

Potomac ALMANAC

The Little Farms Garden Club of Potomac continues a tradition started in 1978, decorating the Great Falls Tavern for the holidays. This season, the greens and bows went up on Dec. 7. Page

Children's & Teens' Almanac 2021

Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas

PHOTO BY DEBBIE STEVENS

DECEMBER 15-21, 2021

ONLINE AT POTOMACALMANAC.COM



7 12609 Greenbriar Road — \$1,910,000



8 11300 Palatine Drive — \$1,725,000



September, 2021 Top Sales

IN SEPTEMBER, 2021, 61 POTOMAC HOMES SOLD BETWEEN \$4,900,000-\$357,500.



6 9814 Hall Road — \$2,100,000



2 9701 Spicewood Lane — \$2,425,000



1 9819 Newhall Road — \$4,900,000



5 9204 Potomac School Drive — \$2,195,000

Address.....	BR	FB	HB	Postal	City.....	Sold Price...	Type.....	Lot AC.	Postal Code ...	Subdivision.....	Date Sold
1 9819 NEWHALL RD	6...	6...	2	....	POTOMAC	\$4,900,000	Detached ..	1.08.....	20854	POTOMAC OUTSIDE	09/15/21
2 9701 SPICEWOOD LN	6...	7...	2	....	POTOMAC	\$2,425,000	Detached ..	2.09.....	20854	FALCONHURST	09/30/21
3 10821 TULIP LN	7...	6...	2	....	POTOMAC	\$2,318,000	Detached ..	3.39.....	20854	POTOMAC	09/27/21
4 9809 BENTCROSS DR.....	6...	6...	2	....	POTOMAC	\$2,200,000	Detached ..	2.01.....	20854	FALCONHURST	09/15/21
5 9204 POTOMAC SCHOOL DR	7...	7...	1	....	POTOMAC	\$2,195,000	Detached ..	0.45.....	20854	AVENEL	09/27/21
6 9814 HALL RD	5...	6...	3	....	POTOMAC	\$2,100,000	Detached ..	0.46.....	20854	HERITAGE FARM	09/30/21
7 12609 GREENBRIAR RD.....	5...	5...	2	....	POTOMAC	\$1,910,000	Detached ..	2.00.....	20854	PALATINE	09/27/21
8 11300 PALATINE DR.....	7...	6...	0	POTOMAC	\$1,725,000	Detached ..	2.00.....	20854	PALATINE	09/13/21

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HTTP://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM/NEWS/2021/OCT/29/POTOMAC-HOME-SALES-SEPTEMBER-2021/

2021 CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' ALMANAC

Welcome to our 2021 Children's Almanac sections. While submissions were still short of the pre-pandemic avalanche of children's and teens' art and writing, in 2021 students have delivered a delightful, sometimes unusual, panoply of expression. I've enjoyed the art and writing as we've downloaded it over many many hours in the last two weeks. And I hope you will also.

You can find digital copies of the papers, including the Children's and Teens' Almanac at <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/>. The papers should be posted by Thursday, Dec. 16. We deliver tens of thousands of papers to homes, businesses, public libraries and community centers, plus thousands more in email and digital. We will print extra copies, and restock at libraries and community centers. But also feel free to

print out pages from the PDFs or take a digital copy to a photo center to print out larger, high resolution copies of your child's art if you desire many copies.

It feels like a small, or not so small, miracle to have made it to the end of 2021 and be looking forward into the New Year. The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning in 2020. More recently we have seen the return of advertising for events and Grand Openings. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. Revenue is still short of our greatly curtailed costs.

At the end of 2020, we didn't have any idea how we would keep going. But our readers responded overwhelmingly to our Go Fund Me, bringing us within reach of our

goal of \$50,000. PPP funding, "forgivable loans," made our survival possible. Now we are still hoping for a grant from Rebuild Virginia to help get us into 2022. We applied almost a year ago, but it seems possible that our application might be reviewed while there is still money in the fund.

I think we can be characterized as pathological optimists. While there are forces out there that could make it impossible for us to keep going, we continue to push forward. While I have said this a few times without yet making it happen, keep your eyes open for our membership drive, which would hope for readers, sources and community members who would be interested in supporting us on a monthly basis.

One of the magical elements that helped us get this far was the presence on our staff

of an international journalism legend, Kemal Kurspahic, who served as managing editor and guiding light for decades. Kemal died tragically and unexpectedly this fall, having a stroke after minor surgery. We miss him daily. Keeping everything going has been harder since. You can read Kemal's obituary here: <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2021/sep/22/courage-journalism/>

We haven't done everything we aspire to do, we always aspire to greater community service. But we do know that the community is better off for Local Media Connection continuing to publish.

Now that we've told you how we're doing (ha!), let us know how you are doing, what you think about the state of our communities.

Thank you.

— Mary Kimm, kimm.mary@gmail.com



Student's name: Timothy Garland
Age: 10
Grade: 4
Town of residence: Potomac
School: Potomac Elementary
Name of teacher: Yanshun Sui
Town of school location: Potomac



HOOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL Mrs. Bryant's Sixth Grade English Class students

By: MICHAEL DERDZAKYAN

My dear friend,
Let me tell you of a country called Armenia.

With all its traditions,
With all its beliefs,
No one will believe what I'll tell you right now.

Even though this country is the most religious of all,
It has had a genocide.
1.5 million people dead,
With my great grandfather being one of the survivors.
Traveling from Van to Yerevan,

He lost his whole family except for a brother and two sisters.

Too harsh to imagine,
Too bad to think,
But after all this,
The country exists as ARMENIA.

Korean Pride

By: GRACE KIM

What does sharing who you are to a person without ears do?

Everyone's mouths are silenced, so we must write with fire.

The more we share, our pride goes higher.
It is a piece of us, like a beating heart, it

is ironclad.

I have a Korean mom, and a Korean dad.
My life without my Korean heritage is like a wasteland.

A wasteland from fairytales from long, long ago.

A wasteland is my heart, so I demand,
For you to eat the seeds I will sow.
Each of the seeds are different.

One gives food, another dance.
A dance with feather rimmed fans, the significant.

As the beautiful designs in our rice cakes enhances,

People only know us by our pop star dances.

It is not true Korean heritage,
Yet, that is all many people think of Korea.

It is not the true image.

True Korean culture is when you feel your steel heart overflow

with your courage, and you feel you grow five times bigger.

Our language created by a loving king,
Today, for him, songs we sing.

With letters inspired by the shape of humans,

it may have been on paper, but it's a gem, protected and enforced up 'till today.

It was made with love and passion,

Using the shapes of the ground and the sun.

Back then, we were constantly scared.

We constantly had to hide.

But there was one thing no one could hurt.
That was, and is, Korean Pride.

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.

NOW THRU JAN. 9

"Dreamscapes" Exhibition. At Park View Gallery in Glen Echo Park,

7300 Macarthur Blvd., Glen Echo. Reception on Saturday, Dec. 11 from 4-6 p.m.

Artist Vian Borchert stated: "Ever since I was a child I was a dreamer. I remember looking up at the sky and being fascinated by the clouds' movement and formations. The sky was always there for me to dream upon and provide me with joyful

feelings. As an artist, contemplation and observation on the world around me is of utmost importance to my work. The world, nature and the environment move me like no other. The works presented in this collection titled "Dreamscapes" are an accumulation of my dreams, my journeys, and what caught my eyes at a specific moment in time. The

art illustrates the snapshots of my visual voyages documenting my life through these paintings."

<cal1>Dec. 17-19

<cal2>The Christmas Revels. At The Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park, 7300 Glen Echo Drive, Glen Echo. Start your holidays with The Christmas Revels and timeless

American traditions: joyous carols, heartfelt spirituals, and toe-tapping dances that will bring us closer. Cost is \$20-\$55. Different dates: Friday, December 17, 7:30-9:45 p.m.; Saturday, December 18, 2:00-4:15 p.m. & 7:30-9:45 p.m.; Sunday,

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Santa Is Coming

Every December Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department decorates the reserve engine, loads Santa and a few additional volunteers, and head out into the community to collect unwrapped holiday gifts for children up to the age of 14. Unopened, unwrapped presents can be brought out to Santa as he passes by, or dropped off at either Cabin John Park VFD Fire Station.

