladdin, the Christmas Camel through Jan. 7.

When Aladdin hears the familiar hum of the engine and tires rolling across the gravel path, the 7-foot-tall camel stands up and hurries to the fence. Having stayed at Mount Vernon every holiday season since he was eleven months old, the camel knows the approaching vehicle is bringing him food. Lisa Pregent is a

member of the Mount Vernon livestock team and the resident camel connoisseur. She has worked at the estate for 21 years and has taken care of Aladdin since his first visit.

Pregent and the livestock team begin their day long before visitors arrive. They feed the 1400 pound camel at 7:30 a.m. and again later in the day.

Aladdin has lived in Virginia his entire life and is well acclimated to the cold weather. "I brought Aladdin home at 3 months old and took on the 'mothering' duties of bottle feeding and play teaching," said Jennifer Cossette, Aladdin's owner. As part of

the Pony to Go family, Aladdin lives in Berryville, Va. with an emu and miniature horse. "He seems to enjoy the company and always comes to the fence to greet visitors," said Cossette. "He definitely has the personality of a dog, coming when you call him and eager to give kisses."

The rest of the year, Aladdin entertains at birthday parties and weddings. Although he is not the camel in Geico's "Hump Day" commercial, he has made special appearances at Geico events.

Visit Aladdin at Mount Vernon during the holiday season, until Jan. 7.

SCHOOLS



FCPS substitute teacher Ashley Salas leads a Fort Belvoir Elementary School classroom in a lesson.

Military Mom Saves the Day as a Substitute Teacher in Her Spare Time

Ashley Salas has a job already. The mother of two Fairfax County Public School students works as a photographer, doing shoots primarily on evenings and weekends. And still, she was drawn to becoming a regular substitute in her children's school district.

Salas, a military spouse whose children attend Fort Belvoir Elementary School, says she found herself wondering how she could make use of her weekdays to help her community recover from the pandemic.

"During the day, when the kids are at school, I was like what can I do to help?" Salas said. "My brother and his wife are both teachers, I've seen how the pandemic has affected teachers. They need breaks too, they need to be able to attend medical appointments for themselves and their families."

So Salas signed up to substitute teach at her children's school in September. Since then, she's typically in the building teaching multiple times a week -- she's filled in for the art teacher, for individual grade classrooms, and even the librarian -- reading books to students.

She knows from the volume of requests she gets that there is a significant need for people like her -- interested, motivated, patient and caring individuals who may have some spare time during the week here and there. In FCPS, substitutes can designate what days of the week they are available, what roles they are comfortable filling, as well as which schools they would like to help.

"I've honestly started getting texts from teachers at the doctor's office who need to schedule a follow-up exam, saying are you available three weeks from Thursday," Salas said. "This is how significant the need is. Teachers are hesitating to schedule medical visits until they know they have someone to step in for them."

Jamey Chianetta, principal of Fort Belvoir Elementary, agrees the need is significant.

"Day in and day out, our school has unfilled vacancies and we have to get creative," Chianetta said. "Sometimes we pull other employees off assignments to lead a classroom, sometimes we split a group of students and send them into other classrooms. It has not been easy."

Some days the school is short one teacher, some-



FCPS substitute teacher Ashley Salas, a military spouse and freelance photographer, began substituting at Fort Belvoir ES this year when she became aware of the significant need for substitute teachers.

times five or seven, Chianetta says, requiring her to reconfigure duties on a daily basis.

She praises Salas for her drive to help her community.

"She came in knowing not every day was going to be easy, but she doesn't give up," Chianetta said.

Salas has taken her commitment a step further. She posts on Facebook to military spouse groups encouraging other parents who have the time to get involved, leading a mini recruitment drive of her own.

"I love that I teach where both of my kids go to school -- one is in fourth grade here, one is in sixth grade," Salas said. "Honestly, gaining real relationships with other kids who go to school with my children and having them know I'm one other grown up in the building who cares about them and is there to support them means a lot to me."

STORY AND PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FCPS

People interested in applying to be an FCPS substitute teacher must have 30 hours of undergraduate education coursework, provide a professional and personal reference, and clear a background check.

For more information on how to become an FCPS substitute, please visit the Substitute Teaching Opportunities webpage <https://www.fcps.edu/careers/career-opportunities/substitute-teaching-opportunities>



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Budget Surplus in a Time of Need

DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

A combination of an economy producing much more strongly than expected during the pandemic and a frugal state budget in anticipation of a revenue shortfall combined with several federal programs sending enormous amounts of cash to the states has resulted in Virginia having a strong cash position—possibly the greatest ever. Some choose to call the available cash a surplus, but I think a much more accurate term to describe it is an unappropriated balance. The amount involved is more than \$4 billion!

Using the term surplus implies to me that the needs of the state have been met and that there is money left over. As I indicated above, the existing state budget was put together with a very conservative estimate of tax revenue based on a contraction in the economy. Programs were minimally funded or needs were not addressed in order to ensure that the budget would be



balanced at the end of the year as constitutionally mandated. Likewise, the availability of cash flowing from the federal government has been much greater than ever before with an expectation that even more dollars will be coming to the states.

With the numerous challenges facing government in general it is reassuring that the availability of funding will not be as great an issue as it has been in recent years. The list of unmet needs for those who view government's role broadly can be reduced by the available cash. For others, the availability of cash in government coffers raises the prospect of tax cuts. The incoming governor has indicated that he favors tax cuts. Virginia's tax rates are among the lowest in the country and should a policy of tax reductions be pursued it should be targeted to those with the lowest income.