The toy drive supports the National Center for Children and Families in Bethesda and the Scotland Drive Community Association in conjunction.

The week before Christmas volunteers begin wrapping and labeling all of the gifts and on Christmas Eve they are delivered to children who otherwise may not have any gifts at all.

Contactless Toy Drop-Off

You can also drop toys off at Station 10, on River Road near Seven Locks Road, or Station 30, on Falls Road close to Oaklyn Drive from now until Dec. 23.

Santa's Schedule

Wednesday, December 15

Congressional Country Club Estates
West Bethesda Park
Cohasset
Bradley Park
Burning Tree Valley
Frenchmen's Creek

Thursday, December 16

Locust Ridge
Oakwood Knolls
Make up missed runs

Friday, December 17

Alvermar Woods
Potomac Hunt Acres
Merry Go Round Farms
Beallmount
Lake Potomac
Stoney Creek Farms
Saddle Ridge
Piney Meetinghouse/Glen Road

Saturday, December 18

Potomac Village
Camotop
Falconhurst
Bradley Farms
McAuley Park
Kenddale Estates
Bradley Blvd Estates
Congressional Forest Estates

Sunday, December 19

Bannockburn
Bannockburn Estates
Al Marah
Wilson Knolls (1st Due Only)

Monday-Wednesday, December 20-22

Make up missed runs

Friday, December 24

Toy delivery



HOOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL Mrs. Bryant's Sixth Grade English Class students

Lena Berhane
Grade 6

HHMS (Herbert Hoover Middle School)

In The Eye of the Beholder

BY LENA BERHANE

"Mariam? Why weren't you at school yesterday?"

I looked at my feet. Should I be embarrassed? It's not like I chose to...

"I'm sorry...family event..." I mumbled. Kids looked at each other questioningly. My teacher, Mrs. Davis, smiled genuinely. She laughed and bent down a little to look me in the eye as I kicked my feet around in my chair.

"It's okay. I understand! It's not that deep, Mariam. Just make sure to come to school tomorrow for international day. Who is helping you with your trifold display?"

"My dad."

"Sounds nice!"

"Yeah."

After school, Mariam Tesfaye collapsed onto her bed. She didn't know what to expect. She wanted to rock her habesha dress, but what will other kids say? She didn't know,

And as a borderline shy girl, she knew she definitely didn't want to stand out.

"Mariam! Dinner is ready! Come down!"

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Mariam's little brother, Yonas, screeched from the bottom of the stairs.

"Okay! Coming!" she hopped off of her bed and ran downstairs.

"Hi, dad!" Mariam exclaimed when she saw her father standing at the bottom of the stairs as well. "You're back from work!"

"Hi, Mariye. How was school?"

"Good, overall. But... I need your help with something..."

"Yes? What is it?" he looked down at her in curiosity. She grabbed the bottom of his sleeve and dragged him into the kitchen. He sat down in a chair and Mariam sat down across from him.

"So... Here's the thing. International day is tomorrow. And I've just been wondering... should I wear my habesha dress? I would love to, but other kids might just end up wearing their normal clothes."

"Mariye, it's okay. Wear what you want, it doesn't matter what others are wearing, saying, or doing. Self-satisfaction is key," he reminded me. I smiled, pleased to hear those reassuring words.

"Now, do you want to talk about it over some kitfo?"

My mouth watered slightly and I bolted upright, my chair almost falling. "Yes!"

He looked at me sternly. "Mariam, the chair almost fell."

I smiled a "haha, yeah, I'm guilty" smile and he smiled back, sorta rolling his eyes.

He got up and started making the kitfo and I shuffled my hand around in the pocket of my lime-green hoodie. I didn't find what I was looking for, so I put my hands in the pockets of my light blue

jeans and felt for my phone. Once I found it, I pulled out my phone and texted my best friend, Akari.

Me: Hi

Akari: hey!

Me: How is your trifold-presentation for international day going?

Akari: Finished it yesterday! You?

Me: Same :) What are you gonna be wearing?

Akari: My grandmother sewed me a beautiful kimono

Me: Ooooooh send a pic! I wanna see!

Akari: Nope /_(-v-)/ your gonna have to wait and be surprised~

Me: kk I don't mind :) Can't wait to see. Peace out bestie, I gotta eat dinner

Akari: Lol k bye :>

"Okay it's ready," He dumped a few spoons of kitfo onto a plate of injera. Yonas ran into the kitchen and shouted "I smell kitfo! Where is it! You can't hide it from me!" My dad got up and once after preparing a plate, sat back down. We said a prayer and then started eating.

We enjoyed some nice kitfo: grinded meat,

cooked and seasoned to make it extra spicy, onto a piece of cultural flatbread, known in Ethiopia as injera.

"Dad? Why did you keep me home from school yesterday. I mean, I know it was Ethiopian Christmas, but..." Mariam tapped the side of her plate, hoping he got the hint, because she wanted answers.

"Because this is our culture. As much as I value your education, it matters to me that you hold your culture dear to your heart," he explained firmly.

"B-but kids were looking at each other weirdly! I was the only one out that day! If this is what 'culture' is gonna do to me, I don't love it."

"Mariam. We will not discuss this any further, I have said the most I could. This conversation is now done," He calmly got up to put his dish in the sink and walked away. Mariam furrowed her brow in worry. She didn't know what was to come.

~International Day~

The school gym had never felt so huge. All over the tables were trifold cardboard displays. There was loud instrumental-pop music playing in the background. She was in awe.

Maraim looked down at herself and smiled. She wore a long dress with long sleeves. On

SEE IN THE EYE OF, PAGE 11

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

A Cruise to Die For

BY ELA JALIL

I took a deep breath of the fresh salty air. There's nothing quite like the feeling of being at sea. I come alive when I feel the beating sun warm my skin, and watch the wake behind the yacht as it breaks through the water. Sea sickness has never been a problem for me, something that unfortunately cannot be said for my fellow passengers. The skin of eight of the 12 people on board has a greenish tinge, telling me they would rather have this excursion on land. Armed with sea sickness bracelets, apples, and the ever-helpful horizon trick, the captain was able to uplift the spirits onboard. A small grin settled on his face when I flashed him a quick smile and a wink as he passed by. Now with only slightly pale faces, most everyone was sitting and relaxed in deck chairs with a few playing shuffleboard in the long shadow cast by a basketball backboard.

This is one of the nicest yachts I've ever been on, but I should have expected that given the excessive wealth of the people on board. Eying the diamond necklace that the blonde sitting next to me was wearing, I pictured myself fingering those jewels as I wore them proudly. When she turned to smile at me, I quickly morphed my face into a grin, praying that she didn't see me staring at her.

"Mira, you have just got to try this lobster," Camila called from the opposite side of the deck.

Thankful to leave the awkward situation I had found myself in, I walked over to Camila who was holding court on the starboard side of the yacht. She truly was the queen bee, and the only reason I was there in the first place. Our friendship was sparked when I bumped into her at a cafe, causing her to drop her food all over the floor. After treating her to lunch to apologize for my blunder, we realized that we had a lot in common. We've been inseparable for the past couple of weeks. That's how I think friendships work with Camila. Super intense in the beginning, and slowly petering out until she moves onto the next thing. I know that my time with her was running short, so I was enjoying the luxury while I could. I perched on the edge of her seat and stole a lobster claw from her plate while flashing her a smile. She looked at me above her sunglasses and smirked, then pulled me into a tight side hug.

"Today's going to be so much fun," she gushed. "This wouldn't be possible without

you. Thanks for recommending the captain."

At the mention of his title the captain looked over at us, locking eye contact with me. I gave him an imperceptible nod and turned back to Camila to laugh at a joke she just told. As we sat there, surrounded by the extravagance of it all while soaking in the beauty of a bright summer day, I felt the boat picking up speed along with a change registering on the passengers faces. The green tinge was back. Most of the people tried to adjust, but not Camila. She rushed onto the bridge to complain to the captain. I couldn't hear their heated discussion.

When she returned, she was pacified, albeit still nauseous from the increased speed.

"We have to go faster because there's a storm coming and we need to get ahead of it," Camila whispered to me. "Don't tell anyone else we don't want to alarm them."

"Got it," I whispered back with a concerned look on my face.

One by one, everyone went below to try and ease the seasickness they were experiencing. Beforehand, two people vomited over the rail as the captain kept his relentless pace. In fact, I felt that he might be going faster. At that point there were only three people above deck, the captain, Camila, and me. Camila clutched her stomach and groaned but refused my offer to take her below. Nothing was going to stand in her way. Determined to enjoy the day at sea, she launched into a long-winded story of a gala she attended a couple of years ago. I tuned her out as I stared out into the turbulent waters. In time, even Camila couldn't stay above deck. She turned away from me and stumbled down the stairs to the lounge.

As soon as she was out of sight I rushed to the bridge. "How much longer is this going to take?" I hissed. "We can't keep them below deck much longer!"

"We're here," the captain said, pointing at the jagged rocks ahead as water glistened off of their tips – a beautiful but deadly sight.

When I looked into the captain's eyes, I realized the flood of emotions in him as he comprehended the oncoming danger. "What am I doing," he yelled as he began to turn the wheel away from the rocks, impelling me to grab his arm and turn him towards me. Looking into his eyes, I cautioned him, "Deep breaths," I said, taking exaggerated inhaleds until he calmed down. As his eyes clouded over, I braced myself for the impact. The captain increased the speed projecting the yacht towards the rocks, impaling the



Audrey Benford
16
Grade 11
Potomac, MD
Winston Churchill HS

boat. Its steel hull exterior no match for the craggy reef, it was quickly pierced.

Upon impact, I could hear the screams from the people below. I smiled, knowing that there was no escape before I dove over the side of the once magnificent yacht. I willed my true self to come forward once I hit the water. When my legs fused together to create my tail, I propelled through the water calling my sisters out of hiding. They came in a swarm, eyes glinting, teeth flashing, and tails lashing through the water. Whipped into a frenzy, they sought out their victims -- nicely packed below deck for easy pickings.

I tried not to think of Camila. Was she

screaming in fear? Was she deathly silent and trying to hide? Or was she trying to fight the rising water and my sisters in a futile attempt to survive? I cast her out my mind with a shrug. I've known countless girls like her throughout the centuries who've all met the same grisly end. There's nothing I could do when my sisters got their talons on her.

The one thing I grabbed during the attack was the shining diamond necklace, whose owner is no longer whole. I placed it around my neck and smiled.

This was my most successful endeavor yet, but I'm glad that I stayed hopeful even during the failures. Rebranding takes time, and the Sirens aren't going anywhere.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 3

December 19, 2:00-4:15 p.m. & 7:00-9:15 p.m.

DEC. 17-27

"The Nutcracker." Show times are December 17, 18, 19, 23, 26 and 27. At Robert E. Parilla Performing Arts Center,

Montgomery College, Rockville. Presented by Maryland Youth Ballet. Mechanical dolls, life-sized mice, dancing snowflakes, and an enchanting kingdom of sweets return to stage this holiday season for Maryland Youth Ballet's LIVE production of The Nutcracker. Set to Tchaikovsky's timeless score, the

incredible dancing and dazzling costumes bring to life the story of Marie and her Nutcracker. Join us back at the theater for the full-length classic choreographed by Artistic Director, Olivier Muñoz. Tickets start at \$27. Visit the website: <https://www.marylandyouth-ballet.org/tickets/>

LIBRARIES OFFER FREE WORKSHOPS FOR JOB SEEKERS

Montgomery County Public Libraries is offering online workshops and one-on-one sessions geared toward assisting job seekers and entrepreneurs throughout December. All workshops are free and offered virtually.

An internet connection and a device (such as a smartphone, tablet or computer) are required for participation.

Throughout December – Every Monday 9:30-11:30 a.m. H.I.R.E. (Helping Individuals Reach Employment) Sessions

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

The Seventh Call

BY ADEN SILVERMAN

Prologue

Now you may know the feeling of release. After a long hard day, whether it's at school or work. But for me, a couple of years. Hello, I'm David. That's David with an I. As in, I hate this place and am going to escape it. Let's wind back to before this place was my new "home," let's call it. I had a good life, you could say. I had a somewhat well-paying job and a wife, Avigail. And two children, Yoseph and Sarah. Yoseph is three, and Sarah is five. We had a good house too. We did not have many friends, though. No one liked us that much. And because there aren't many Jews in the city, there wasn't exactly anything we could do about it. Then, one day, while we were sitting at the table having breakfast, there was a knock at the door. There isn't anyone who usually knocks at it beside us when we need to get back inside, so I was skeptical about who it was. Avigail and I exchanged a look, and she ushered the kids to the other room. I looked through the peephole and saw two tall men in black suits in the most excellent pair of shades I've ever seen. I opened the door to welcome them in, but instead of saying something to them, I opened my mouth, but nothing came out. My eyes became blurry on the sides, and I felt something stinging in my stomach. By then, in the other room, my wife and kids had started playing a game. Then I realized what had happened; I'd been shot.

They dragged me out of my house, silently closing the door behind me. I struggled to break out of their tight grip, and they weren't even working themselves, not even flinching as they dragged me to what looked like a bus. I managed to look back to the window. I saw Avigail looking in complete shock as she saw what was happening. I was falling unconscious by the second I just knew it. Pain struck me in the stomach earlier, but now it was coursing through my body, exploding through my veins, it felt like. External blood was covering my whole lower body. It's bright red shining in the sunlight, Like if you could see liquid fire. The blood was streaming through my skin like a river flowing past a mountain. Unable to think. Relaxed like you're dying. Somehow blocking out the pain as life itself. Sadness and life are flashing before your very eyes. The blood is resembling your strength, weakness, emotions, and reality, coursing through your body. Your body is resembling life itself and the endless possibility for change. And the veins, the veins resembling your family and friends, and the people who support you through your long journey, the body. The long journey through life.

Always going to be there for you, no matter the circumstances. That is the thought process that goes through your mind, usually around right before you're about to die.

I woke up in what looked like a living room-sized tent; I was sprawled out on a worn-out old cot; I could hear yelling and beeping of the a-a machine hooked up to me? What was happening?

I remembered all of it, I had fallen unconscious, but my mind had somehow remembered a bit. I could see old, torn-clothed men and some young men covered in wounds. I heard the screeches of the tires- the bus; I was on the bus, where am I now?

I returned to the present from a heavy shaking on my arm, looked up, and there was rain dripping through the tent. I saw it slowly come down, with a *plop* right onto my... White t-shirt? A nice cool breeze came through the tent flap as someone walked in. They were a big, broad man with a badge of some sort and a blood-stained plaid uniform, "Ekelhaftes Schwein aufstehen" He said to me, "Mutig von Ihnen anzunehmen, dass ich es nicht wusste," I said back. "Eh, fair enough," he responded. "Welcome to camp Auschwitz; well, you are not very welcomed, but we will carry on. Get up now," he said. I got up and took off the series of items hooked up to me. I had no idea how long I was unconscious, didn't know the time either, or what camp Auschwitz meant. My best bet was to follow him to see what was happening. He gestured to me to exit the tent. When I pushed the flap of the cloth, I looked around; many men were shouting, some man got hit with a baton and shrieked loudly, what was happening?! A foul smell filled the air. A lot of gasoline oil was what I pinned the scent to. There were what looked like guard towers surrounding the area.