Certainly tax revenues should never be allowed to exceed the wants and needs of citizens for government services. When there are dollars available the question becomes one of

giving monies back to citizens in the form of tax reductions or rebates or using it to provide needed services. Cutting taxes is an approach that is appealing to most politicians and is one that I think should be pursued when it can be done responsibly. In Virginia at this time I believe there are too many unmet needs to be doing anything in the budget other than providing funding for programs and services that have been needed but unfunded for years.

There is a waiting list estimated at over 12,000 individuals who qualify for assistance because of a developmental disability, but that list is reduced by only a few thousand persons per year with the need growing faster than programs or services to meet them.

There is a wide disparity of funding across jurisdictional lines for public education even though there is a composite index that is supposed to smooth out the differences. The lack of equity in funding among counties and cities is unjustifiable as are the differences across colleges and universities.

In coming columns I will be discussing other unmet needs. It is not possible to have a budget surplus when there is so much left to be done.

Children's & Teens' Connection 2021

Deadline extended, please send all submissions via email by Friday, Dec. 10, but earlier is better.

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:

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. 10, 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/ and scrolling down to Children's

Email submissions for the Children's Editions to kimm.mary@gmail.com.

For advertising information, email Debbie Funk at debfunc@connectionnewspapers.com.

For more, see <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2021/nov/17/childrens-teens-connection-2021/>

MARY KIMM
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More Places To Give for Local Impact

Dear Editor:

I'd like to suggest more places to give for local impact

Please consider publishing a second list with these options
Thanks

Sara H.
Oakton

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A Connection Newspaper



NOTICE OF WATER RATE AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

December 16, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 16, 2021, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2022, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,400 to \$4,510[†].
- A decrease in the Local Facilities Charge from \$19,610 to \$19,400.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,430 to \$1,480[†].
- An increase in the Account Charge from \$40 to \$41.
- An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$14.85 to \$14.95[†].
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$3.33 to \$3.46 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- A decrease in the Peak Use Charge from \$3.90 to \$3.85.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the changes in the Commodity Charge and Peak Use Charge.
- An increase in the Overhead Charges for (Labor) from 102% to 103% and a decrease for (Materials) from 13% to 12%.

[†]Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$208 million budget for calendar year 2022*. Water sales are expected to provide \$180.1 million and the remaining \$27.9 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

-- \$1,000s --		
Category	2021	2022
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$58,379	\$63,585
Power and Utilities	10,597	10,795
Chemicals	7,637	8,688
Purchased Water	6,863	8,013
Supplies and Materials	4,984	5,272
Insurance	1,157	1,214
Fuel	680	753
Postage	585	618
Contractual Services	11,737	12,526
Professional Services	1,254	1,249
Other	2,243	2,740
Sub-Total	106,116	115,453
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(10,763)	(10,949)
Total	\$95,353	\$104,504

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$42,484,307
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$47,922,000

*Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

Visit fairfaxwater.org/rates to view a copy of the proposed changes.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Karen Barnette at 703-289-6029.

Written comments to can be sent to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, December 15, 2021, to be included in the record of the public hearing.



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON\GAZETTE

Officials are launching a six-month study on Richmond Highway speed limits.

Speed Limit Study About to get Underway

Traffic engineers looking at a speed limit change on Richmond Highway.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Traffic engineers from the Virginia Department of Transportation and Fairfax County are launching a speed limit study on Richmond Highway as a precursor to future development and transportation improvements for this busy thoroughfare in Mount Vernon.

This \$200,000 study is assessing the 45 MPH speed limit on about eight miles of Richmond Highway between Belvoir Road/Meade Road and the beltway to improve safety for all users, VDOT said.

The study is being launched now and will conclude in Spring 2022 when VDOT will have another meeting to discuss the results. The final report will be out next summer, but whether any real action resulting from this study is still uncertain.

In a virtual public information meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 30, traffic engineers outlined the plan with a presentation called

"Richmond Highway (Route 1) Speed Limit Study," which talked about the three sections within the 8-mile corridor, and the factors involved. This includes current speeds, crash data, roadway functional classification, traffic control devices, traffic operation and pedestrian-bicycle facilities in the corridor. "A state and local police response is required in the final study," said Warren Hughes, a traffic engineering consultant who led part of the discussion.

Although there are plans throughout the corridor for additional facilities built along the highway that impact speeds and other plans for widening and bus rapid transit, the study is focusing on what is in place right now, not in the future.

When it came time for questions from the public, an assortment of topics was discussed including people crossing the roadway outside the crosswalks or away from the intersections. This is a common sight along this stretch of the highway, but it would be difficult to get it all with the study. Another question involved the sound walls that have been looked at from time to time, particularly in the Gum Springs area, but a noise analysis would be needed, not a speed analysis, officials said.

Officials requested that all questions, comments and feedback be sent to: amassoudi@atcsplc.com before Dec. 10.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

HOLIDAY NETWORKING AT COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT

'Tis the season for holiday cheer and celebrations. Join Mount Vernon Lee Chamber at a special holiday business reception on Wednesday, Dec. 8, from 5:30 – 7 p.m., hosted by the Courtyard by Marriott, 7610 Commerce Street, Springfield. First, cele-

brate the grand opening of the new Bistro Bar at the hotel and enjoy complimentary cocktails and small bites and see what this reimaged Bistro Bar has to offer. Then, meet the 2021 Distinguished Businesses of the Year with a special video and award presentations. Enjoy some holiday cheer and celebrate the season with the Chamber. This event is free for Chamber members and their guests, \$25 for others. For more information please contact Mount Vernon Lee Chamber of Commerce 703-360-6925 or visit www.MountVernon-LeeChamber.org