We continued to walk to a remote shack where a large muscular man, "Igor," called out. The man was focused on what looked like security cameras monitoring the area, startled. He turned around and faced me and then to the person who woke me up, then he stared back at me and had a grim face of disgust. "What do you want?" the big fellow said "this guy's new here. Are there any free cells yet?" "Cells?!" I thought to myself, excruciatingly exasperated. "Yeah, Row C," the security man said. My head felt heavy. I couldn't breathe. Something had hit my head- and hard. I fell back on my knees and hit the soft, damp soil. It must have rained recently. Some dirt fell in my mouth. I coughed it up along with some blood. My mouth felt numb. Heck- my whole body. I couldn't feel a thing, and then a foot slammed onto my back. And I was knocked out.

Chapter 1: The Acclimation procedure

I woke up to the sound of some sort of clanging, a rock? No, too loud to be a rock, my eyes felt heavy- really heavy- so the only choice I had was to wake my body up with a jolt, alright, 3, 2,1 BANG! My head hit something- and hard I forced myself to reopen

my eyes, and I was on the bottom of what looked to be an old worn-out bunk bed. I think I woke the thing sleeping atop there because he rolled off the bed right onto the floor with a loud WHAM. He lay there on the solid stone ground for a solid minute, I tell you. I guess he was a heavy sleeper because he didn't budge after that. I looked past him, and I was in some sort of house-like area. There were dozens of people lying on the floor fast asleep, whom I didn't even see. I heard babies crying in what was heard to be just the room over, thin walls apparently.

A loud voice echoed the hallways; it sounded like a gym, the reverb hurt my ears. "Get up!" it bellowed. I opened the door from the room to find a ton of other people doing the same. Their eyes were weak, their bodies grim and tired. What IS this place? I thought to myself. I followed everyone else down a set of stairs and through a wide door. The people I was following didn't even hold the door for me; it slammed in my face, and when I went to push it open, it backed up. I got shoved right back into the door, on the floor.

Someone opened the door from above me, and my head fell onto rough, cold dirt. I got up, brushed off my now brown-spotted white shirt and pants, and continued to follow the others.

Chapter 2: Lewis Winter

Two years ago, before I got into this wicked place, I was broke, no home, no family or friends, nothing. That disappeared when I got a job offer, a new hope for me, something to help me get better and back on my feet. Or at least, that's what I thought.

Every couple of seconds, the whole bus shook. Everyone was bouncing around in their seats, trying not to get tossed around as the entire road was filled with rocks, some big, some as tiny as pebbles. But it didn't matter. The boss was 20 years old. A feather could stop the bus right in its tracks. It was also a very twisty road. Combined with people trying to latch onto their seats from the rocks, they also avoided smashing into the glass window. We were heading to the abandoned village that we found. A couple of years back, we wanted to create our own area. So that's what we did.

After years of building, we were ready. We overthrew the government; Raid every governmental building. We got guns, ammo, and a lifetime supply of death, after two years. WE were the new government. WE run this. Not those stupid, ignorant little "jews" igch, even the word disgusts me. After we took over almost every building that was even remotely associated with those government brats, they didn't know what was right. They thought they knew everything. But the thing is, you aren't more intelligent than your ruling. You don't command them; they command you.

Chapter 3: Get to know you

Amongst all of the hatred and things

that I will never talk about again, Ty was always there to speak with me. Ty was a tall black man who had broad shoulders. He was exceptionally skinny for his size. Underneath that shirt is just a couple of bones taped together with gorilla glue, along with some skin strapped on with duct tape.

Ty and I were sitting down at a broken bench table, eating our supper. Nails were sticking out of the bottom and tops, damaged wood as sharp as a knife. You had to be very careful where you sat in the cafeteria. Sometimes you had to sit on the ground because the inmates would take all of the seats. That might not sound as bad as it is, but the floor is infested with ants and tiny bugs trying to take your food. Food was something as rare as diamonds. Only once every two days could we eat. Water was from the river, filtered by a broken system. Most of the time, there was algae in the water cups. You would be pretty lucky not to digest it.

We were eating the usual refried beans with a cup of water and two blueberries on the side.

We started to talk about our day, what we did and what we saw; small talk, I guess, when I heard a sharp screech from outside, then two, then three, then a whole thunderstorm. I couldn't hear a thing at all besides yelling and shouting. My ears stung, and I had no idea what happened. I fell to the ground. Then I smelled it. Gunpowder. The smell that stung your nose. It couldn't be, right? I ran outside to see what had happened, hoping that it wasn't what I thought it was- but I was wrong.

"YOU DO NOT, EVER DISRESPECT US. SAY ADONAI IS MY RULER, AND YOU WILL GO RIGHT WITH THE REST OF THEM, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY. SAY WHAT YOU WANT, BUT WE CAN- WE WILL KILL YOU. DO. NOT. MESS. WITH. US. I am your god. I am your ruler. I command you." Ty was right next to me. I didn't even realize, but he was covered in blood from shirt to pants. He made a little sound, but I quickly covered his mouth. Unfortunately, they heard and shouted "do you want to say something?" The crowd around is walked back into a circle formation. Just the 2 of us in the middle while he was standing on the stage. The guards drew their weapons. I looked at him. He looked frozen solid. "Well?" he shouted. Ty frantically shook his head. "Good, I wouldn't want to have a problem to deal with right now. I have more important things to deal with, rather than you. Ty's head was sweating so much. "Boys, lower your weapons." He said. Ty, with all his strength, said, "thank you, sir!" In which he responded, "It's Adolf Hitler; to you."The Seventh Call

Guaranteed Income Pilot Program

On Dec. 14, Montgomery County Council unanimously voted to approve a nearly \$2 million special appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget for a Guaranteed Income Pilot Program. The funding was introduced by lead sponsors Councilmember Will Jawando and Council President Gabe Alborno. Council Vice President Evan Glass and Councilmembers Tom Hucker, Craig Rice, Hans Riemer and Nancy Navarro were cosponsors.

This special appropriation will provide the initial funding to implement a Montgomery County Guaranteed Income Pilot Program. The pilot program would enroll 300 households and provide \$800 per month for 24 months.

This may include individuals or families with or without children. A collaborative planning effort is underway to determine how people will be enrolled into this pilot program. Efforts to address any impact from guaranteed income on other benefits, and the structure for the evaluation of outcomes for participant households are also underway.

"Guaranteed Income Programs are showing up in cities and counties across the U.S." said Councilmember Will Jawando. "The belief that people have the ability to make the best choices to improve their economic position has shown to be true in case after case. We're proud to be the first jurisdiction in Maryland to introduce a Guaranteed Income Pilot. As we continue through recovery from COVID-19, we look forward to helping many Montgomery County residents become more financially stable and improve their quality of life."

Guaranteed income is a direct, recurring cash payment to a specific, targeted group of people without strings attached. The purpose of the program is to help alleviate poverty, provide a form of financial stability and give residents the ability to make their own

choices to improve their economic position.

"The Guaranteed Income Pilot Program is a solution to assist families in permanently exiting poverty," said Council President Alborno. "The first of its kind in the State of Maryland, this program will help provide economic mobility to our most vulnerable residents and put an end to generational poverty."

The pilot will be a public-private partnership with a \$1 million grant from the Meyer Foundation to support this effort. Evaluation of the program will be built into the pilot as it is designed.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, data showed that 40 percent of Americans could not afford a \$400 emergency. In 2018, it was estimated that 47 percent of Montgomery County's renter households were rent burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing. COVID-19 has disproportionately had a negative financial impact on women and people of color. Guaranteed income is expected to be an effective component of helping households recover from the economic impacts of the health crisis

COVID-19 Hospitalizations Are Up in County

Sean O'Donnell, the county's public health emergency preparedness manager, said that as of Monday, Dec. 13, there were 141 COVID-related hospitalizations countywide, 106 in acute care beds and 35 in intensive care unit beds, which CDC considers "moderate utilization." This is higher than in previous months.

Although the county currently has adequate bed capacity, county health officials have worked with local hospitals to develop plans for increased capacity in case of a surge. In addition, state health officials have directed hospitals throughout Maryland to provide updated emergency plans addressing a potential surge to the Maryland Department of Health, according to O'Donnell

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

Sign up to meet virtually/confidentially one-on-one with a career counselor for advice and assistance with your job search. Register:

Monday, Dec. 20: <https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/5835481>

Monday, Dec. 27: <https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/5835485>

Wednesday, Dec. 15: 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Introduction to Entrepreneurship
Are you just starting your entrepreneurial journey? This workshop will cover the fundamentals of building a business and help you determine if you're ready to become a small business owner. Presented in partnership with the Maryland Women's

Business Center. Register: <https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/5835844>
Wednesday, Dec. 15: 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. How to Apply for Jobs with Montgomery County Government
Find out everything you need to know about applying for jobs with Montgomery County Government. Register: <https://mcpl.libnet.info/event/5194274>

Program Contact: Adrienne Vanlare, Adrienne.vanlare@montgomery-countymd.gov

DEER MANAGEMENT AT ROCK CREEK PARK
Since 2013, when the National Park

Service (NPS) began reducing the deer population in Rock Creek Park, the park's tree seedling density has almost tripled. To continue to protect and restore native plants and promote healthy and diverse forests, Rock Creek Park will conduct deer management operations between Nov. 22, 2021, and March 31, 2022. During this period, the NPS plans to reduce deer populations in Rock Creek Park and other areas under Rock Creek Park's management. These areas could include Melvin Hazen Park, Soapstone Valley Park, Pinehurst Parkway, Glover Archbold Park, Battery Kemble Park and Fort Totten Park, among others.

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A Tradition Since 1978

Decking out the Great Falls Tavern for the holidays.



On Dec. 7, 2021 National Park Ranger Mark Myers continues his long tradition of helping the Little Farms Garden Club with the decorating of the Tavern. He's been doing it as long he can remember.



The Little Farms Garden Club of Potomac continues a holiday tradition decorating the Great Falls Tavern.

The Little Farms Garden Club of Potomac decorates the Great Falls Tavern for the holidays every year in early December, although the tradition was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic.

As reported in the Potomac Almanac in 2014:

"A tradition established in 1978 by the women of Potomac's Little Farms Garden Club continued when over two dozen of its members enhanced the historic Great Falls Tavern with a

bounty of verdant foliage. The lush and fragrant collection of shrubbery and botanicals included boughs of magnolia and white pine, Fraser Fir, holly, and nandina with berries. The spirit of the season filled the air as the women wired, tied, and draped greenery while they enjoyed the great outdoors on the unseasonably warm 72-degree day.

"Little Farms Garden Club formed the partnership with the rangers at the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park to meld their talents and resources to beautify the national landmark for the community during

the holiday season. The tavern, built in 1828 as a lockhouse, had north and south wings added in 1831 as suggested by its first locktender, W.W. Fenlon. He aspired to establish an inn that would accommodate the growing numbers of travelers visiting the area to escape the city's heat and hustle and bustle.

"The centerpiece of the overall design features a 40-foot long garland above the main portal hung by Park Ranger Mark Myers. "I've been helping them as long as I can remember. The garland was plenty heavy. It's definitely an armful," Myers said."



The broad side of the tavern was also decked out for holiday cheer.

PHOTOS BY
DEBBIE STEVENS





Karah Lombardo and Alex Glaubitz out to enjoy the remaining fall colors.



Scott Holliday heads off to enjoy the day on the river.

Enjoying the Day in a Beautiful Place

It was just still before Thanksgiving, and there were some beautiful warm days to enjoy out along the towpath and the Potomac River.

PHOTOS BY DEBBIE STEVENS



Julie Lang and her stand up paddleboard.



Elizabeth Riel, and Josie and Tara Bingley



Kate Glynn and Matt Ryan are bookends to Penny.



PHOTO BY RON GREEN

Cynthia Fox (center), of Alexandria, visits with members of Afghan refugee Javi and family at Quantico, bringing donations of clothing and other essentials.

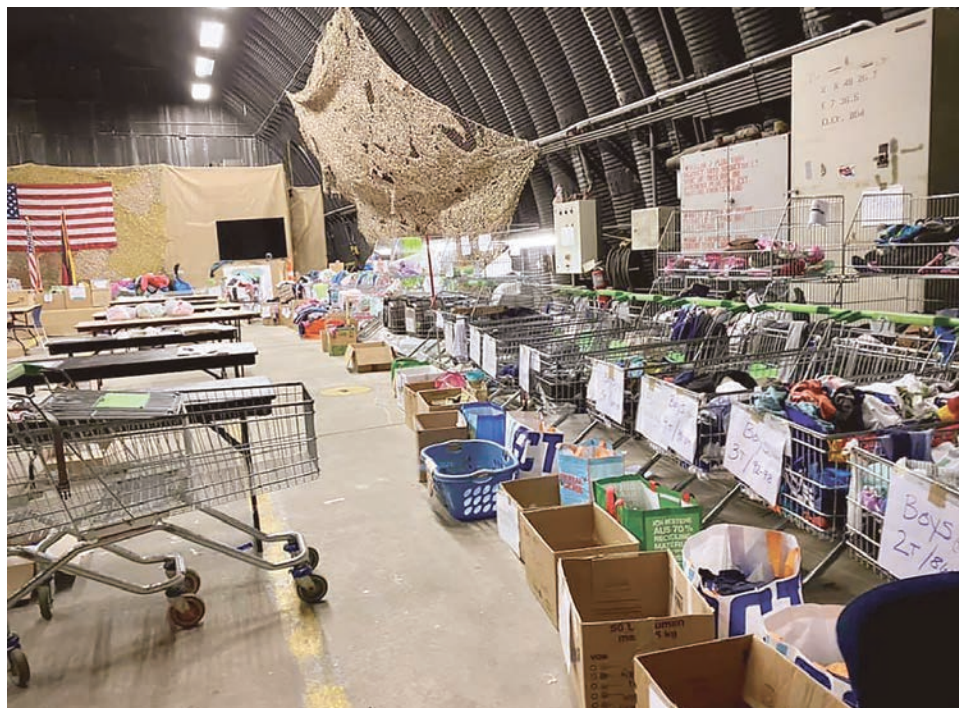


PHOTO BY LINSEY WISE

A second sort of donations at Ramstein Air Base separated clothing by sex, age and size.

Local Veterans Aid Afghan Evacuee Family

Support Crosses Three Continents.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE ALMANAC

This is the story of one family's successful evacuation from Afghanistan to escape the brutal policies and actions of the Taliban. It's also the story of how groups of northern Virginia residents made the evacuation possible in the face of shrinking hope and rising danger, and how they helped one family start their journey to freedom and safety.

There are many Afghan families whose stories are similar to this family's and many neighbors who felt the call to help. Situated so close to the global seat of power that is Washington D.C., many residents in our area are among those involved in high profile events. What makes this story different is that local people took on the role that the government could not, making the ultimate difference in the lives of many who aided the U.S. in time of war.

MEET THE FOX-GREENS, both career Army veterans now residing in Alexandria. Ron Green served in Afghanistan in the 528th Special Operation Support Battalion from 2000-2003; his wife served in Kandahar in 2005-06. The Northern Virginia couple, together with others, organized a core group of veterans after a plea from friend and fellow veteran Thomas Koppen. Koppen's Afghan translator, Javid, who served in support of U.S. troops through 2017, had called seeking assistance. Javid's long period of application for a Special Immigrant Visa, begun in 2016, had not been finalized. Dangers and



PHOTO BY JON-PAUL DELANGE

Northern Virginian group organizer, veteran Ron Green (left), of Alexandria, stands with Afghan evacuee Javi on Quantico Marine Base after Javi's escape from Kabul with his family.

pressures were building in the final days of U.S. troop withdrawal. Javid was desperately worried for his safety and his family's.