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

NOW THRU 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

SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS

Waterfront Art Market. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Torpedo Factory Art Center's waterfront entrance, 1 Cameron St., Alexandria. Visit the Waterfront entrance at Torpedo Factory Art Center to discover new artwork from a rotating lineup of the Art Center's studio artists. Find paintings and photographs to jewelry and wearables, then step inside to browse the three floors of the Art Center for even more original art for purchase. Visit torpedofactory.org

NOW THRU DEC. 31

Jingle Journey. At various locations in the Del Ray neighborhood, Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. With your little ones, go a magical scavenger hunt through Del Ray and piece together the Jingle Journey story. This event is free but requires online registration. Visit www.artsonthehorizon.org/jingle-journey.html.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

Saturdays and Sundays in December. 8-10 a.m. Invite friends and family to celebrate the holidays with Alexandria Restaurant Partners' Breakfast with Santa. Enjoy a festive breakfast menu, Prosecco Bellinis (for adults), takeaway treats for the kids, and a family photo with Santa Claus. (Saturday, 12/4; Sunday, 12/5; Saturday 12/11; Sunday 12/12; Saturday, 12/18; Sunday, 12/19; and Friday, 12/14) and Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24th at the locations below:
Ada's on the River (\$55 adults/\$35 children)
Phone: 703-638-1400
Mia's Italian Kitchen (\$49 adults/\$29 children)
Phone: 703-997-5300
Theismann's Restaurant (\$45 adults/\$25 children)
Phone: 703-739-0777

DEC. 2, 3, 9, 21

Museum Shopping Evenings at Carlyle House. 5 to 8 p.m. At Carlyle House Museum Shop, 121 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria. Enjoy shopping small and local. Stop by the Carlyle House Museum Shop for wonderful holiday gifts. An assortment of Virginia made items, ornaments, soaps, and more are available for purchase. Visit novaparks.com.



The Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend and Parade will be held Dec. 3-4 in Alexandria.



The Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights will be held Saturday, Dec. 4 in Alexandria.

DEC. 3-4

Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend and Parade. Taste of Scotland: Friday, December 3 at 6:30 p.m. Parade: Saturday, December 4, at 11 a.m. Campagna Center is thrilled to celebrate the 50th Anniversary Scottish Walk Weekend in Alexandria. In 1749, the City of Alexandria was established by Scottish merchants. Dozens of Scottish clans dressed in colorful tartans parade through the streets of Old Town, joined by pipe and drum bands from around the region, as well as terriers and hounds. The weekend kicks off with the Taste of Scotland Scotch Tasting on Friday evening in the Atrium Building. The parade will depart from St. Asaph St. heading north, head east from Queen St., head south from Fairfax St., and head west from King Street, ending right in front of City Hall. Admission: Free to view; \$75 registration fee to march in parade; \$200 and above for Taste of Scotland Scotch Tasting. Visit the website: campagnacenter.org

[Campagnacenter.org](https://campagnacenter.org)

DEC. 3, 4, 10, 11, 19

Mount Vernon by Candlelight. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon. Take a candlelit guided tour and learn about holiday traditions in 18th-century Virginia. Visit with Mrs. Washington and other 18th-century residents of Mount Vernon in a 45-minute candlelit tour of the Mount Vernon estate, followed by a reception. Hear stories of Christmases past from costumed character actors portraying Washington's family, friends, and enslaved or hired staff. Admission: \$36 for adults (ages 12 and up); \$28 for youth (ages 6-11); for members, \$26 for adults; \$18 for youth. Visit the website: mountvernon.org/candlelight

DEC. 3-18

"A Christmas Carol." At The Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe

St., Alexandria. The Little Theatre of Alexandria rings in the holiday season with a return of the classic by Charles Dickens. Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserable, bitter old miser, travels with ghostly guides through Christmas past, present and future to find the true meaning of the holidays. Visit the website: thelittletheatre.com

DEC. 3 TO 5, 10 TO 12, 17 TO 19

Del Ray Artisans' Fine Art & Fine Craft Holiday Market. At 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Fridays, 6 to 9 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Featuring unique handmade fine arts and crafts from local artists. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass and much more from different artisans each weekend. Plus, purchase 2022 wall calendars, cookbooks and tote bags to support Del Ray Artisans. Visit the website: delray-artisans.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Holiday Festival at Torpedo Factory Art Center. 2 to 8 p.m. At Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Torpedo Factory Art Center joins the fun on Alexandria's most festive weekend of the year. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by fire boat around 3:30 p.m. on the Waterfront. Music fills the halls and the waterfront, beckoning people to browse three floors of open artists' studios. Visit the website: torpedofactory.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Scottish Walk Open House at Carlyle House. 12 to 4 p.m. At Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria. After the Scottish Walk Parade, enter the museum gates and step back in time for a free open house in the spirit of the holiday season. Please note that Carlyle House will letting smaller groups in at a time to allow for social distancing inside the museum. Visit the website: novaparks.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 4

Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights. Old Town's historic waterfront will shine for the 21st annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights sponsored by Amazon. Parade begins at 5:30 p.m.; Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m. at Waterfront Park (1A Prince St.). Parade viewing areas along one mile of the Old Town Alexandria waterfront stretching from Founders Park (351 N. Union St.) to Ford's Landing Park (99 Franklin St.) Boat parade dockside festivities will entertain parade-goers from 2 to 8 p.m. in Waterfront Park at the foot of King Street. Festivities include a pop-up beer garden from Port City Brewing Company. At 3:30 p.m., Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive by fireboat at the Alexandria City Marina before attending the annual Torpedo Factory Art Center Holiday Festival. Admission: Free; \$ for food/drink and some activities Visit alexandriava.com/boatparade.

DEC. 4-5

"The Nutcracker." 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. At The Rachel M. Schlesinger Center for Performing Arts NOVA Alexandria Campus, 4915 East Campus Drive, Alexandria. Enjoy this exciting Metropolitan School of the Arts production as Clara fights the evil Mouse Queen and her army of fierce mice to save the handsome and kind Nutcracker doll. On this great adventure, Clara will be transported to a fantastical land where she will meet the dazzling Snow Queen, dancing snowflakes, the Sugar Plum Fairy and many more wonderful characters. Visit the website: metropolitanarts.org

DEC. 4, 11, 18

Candlelight Tours at Lee-Fendall House. On the half hour from 5:30 p.m. through 7:30 p.m. At Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco St., Alexandria. Celebrate the holiday season with evening candlelight tours of the Lee-Fendall House decked out in Victorian splendor.

SEE HOLIDAY CALENDAR, PAGE 11

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](https://www.connectionnewspapers.com)

CALENDAR

NOW THROUGH-DEC. 12

Fall Salon. At Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union Street, Alexandria. Torpedo Factory Art Center is encouraging people to bring home original work from local artists this fall with major offerings dedicated to making art buying simple and affordable. Target Gallery's next group exhibition, Fall Salon, features 70 works by artists from the greater metropolitan region, all priced at \$1,000 or less.

NOW THRU DEC. 17

MVUC Holiday Shop. Virtual. At 1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria. Mount Vernon Unitarian Church's 56th Holiday Shop is virtual due to Covid. Vendors include Papazian Design, Late Bloomers, Bead Therapy, Deerhawk Art, The Bathing Raven Candle Company, Recycled bag Lady, Jane's Crafts, Nina Tisara Mosaics. Information: mvuc.org. Visit us at bit.ly/MVUCHoliday.

THE HOLIDAYS IN DEL RAY

Dec. 5 at 6 p.m. Del Ray Tree and Menorah Lighting.

Dec. 6 from 6 p.m.-9 p.m. Shops of Del Ray's Holiday Sip & Shop – shop local and enjoy special promotions and complimentary wine and refreshments.

Dec. 8-19 Twelve Days of Wellness – Twelve days of tips and special promotions focused on self-care during the busy holiday season.

Dec. 11 from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. 6th Annual Candy Cane Bar Crawl – proceeds benefiting Neighborhood Health.

Dec. 11 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Del Ray Holiday Pop-Up Market at Pat Miller Neighborhood Square.

Dec. 13 from Noon to 1 p.m. DRBA Annual Holiday Luncheon & Star Awards at Lena's.

DEC. 3-19

Holiday Market. At Del Ray Artisans gallery in the Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Different artists each weekend. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and much more! Plus, FUNdraising 2022 wall calendars and upcycled tote bags to support Del Ray Artisans. Free admission. First three weekends in December. Fridays 6-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Visit the website: <https://delrayartisans.org/event/holiday-market-2021/>

TUESDAY/DEC. 7

Author Henry Gee. 7-8 p.m. Virtual event. At Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library, 717 Queen Street, Alexandria. Join in a discussion with author and "Nature" senior editor, Henry Gee, on his new book, "A (Very) Short History of Life on Earth," which takes readers on an entertaining 4.6 billion year trip through the history of earth. Visit the website: <https://alexlibraryva.org/event/5750346>

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 8

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra Winter Recital. 7:30 p.m. At The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria. Join Alexandria Symphony Orchestra musicians Meredith Riley (violin), Daniel Frazelle (clarinet) and Sophia Kim Cook (piano) for an evening of music and conversation. Enjoy a variety of chamber music followed by a post-concert reception with light refreshments. This recital is presented as part of the Adopt a Chair program. Cost: \$40 Adult • \$5 Youth • \$5 Student. Visit the website: <https://alexsym.org/performance/winter-recital/>

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Market Square Concert. 3 p.m. At Market Square, 300 King Street, Alexandria. Featuring the Alexandria Harmonizers Men's Chorus as it brings fun and good cheer to the holiday season. Enjoy some of the best a cappella singing in the region by a group that never fails to surprise and entertain. A wide variety of seasonal music will be performed and the men promise a spirited and moving experience. Visit the website: www.harmonizers.org.



The Market Square Concert will take place on Saturday/Dec. 11 at Market Square in Alexandria.

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Storytime with Young Historians. 10-10:30 a.m. Virtual Only. Pick up an activity kit at Beatley Central Library before the event. Geared for ages 4-8, but all are welcome. December's theme is Kwanzaa.

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Christmas in Camp. 12-4 p.m. at Fort Ward Museum, Alexandria. Get in the holiday spirit and learn how Christmas was observed during the Civil War at Fort Ward Museum's annual Civil War Christmas in Camp program. This popular family-oriented event features a patriotic Civil War Santa Claus, reenactors in winter camp settings, period decorations, fort tours, and kids activities. The suggested donation is \$2 per person and \$5 for families.

SUNDAY/DEC. 12

Beethoven's 251st Birthday Celebration. 4 p.m. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall, 4915 East Campus Drive, Alexandria. New Dominion Chorale's Artistic Director Thomas Beveridge will conduct the Chorale and orchestra in Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," from the Finale of Symphony No. 9, the "Kyrie" and "Gloria" from his Mass in C major, and "Creation's Song." Renowned concert pianist Thomas Pandolfi, will perform Beethoven's "Choral Fantasy," composed when Beethoven was 38 years old for solo voices, mixed chorus, orchestra, and piano soloist. Tickets are \$25 for general admission, open seating. Visit www.newdominion.org or president@newdominion.org or call 202- 244-7191.