The Special Immigrant Visa program is available to people who worked with the U.S. Armed Forces or under Chief of Mission authority as a translator or interpreter in Iraq or Afghanistan.

When Green's friends recognized there was no existing system within the State Department or Department of Defense that could coordinate with these allied families like Javid's, the veterans organized. They took on the task of getting the interpreter and his family out of danger. In what Fox described as a "spider web" of contacts, including those from her service in Kandahar Province and Kuwait, several groups connected



PHOTO BY COLBY WISE

Northern Virginians residing in Germany buy out the IKEA store inventory of blankets to contribute to evacuees arriving at Ramstein Air Base

to help each other in their mission, including some still on active duty in Afghanistan.

Communications in Afghanistan required encryption to avoid leading the Taliban to the hidden families.

Over several harrowing days and nights, the family, six girls under the age of ten, six women, and six men, reached the airport and were safely airlifted to Germany. Their escape included narrowly missing the suicide bombing at Kabul International Airport.

Javid's was not the only family aided by the group. "Our efforts to date have successfully rescued 12 translators and their families. This is great news, but the work continues," according to the group's Go Fund Me. "There are many others our group is working on getting out of Afghanistan including interpreters who directly supported Special Operations, Medical Professionals, and work-

Give to Help Refugees

At a time of the year when many more area citizens will open their hearts to help others in need, these local charities are offering assistance to Afghan evacuees who must start again from nothing:

LUTHERAN SERVICES
National Capital Area,
www.lssnca.org

AFGHAN YOUTH RELIEF FOUNDATION
Chantilly,
www.aryl.org

CATHOLIC CHARITIES
Arlington,
www.cceda.net

HOMES NOT BORDERS
Washington D.C.,
www.homesnotborders.org

LOCAL VETERAN SPONSORED FUND
<https://gofund.me/b5cf1eb0>

ers who supported an Afghan Orphanage all of whom are in fear for their lives for working with US Forces. Many more still in harm's way, trying to get out of Afghanistan."

Read more at <https://gofund.me/b5cf1eb0>

MEANWHILE IN GERMANY, at U.S. Air Force, Ramstein Air Base, another northern Virginia couple, Colby and Linsey Wise were also heeding the call to help. The Wise family, formerly of Falls Church, had been in Germany for four years with Colby's company, providing Defense Department support. Ramstein Air Base was designated to receive evacuees airlifted from Kabul as a point of departure to the U.S. and other countries.

The Ramstein Air Base newsletter told of a growing effort, "What started as a clothing and shoe drive turned into a large do-

Over 50 Years of Iconic Music Venue

Birchmere tell-all book by local writers published in time for the holidays.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE ALMANAC

For a band to play at the Birchmere in Alexandria, it was like almost making it to the big-time concert world of stadiums and arenas. Since opening in the mid 1960s, the Birchmere has been a launching ground for many musicians, showcasing songs and sounds that make it an important place to start a musicians tour. The festoon out front featured iconic musicians like Pete Seger, Arlo Guthrie, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles and Joan Baez to name a few.

An entertainment venue like that can't go through 55 years of concerts without a few stories to tell, and those stories are the meat behind the newly released book "All the Roads Lead to the Birchmere, America's Legendary Music Hall," that hit the shelves in early November. Authors Gary Oelze and Stephen Moore dipped into their memory banks, and the memory banks of many others that have been on stage there to come up with this 472-page documentary on paper.

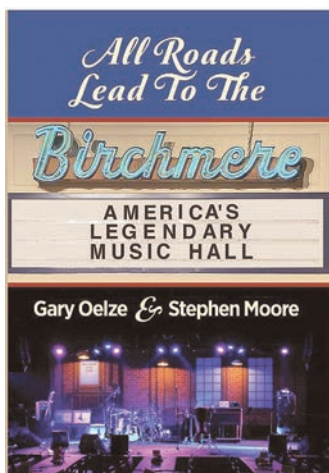
"Many moments stand out as

markers that built the reputation of this durable music venue," Oelze wrote. Oelze lives in the Del Ray part of Alexandria, while Moore lives in Bethesda.

"We interviewed about 120 musicians, they viewed it as an intimate listening room," Moore said. The sound is different in a small place like this, and Moore found that some

of the musicians prefer being close to the audience. "Here they can really see the people, they love that," Moore said.

"Intimate," is a place with about 500 seats and an artistic neon sign that looks out to Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray. The current venue is the third place the Birchmere has been over the years. They were at another location in Del Ray, and a spot in Shirlington before that. It's tough to survive with prime real estate like that on only concert rev-



Famed music venue is in an area that used to be known as Arlandria.

enue, so the food and drinks they serve are part of their financial picture.

People are there to see the shows though and hear the music of Vince Gill from the Pure Prairie League, and the Eagles, Richie Havens of Woodstock fame, Herb Alpert and Mary Chapin Carpenter to name a few. "Many of the musicians see

the Birchmere as their first stop on tours," Moore said.

Over the years, there are tales of musical discovery, but also tales of time and place.

For example, one of the stories involved the Grateful Dead's Mickey Hart who arrived late, and the Dead Heads were camped out all over the place around the Birchmere. The place was filled and it "almost exploded," said Moore.

Another story involved Ray Charles, a blind musician who took



Authors Gary Oelze, left, of Del Ray, and Stephen Moore of Bethesda.

a time out unknowingly in one of the technician's rooms.

In 1991, Woody Harrelson of the television series "Cheers," hammered out a country set with his band "Three Cool Cats." Movie producer John Waters does a Christmas Show every December that's more comedy and commentary than music. Waters is coming again this year on December 15.

The book has 33 chapters on acts throughout the years, and thumb-

nail pictures of the musicians and the early days. Some are recognized at first sight, and some are not, at least not to the music fans of today's Top 40. The book took two years to write and the cover was produced by Stilson Greene, an artist in Leesburg. An afterward was written by newsman Bob Schieffer, who had his own country band at one point.

The book is available on Book-Locker.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

HOOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mrs. Bryant's Sixth Grade English Class students

In The Eye of the Beholder

FROM PAGE 4

the cuffs of her sleeves and the hem of her skirt was a green and red pattern. She walked around in an attempt to find people to socialize with, until her eyes wandered around the gym enough for her to come to a horrifying discovery.

Her worst nightmare, in fact.

Everyone was wearing their casual clothes; hoodies, jeans, leggings, t-shirts, sweaters, etc. She stopped smiling at herself and panicked. It was her worst thought, live in action; being the only one wearing cultural clothing.

"Dad!" Mariam exclaimed.

She ran toward her father, who was standing behind the table that had the cardboard display on it. "It happened! I told you it would happen!"

"What is it?"

"All the other kids are wearing normal clothes! Dad, I told you this would be a disaster."

"It's fine, just go out and talk to your friends. They probably will love your dress, you look lovely."

Her dad was trying to help, so she decided to give it a chance,

"Okay fine," Mariam mumbled in a mopey voice. She left her father and walked around to look at the presentations. She couldn't find Japan, meaning Akari wasn't here yet. That's where

she's from, so it's kinda a no-brainer that she would do that country. She loved the German display; they had those German gummy bears (we both know what I'm talking about)! Yum!

"Why are you wearing that dress?" a random girl with blond and freckles asked. An elementary schooler.

"Oh, u-um... it's for my culture. This is the traditional clothing in, um you know, Ethiopia." she responded to the kindergartener as calmly as she could. "Why do you ask?"

"Well," the little girl messed with her little blond ponytail. "Nobody else is wearing dress. You weird," she walked away.