SUNDAY/DEC. 12

"Simple Gifts" with the Colonial Handbell Ringers. 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. At Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum, Alexandria. The Colonial English Handbell Ringers are excited to return to ring in the holiday season with you with the holiday concert, "Simple Gifts." The program will include several traditional carols, kids' classics like "Frosty the Snowman," the "Song of Gladness" and "Bell Talk!" The performance is appropriate for all ages and is free.

JAN. 7-29

The "Little Monsters" Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features artists' interpretation of their own little monsters—from fantasy to reality, from cute to terrifying. Take a peek at some fun workshops available to you during the exhibit. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed January 30). Details at DelRayArtisans.org/event/little-monsters

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

December

Thu. 2: Squirrel Nut Zippers "Holiday Caravan Tour 2021" \$45.00

Fri. 3: Chris Botti \$110.00

Sat. 4: Chris Botti \$110.00

Sun. 5: Dar Williams w/ Emily Scott Robinson \$45.00

Mon. 6: Steven Curtis Chapman 'Acoustic Christmas!' \$49.50

Tue. 7: America "50th Anniversary" \$99.50 SOLD OUT!

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 10

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



campagna center
PRESENTS

The 50TH Anniversary

Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend & Parade

Friday, December 3rd, & Saturday, December 4th, 2021



Join us in kicking off the holiday season and celebrating the rich history of the Alexandria community with our 50th anniversary events. Funds raised support our educational programs for children and families from cradle to career!





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campagnacenter.org/event/the-scottish-christmas-walk-weekend

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OF COMMERCE

Water Quality of Pohick Stream Monitored by State

BY SUSAN LAUME
GAZETTE PACKET

Employees of the Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality donned high waders to enter Pohick Creek on Nov. 30 as part of their water quality monitoring throughout the Commonwealth. The field survey measured stream habitat, and sampled fish and benthic macro invertebrate species living, there as an indicator of stream health.

Invertebrates, such as the caddisfly larvae pictured, are common in the world's streams, and were netted, as were nine species of fish. Fish were stunned with a low charge of electricity for netting, then counted and released. Some species are known to be more tolerant of pollution than others, so an inventory of what is living in a stream can be a good indicator of water quality and stream health.

Results of this survey and others that make up the state's



Tim Jones and Courney Hauler work together to stun and survey fish and eels, using an electro-fisher unit.

monitoring project will take several months to compile.

Virginia has more than five mil-

lion water quality observations in its database; the third largest nationally.

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/GAZETTE PACKET

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 9

Wed. 8: Eric Benet \$69.50
Thu. 9: KT Tunstall w/ Haley Johnsen \$45.00
Fri. 10: Maggie Rose "Have A Seat Tour 2021" w/ Them Vibes & Dylan Hartigan \$29.50
Sat. 11: Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes \$49.50
Sun. 12: "Seasons Greetings from the Ozone" Bill Kirchen & Too Much Fun with Lost Planet Airmen #1 Dr. John Tichy - A Honky Tonk Holiday & Tribute to Commander Cody \$39.50
Tue. 14: Shaun Cassidy \$55.00
Wed. 15: A John Waters Christmas \$55.00
Thu. 16: Carbon Leaf \$39.50
Fri. 17: Carbon Leaf \$39.50
Sat. 18: Tom Papa \$35.00 (Resched from 3/26/21. All 3/26/21 tickets honored) SOLD OUT!
Sun. 19: Luther Re-Lives Holiday Show featuring William "Smooth" Wardlaw \$45.00
Mon. 20: Puddles Pity Party \$49.50
Sun. 26: MAYSA Holiday Show \$69.50
Wed. 29: Hank Williams Tribute w/ Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer, Robin & Linda Williams, Phil Wiggins, Patrick McAvinue, Mark Schatz \$29.50
Thu. 30: Bela Dona Band \$35.00
Fri. 31: New Years Eve with The Seldom Scene, Eastman String Band, & Wicked Sycamore -8pm- \$49.50

ADDED SHOWS IN 2022

Mon. Dec. 27: MAX WEINBERG'S JUKE-BOX \$65.00
<https://www.maxweinberg.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 12N ET.

Sun. Jan. 9: THE S.O.S. BAND \$69.50
<https://www.thesosband.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 12N ET.

Wed. Jan. 26: SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK \$45.00
<https://sweethoneyintherock.org/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 12N ET.

Sat/Sun. Feb. 26 & 27: LYLE LOVETT ACOUSTIC GROUP \$115.00
<https://www.lylelovett.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 12N ET.

Sat. Mar. 5: NATALIE MACMASTER & DONNELL LEAHY \$45.00
<https://www.natalieanddonnell.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 12N ET.

Wed. Apr. 6: TAB BENOIT's Whiskey Bayou Revue \$45.00
<https://www.tabbenoit.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 12N ET.

Mon. Apr. 18: THE ZOMBIES: Life Is A Merry-Go-Round Tour w/ Jesse Lynn Madera \$59.50
<https://www.thezombiesmusic.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 10am ET.

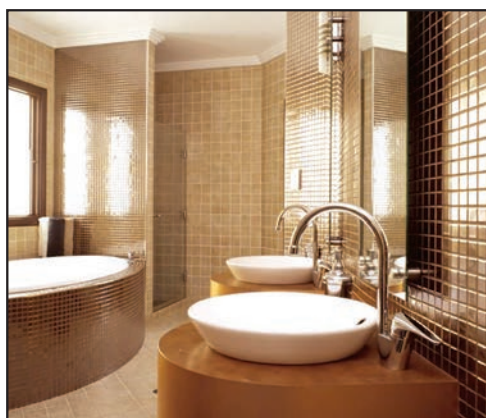
Sat. Apr. 23: 10,000 MANIACS featuring Mary Ramsey \$55.00
<https://www.maniacs.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 11/19 at 12N ET.