"Little kids are weird, but she

has a point." said a boy. Her older brother, based on the resemblance. "What are you wearing?"

She looked around and saw another boy whispering and pointing. Mariam couldn't take it anymore. She ran out of the gym and into the bathroom.

She sat under a sink, hugging her knees, and silent tears streamed down her face and onto her sleeves. She tried to wipe her face but the material of the sleeve irritated her skin, so she just left the tears to dry on her face.

"Mariam?"

A soft, kind voice uttered her name. God? She wondered for a silly second..

She walked in. It was just Akari. For some reason, she was still as shocked, yet euphoric.

"Hey, Akari. Woah, your kimono... ! It's amazing! It's so purple! The pink cherry blossoms add such a pretty touch! It's beautiful!" She looked her up and down in awe.

"So is your dress," she smiled warmly.

"I don't think everyone else thinks so..."

Akari joined Mariam under the

sink. "Please dont...it's kinda dirty down here... uh, your Kimono..."

"It's okay, no worries. Have you been here the whole time? I'm sorry for being late, we had to do some last minute changes to my kimono... it didn't fit quite right," she laughed awkwardly and as though it were contagious, Mariam smiled.

"How are you so chill?"

"Because I love my culture and you should too! It's beautiful! All cultures are beautiful in their own way. It just depends on who you talk to, beauty is always in the eye of the beholder. It's an opinion. Now, we both look amazing. So let's go do that Japanese-ethiopian dance we practiced," she crawled out and stood, and Mariam did the same.

"Let's make them jealous, yeah!"

"Mhm!"

They ran out of the bathroom and into the gym right on time.

"Thank you for that beautiful traditional Irish dance, Clara! Even though it used pop music... it was still quite creative! Now, we have a special event: A japanese-ethiopian dance! That's right folks, a crossover!" The announcer, a girl

not much older than Mariam, perhaps an 8th grader,

ran her fingers through her afro and then calmly walked backstage. Mariam and Akari ran backstage as the curtains closed. Then they emerged, the traditional Ethiopian music booming from the speakers. They held out pastel pink fans with pink cherry blossoms on them. They both started off with a traditional japanese dance during a slower part, and then and then, as the music got faster, got into a traditional ethiopian dance. The kids stared in awe; they were jealous, in fact. But even if they hadn't been, Mariam felt so happy at that moment. She loved being able to dance like this. She loved being able to express her own culture (also encompassing her friend's culture). This is my culture. I love being able to say that about this. I love my culture.

If I am the beholder, in my eyes, This is beautiful... And that is all that matters.

Last Minute Holiday Gift Ideas for Teachers

Thoughtful and original presents for educators.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Among those who've faced workplace challenges over the last 18 months are teachers. From holding the attention of a class of third graders who are attending school though a video conferencing platform to offering accommodations virtually to students with learning differences, teachers have had to be among the most creative.

If you're still looking for a holiday gift to bring cheer to thank your favorite instructor, consider forgoing apple-themed presents and selecting a gift with meaning.

"A couple of practical and thoughtful ideas, since we're still taking COVID safety precautions, would be interesting face masks or hand sanitizer. We teachers use those all day," said Linda Reinhold, a teaching assistant in Bethesda Md. "Teachers might also appreciate hand cream or lotions since using hand sanitizer frequently can dry out your skin."

Instead of sweets and other edibles, Courtney Thomas of The Picket Fence in Burke, Va. suggests a gift that keeps giving, long after the holiday season. "One of our more popular gifts this season is our Growing Candle," she said. "These candles come in sweet little pots and are wrapped with seed paper labels. Once the candle is gone, you can plant the seed paper in the container and wildflowers will grow."

Give the gift of self-care this season, suggests Ann O'Shields of The Nest Egg in Fairfax, Virginia. "[We have] a luxurious bath set with therapy bath balm, bath soak, a candle and matches too," she said. "It comes in



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PICKET FENCE

<cl> A teacher might appreciate receiving this growing candle. It comes with wildflower seeds that can be planted in the candle container once the candle is gone.

a luxurious box with a ribbon tied and ready to go."

A key ring that's both stylish and functional might be appreciated by teachers who must carry multiple sets of keys. "Key ring bangles from Ink + Alloy, made by artisans in India, are the perfect two-in-one accessory and statement piece," said O'Shields. "Attach it to your keys for easy-access in your tote or market bag or throw it on your wrist."

When school ends, but afternoon shows

begin, an umbrella, particularly one that is made of a classic, but cheerful print will come in handy. "They ... will brighten any rainy day," said O'Shields.

"Give kitchen tea towels with funny sayings to the teacher with a great sense of humor," said Anne M. Walker of Farm and Feast in Potomac. "A wood tray with metal frame by Clarence Town is equally at home holding beverages and drink ware on your outdoor table as it is at holding supplies on



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEST EGG

Teachers can use a brightly patterned tackle box such as this supplies organizer.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEST EGG

A key ring that's both stylish and functional might be appreciated by teachers who must carry multiple sets of keys.

your classroom table."

Supplies can be organized in style with a tackle box in a garden party print. "It comes filled with pencils, push pins, binder clips, paper clips, magnets, a tear-off notepad, and an eraser," said O'Shields.

"One thing that teachers get a lot of each year is coffee mugs," said Reinhold. "But I think most teachers are just glad when families show their appreciation for us."

Free Sober Rides Offered for the Holidays

It is the time of year when, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, more than a third of all U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers (38%, Christmas; 36%, New Year's Day – NHTSA, 2019). Free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk or impaired drivers throughout the area during the winter holidays beginning on Dec. 17.

Washington Regional Alcohol Program's 2021 Holiday SoberRide program will be in operation nightly, 10 p.m. until 4 a.m. from Dec. 17, 2021 to Jan. 1, 2022 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk holiday season.

Each evening, during this six-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download Lyft to their phones, then enter a SoberRide code in the app's 'Promo' section to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. A new, separate Holiday SoberRide promo code will be posted at 9:00 p.m. on Dec. 17, 24 and 31 on www.SoberRide.com.

During the 2019 winter holidays (COVID-19 prevented Dec. 2020's full-out campaign), over 1,100 (1,121) people in the Washington-metropolitan area used WRAP's Holiday SoberRide program rather than possibly driving home impaired. The charity also officers its SoberRide program

on St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Independence Day and Halloween.

"More than a third of all U.S. traffic fatalities during the holiday season in 2019 involved drunk drivers according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration," said Kurt Erickson, WRAP's President.

SoberRide is offered throughout Lyft's Washington D.C. coverage area.

Since 1991, WRAP's SoberRide® program has provided 81,184 free safe rides home to would-be-drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

More information about WRAP's SoberRide initiative can be found at www.SoberRide.com

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PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

George Washington Memorial Parkway



ALMANAC FILE PHOTO

Improvements are coming to the George Washington Memorial Parkway's northern section, the busiest section of parkway serving about 26 million drivers annually.

Improvements Coming to Northern Section of GW Parkway

Contract awarded through the Great American Outdoors Act.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE ALMANAC

Improvements are in store for the northern portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway now that the National Park Service and the Federal Highway Administration announced a \$161 million contract under the Great American Outdoors Act.

Many Montgomery County commuters use the parkway to commute into the District or to Virginia.

This announcement comes on the heels of the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastruc-

ture Law, a historic investment in the nation's infrastructure that will help rebuild roads and bridges, tackle the climate crisis, and create good-paying jobs, the NPS said.

The Parkway is more than just a road used by roughly 70,000 vehicles per day, but users will see little impact for the first year of this design-build contract because it's initially in the planning phase, said Aaron LaRocca, a spokesperson at the National Park Service. The work is scheduled to begin in 2023 and be completed in 2025.

"This project will improve the driving experience, safety, and water drainage while retaining and reviving the historic beauty and significance of the parkway – including opening scenic views to

Washington, D.C.," said Charles Cuvelier, George Washington Memorial Parkway superintendent.