Wed. Feb. 2: MARC COHN \$55.00
<http://www.marccohnmusic.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 10/29 at 12N.

Sat. Feb. 12: BURLESQUE-A-PADES In Loveland! Hosted by Murray Hill with Live Music from The Brian Newman Band starring Angie Pontani, The Maine Attraction, Mr Gorgeous, Gal Friday, and more guests TBA! \$29.50
<https://www.angiepontani.com/>
❖On Sale Fri. 10/29 at 12N.

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THE CONNECTION Alexandria Gazette Packet Mount Vernon Gazette Potomac ALMANAC

Children's & Teens' Connection 2021



During the last weeks 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. Even readers without children of that age spend time admiring and chuckling over the issue. The annual Children's Connection (including Children's Gazette and Children's Almanac) is a long-time tradition.

With high visibility, this is a great advertising opportunity for every industry, so give us a call about rates and ad sizes at 703-778-9431 or email sales@connectionnewspapers.com.

To submit art, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of sculpture or gardens or other creative efforts, please email kimm.mary@gmail.com.

Advertising Opportunity

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 8

The antique toy exhibit will also be on view. Space is limited to 10 people at a time, and advance reservations are required. Visit the website: leefendallhouse.org

BEGINNING DEC. 5

Old Town Boutique District's Holiday Week. At various boutiques throughout Old Town Alexandria. Head into December with the first-ever OTBD holiday week, kicking off Sunday, December 5. Look out for a kick-off event at Hummingbird, tastings, trunk shows and doorbuster deals, and spend the holidays in the most magical place on earth. Visit oldtownboutiquedistrict.com

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Town of Herndon's Holiday Arts & Craft Show. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At the Herndon Community Center, 814 Ferndale Ave., Herndon. Over 70 artisans and crafts people will exhibit and sell their handmade work at this annual arts and crafts show sponsored by the Herndon Parks and Recreation Department. A variety of handcrafted items and fine art will be on sale at the show including jewelry, Christmas ornaments, decorations, original artwork, baked goods, stained glass, wooden crafts, doll clothes, and much more. Visit herndon-va.gov/recreation.

SUNDAY/DEC. 5

Del Ray Holiday Tree & Menorah Lighting. 6 p.m. Pat Miller Neighborhood Square at Mount Vernon Ave. and E. Oxford Ave., Alexandria. Kick off the holidays with a visit to Del Ray for the annual holiday tree and menorah lighting. Continue the celebration and start your holiday shopping with a stroll down Mount Vernon Avenue, which will be illuminated by thousands of luminarias and feature storefront windows hand-painted for the holidays. Visit visitdelray.com

DEC. 5 AND 12


Holiday Kissing Ball Workshops. 2 p.m. At Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco St., Alexandria. Learn the history behind using greenery to decorate homes for the holidays, then craft your own boxwood kissing ball using fresh cuttings from the Lee-Fendall garden. Note that these workshops will be held outdoors, so please dress appropriately. Admission: \$25 per person (advance registration required). Visit the website: leefendallhouse.org

DEC. 5, 12, 19

Old Town North Holiday Markets. 1 to 3:30 p.m. At Montgomery Park, 901 N. Royal St., Alexandria. In addition to Old Town North's weekly Thursday Farmers Market, the Old Town North Community Partnership will be hosting three holiday markets at Montgomery Park. Explore the festive, European-style markets for hand-crafted gift items and specialty food items. Visit the website: www.oldtownnorth.org

WEDNESDAY/DEC. 8

Winter Recital. 7:30 p.m. at The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria. Join Alexandria Symphony Orchestra musicians Mere-See HOLIDAY CALENDAR, PAGE 12
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Libraries to Distribute Free COVID Test Kits

Fairfax County Public Library branches will become distribution sites for free COVID-19 rapid antigen at-home test kits as part of a pilot program beginning Dec. 3.

BinaxNOW COVID-19 Antigen Card Home Test kits will be available at each of Fairfax County Public Library's 13 open community branches and 8 regional branches.

Quantities are limited. Neither proof of residency nor a library card is required, and the kits are free of charge.

The test should be taken at home, not in a library branch, however, most branches provide a strong Wi-Fi signal in parking lots. If someone is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, please request kits via the library's contactless curbside pickup service. <https://research.fairfaxcounty.gov/unlimited>

Due to the recent surge in COVID-19 and low retail supply, there has been an increased demand for testing throughout the Commonwealth. Health officials hope that increased access to testing through key community partnerships with trusted agencies — such as libraries — will be helpful in stemming the spread of the virus. These at-home test kits are intended for diagnostic testing by community members so that they can know their status and get early care. Early action should help break transmission and further protect others.

The 13 community library branches are open Monday through Saturday, while the eight regional branches are open seven days a week. Details about branch hours

and locations are available on the library's website. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches>

Taking the Test

To take the test, individuals will need an internet connection, an internet-enabled device (computer, mobile phone, or tablet) with a webcam or front-facing camera, microphone, and speaker for the testing session, and a valid photo ID to show the eMed virtual guide. Information on supported browsers is available at this webpage. <https://www.emed.com/> Valid forms of ID include driver's license, passport, passport card, birth certificate, state-issued identification card, military ID card, and official school ID. Once completed, rapid antigen tests provide results in 15 minutes. After the test taker completes the test online, eMed will automatically report the results to the Virginia Department of Health.

Individuals who test positive should isolate and follow up with their healthcare provider or the Fairfax County Health Department. The VDH Antigen Testing Recommendations webpage provides guidance on next steps following antigen test results. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/get-the-facts/antigen-testing-recommendations/>

More information on this program is available here or by calling 1-877-829-4682. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/protect-yourself/covid-19-testing/stacc/>

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 11

dith Riley (violin), Daniel Frazelle (clarinet) and Sophia Kim Cook (piano) for an evening of music and conversation. Enjoy a variety of chamber music followed by a post-concert reception with light refreshments. Cost: \$40 Adult • \$5 Youth • \$5 Student. Visit: <https://alexsym.org/performance/winter-recital/>

FRIDAY/DEC. 10

Alexandria's Holiday Concert. 7:30-8:30 p.m. at Del Ray United Methodist Church, 100 E. Windsor Ave., Alexandria. Celebrate the season together again at the always popular — and free — Alexandria Holiday Concert. Conductor Mike Evans

and the hometown Alexandria Citizens Band will play your holiday favorites, and ask you to sing along for a few of the pieces. Dress in your holiday sweaters and Santa hats. Free tickets available at: <https://alexandriaholidayconcert.eventbrite.com>

DEC. 10-11

Colonial Holiday Nights at Carlyle House. 5 to 8 p.m. At Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria. Experience the holiday season with Carlyle House focusing on how the Carlyles and their enslaved workers observed the holidays during the 18th century. Stay tuned for updates about live music. Tours offered of the first floor with timed entry on the hour and half hour. Space is limited and reservations are required. All participants including those under the age of 5 must be registered. Visit novaparks.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Del Ray Vintage & Flea Market. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At the Parking lot of 1900 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Don't miss the holiday edition of this monthly outdoor vintage and flea market in the heart of Alexandria's bustling Del Ray neighborhood. Find 50+ vendors offering

vintage, antique, thrift and artisan goods at two open-air lots, with free appraisals plus bakery and coffee booths. Visit the website: delrayvintageflea.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

A Victorian Christmas. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco St., Alexandria. Experience the wonder of the season by visiting the Lee-Fendall House for a family-friendly Victorian Christmas. Enjoy traditional décor, music, seasonal crafts, a visit with Santa, a toy exhibit and more. Visit the website: leefendallhouse.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Christmas Market and Holiday Craft Show. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At John Carlyle Square Park, 300 John Carlyle St., Alexandria. John Carlyle Square Park will dress up for the holidays and host more than 80 artisans and crafters, independent consultants and other local small businesses. Check off your shopping list with everything from unique handmade jewelry to organic bath and body products to home décor, holiday ornaments and much more. Visit the website: thecarlylecommunity.com

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

Civil War Christmas in Camp. 12 to 4 p.m. At Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site, 4301 W. Braddock Rd., Alexandria. Get in the holiday spirit with a patriotic Union Santa Claus, reenactors in winter camps celebrating the season, period decorations, soldier-led fort tours and kids' crafting activities. Visit the website: alexandriava.gov/fortward

SATURDAY/DEC. 11

6th Annual Del Ray Candy Cane Bar Crawl. 1 to 6 p.m. At various locations along Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria.

Take a break from the bustle of holiday prep — SEE HOLIDAY CALENDAR, PAGE 13

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NEWS

Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber Recognizes Business Achievements

It takes a lot for a business to succeed these days, and over at the Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce, a few businesses and business leaders are being recognized for their efforts at the Chamber's Distinguished Businesses of 2021 celebration on Wednesday, Dec. 8. These businesses are being recognized for outstanding community service, business success, innovation, and customer service.

The awards include:

DISTINGUISHED BUSINESS

Inova Mount Vernon Hospital, the Supporting Strategies of Northern Virginia, and VH Sign Inc.

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Kevin McNulty
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'Tis the season for holiday cheer and celebrations. First, celebrate

the grand opening of the new Bistro Bar at Courtyard by Marriott in Springfield and enjoy complimentary cocktails and small bites and see what this reimaged Bistro Bar has to offer.

Wednesday, December 8

5:30 - 7 pm
Courtyard by Marriott
6710 Commerce Street, Springfield

Then, meet the 2021 Distinguished Businesses of the Year with a special video and award presentations. Enjoy some holiday cheer, dress for this festive occasion and celebrate the season with fellow Chamber members. Free for Chamber members and their guests, \$20 Others

HOLIDAY CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 12

rations and enjoy specialty drinks and delights at Del Ray restaurants during a neighborhood bar crawl to benefit Neighborhood Health. Enjoy holiday costume contests for individuals and groups, raffle prizes and live music. Trolley transportation will be provided along the avenue. Visit the

website: visitdelray.com

DEC. 11, 12, 18, 19

Tall Ship Providence Christmas Story Time. At 12 p.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. At Tall ship Providence, 1 Cameron St., Alexandria. Come aboard the tall ship Providence for a special Christmas story time. This year's tale will be "The Christmas Ship," the true story of

the schooner Rouse Simmons, the ship that for years supplied Christmas trees to the people of Chicago by making a dangerous winter crossing of Lake Michigan. This story is sure to delight young sailors ages 5 to 12. Check in at the Gazebo on the G-H Pier next to Founder's Park. Visit the website: tallship-providence.org

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Not Getting Ahead of Myself



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

For the moment, I'm going to roll with the punch and not slip on any slope, real or imagined. The slope, metaphorically referred to, is my calcium level. A measure in my monthly lab work which needs to be normal-ish for me to continue receiving a bone-strengthening injection (Denosumab), a parallel treatment to my daily thyroid cancer medication. The reason I even have to get this shot is, you guessed it, it's a side effect of my thyroid cancer drug. In early Nov., and the following week's re-test, the calcium level remained abnormally low. As of this result, my monthly treatment has been delayed until early Dec. That means, I will have skipped a month of treatment; in my mind never a good thing. Whether skipping one dose like this could actually cause irreparable damage, I certainly don't know. But I have to admit, it worries the hell out of me, and at this late stage of my stage-IV cancer life; with a re-diagnosis to consider, I don't need anything else to worry about.

I mean, for all I know, the shot is actually working, and not receiving my every-four-week injection might put me at some kind of risk. The most significant risk being that if the calcium level does not improve, I might have to stop the treatment, or possibly, reduce the dosage of the pill I take for the thyroid cancer, a dosage which has been reduced twice already. This has always been a concern of my oncologist: the side effects of the treatment for side effects derailing the treatment for the underlying cancer. And generally speaking, untreated cancer doesn't usually resolve itself in the patient's favor. A side effect, in and of itself, is a problem, but more so the problem, its potential impact on your primary cancer treatment/protocol. I can't help but wonder if I'm, after nearly 13 years, finally heading down that dusty trail. However, I'm not going to go there yet, right?

Where I hope I'm going, as I've gone before, is the sweet spot, so to speak. The spot being where the dosage is high enough to combat the cancer but low enough to sustain one's quality of life. This has been a guiding tenet of my oncologist's treatment plan for me. He's always been sensitive to the demands of this patient on chemotherapy, and even on occasion, was not uncomfortable suggesting that I take a break from treatment and try to enjoy life while I felt good enough. I never took him up on the offer as I remained hopeful (and tried not to think too deeply about what he was inferring; that my life was going to be getting worse/more demanding and that ultimately, I would have to stop my treatment and eventually succumb to the disease. Instead, I just chose to continue the treatment and not think about the unpleasant possibilities).

Though this 'sweet-spot issue has only occurred recently, my concern of it happening has existed since my original diagnosis. I remember asking the oncologist about this medication-having-to-be-stopped issue at our original Team Lourie meeting in late Feb., 2009, he acknowledged the possibility. (As did I; remembering the circumstances surrounding my late mother-in-law's death from cancer.) I wouldn't say I've anticipated it, exactly, but I have been fearful of its inevitability. Nonetheless, until recently, it was hardly a blip on my radar; more like it was tucked away in a filing cabinet. Well, it's here now. And so are you regular readers.

No worries, really. This is life in the cancer whirlled. Up and down all around. Between office appointments, referrals, lab work, various scans, X-Rays, medicine/side effects, the sleepless nights and agonizing waits for results, unless you find a way, emotionally, to balance all the news, good or bad, the actual cancer is the least of your problems. Coping becomes the most of it.

I can't say any of it has been fun, but occasionally there's been a wry smile. Cancer is a very serious business. Contributing to its seriousness seems counter-productive. I've never been one to make a bad situation worse. And I'm certainly not going to start now.

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

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NEWS

December Is Puppy Mill Awareness Month

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

The Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes December as "Puppy Mill Awareness" month. Legislation, enacted unanimously in 2020, sought to call attention to continuing problems in the pet trade that often bring dogs which are sick, underdeveloped, have genetic deformities or behavioral defects, including poor socialization, to the Commonwealth's consumers through puppy stores or on-line sales.

In designating Puppy Mill Awareness Month, legislators resolved that "Virginians be encouraged to observe the month by supporting efforts to raise awareness of puppy mills, support rescue organizations, and promote responsible dog breeding and responsible pet adoption."

Del. Kaye Kory, (D-38), co-chair of the General Assembly animal caucus, indicates that Virginia's animal laws have mostly kept puppy mills from operating in the Commonwealth. Puppy mill dogs bred in other states often find their way for sale here in puppy stores and on-line.

What is a 'puppy mill'? Kory explains, "It's commonly understood that puppy mills are facilities that breed many dogs at the lowest expense and dogs aren't treated well; are even treated cruelly. Some conditions are such that it hurts your heart and turns your stomach. Banning puppy mills is the way this country should go."



Delegate Kaye Kory (D-38th) chairs the Virginia General Assembly Animal Welfare caucus and has sponsored several bills to protect animals



Dogs at a Virginia puppy store sourced from out of state puppy mills before seizure by animal control for medication violations (May 2019)

Where do puppy stores get their dogs? Kory says, "In the past, this has been largely puppy mills ... That was the reason legislation we've worked on required certification of health; to protect dogs and owners, and detect puppy mills."

Kory advises that it's good to avoid puppy mills. She adds that as long as there is consumer demand, it will perpetuate puppy mills. She suggests "instead to adopt rescue dogs and cats, or seek out reputable small breeders ... but please visit rescues more than once before you purchase."

Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling Has Matching Gift

As part of our year end fundraising, two members of the bicycling community have committed to matching the first \$5,000 raised for Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling.

Our two donors lauded FABB volunteers' work uniting government, local leaders, bike organizations and residents towards a common goal of making bicycling transportation safe, accessible, and commonplace in Fairfax County for all ages, abilities, and skill levels.

"Many employers offer a matching gift program to encourage charitable giving within their company. It's a great way to double the impact of your gift. We hope to help spread the word about FABB's work and encourage others to support better bicycling," said Bruce Wright, FABB President.

This commitment will allow FABB to double the impact of the match with a one-time

gift or monthly gift commitment to turn \$5,000 in donations into \$10,000. Supporting FABB goes a long way to advance bicycling in Fairfax County, enabling the organization to hold more adult bicycle education classes, continue advocacy for better bike facilities, and better maintenance of those facilities, and so much more.

Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling is a community-led education and advocacy organization dedicated to improving transportation safety for everyone in Fairfax County. Since 2005, FABB has worked to improve conditions for bicyclists in Fairfax County, and independent localities within the county, to promote bicycling as a viable and safe means of transportation that is environmentally friendly, economically beneficial, healthful, and enjoyable.

Visit <https://fabb-bikes.org/donate/>

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