The rehabilitation project is in the section from Spout Run to I-495. It includes replacing the asphalt pavement, redesigning of the Route 123 interchange, repairing storm-water management systems, reconstructing stone walls and roadside barriers, rehabilitating the historic overlooks and lengthening entrance and exit lanes at some interchanges.

The northern section of the parkway is the busiest section of parkway and serves about 26 million drivers annually. This section, which opened in 1962, has never undergone a major rehabilitation. The first phase of the project will be project design, and park visitors and drivers will ex-

perience little or no change to their routines for at least a year.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law contains over \$30 billion in investments that fund Interior Department initiatives and benefit the communities it directly serves. In addition to historic funding for climate resiliency initiatives and legacy pollution clean-up, the law provides for a five-year reauthorization of the Federal Lands Transportation Program, which will help invest in repairing and upgrading National Park Service roads, bridges, trails and transit systems. The law also invests in projects that will help fund bridge replacements and resiliency, repair ferry boats and terminal facilities, and maintain wildlife crossings that keep people and surrounding wildlife safe, the NPS said.

Local Veterans Aid Afghan Evacuee Family

FROM PAGE 10

nation process to sustain the evacuee population from Afghanistan temporarily housed on Ramstein Air Base, Germany, during Operation Allies Welcome. ... The team received donations valued at \$1.3 million from local and international communities during the evacuation operations. The donation process began on the evening of Aug. 19, 2021, shortly after [the first] evacuees arrived at Ramstein. It dawned on us really quickly that we needed more space. Many of the donated items were not only from the Kaiserslautern Military Community, but they were from the United States, Belgium, France and other countries around the world. Volunteers collected more than 110 tons of donations."

Linsey Wise described the donation center effort. "The first sort was general sorting (e.g., men's clothes, kids shoes, baby food), the second sort was more specif-

ic (e.g., boys clothes size 2T, baby formula, women's small pants). Once sorted, the donations went to a hardened shelter area on Ramstein AB where other volunteers pulled together clothing kits. These kits contained underwear, socks, pants, shirts, scarves, hats, coats, etc. and were handed out to evacuees once they got some essentials from the Red Cross. We tried to ensure that folks had a clean set of warm clothes right away since many people came with only the clothes on their backs. "

Linsey added, "Never have I felt the need to give back more than during 'Operation Allies Welcome.' Colby and I literally put our lives on pause [and hired babysitters] so we could volunteer, purchase essential items, and make purchases on behalf of friends, family, and coworkers back stateside. It was a very humbling and emotional experience, and I feel so lucky to

have been a part of this effort and meet some amazing people along the way."

Leaving Ramstein Air Base, Javid and his family were flown to Dulles International Airport, then transported to temporary housing at Quantico Marine Base. After many weeks, they are still at Quantico as they await completion of final processing for the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), part of the United Nations System, the leading inter-governmental organization providing support for immigrants across the globe. IOM will assist the family in getting to Seattle, where they plan to settle near family members who have been in the U.S. for some time.

Meanwhile In Virginia, the Fox-Green group has continued to organize donations. Multiple visits to the evacuee family at Quantico included delivery of four truckloads of essentials from donors across



PHOTO BY LINSEY WISE

Cynthia Fox brings toys, books and stickers, which the girls particularly enjoyed, to Javid's daughters, Sahar, 5 years old, Kawsar, 3 years old, and Hila 7 years old.

Northern Virginia. Fox said that beyond clothing and shoes, they brought books to help entertain the girls and assist them in learning English. She commented that the family will once again be able to take only a limited amount of belongings with them on the final part of their journey as they fly to Seattle. Fox was complimentary of

Three year old Jackson Wise helps pack and load jackets and other warm clothing donated by friends and neighbors of his family for evacuees traveling through Germany.

the work that charities such as Lutheran Social Services are doing to support refugees with transportation, housing, job assistance, mentoring, and other essential needs beyond what the small local group can manage. The Lutheran's national capital group, with the help of 5,300 volunteers, has assisted 926 Afghan allies to date.

New Council District Lines for Seven Districts

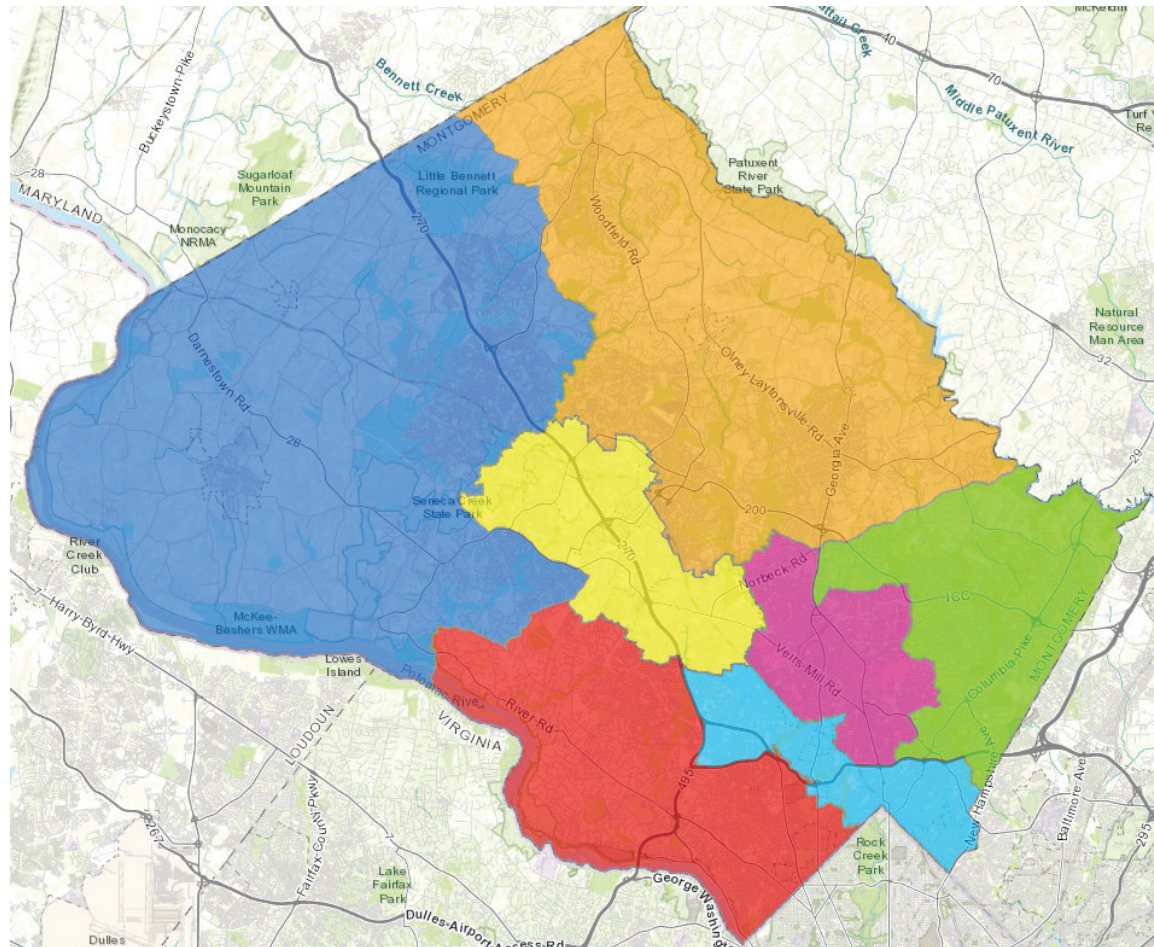
Last week, the Montgomery County Council voted to enact Bill 41-21, Elections Council Districts – Boundaries, which is the enabling legislation that revises the boundaries of Council districts to create seven districts as required by the Montgomery County Charter that was amended by the voters in the 2020 general election. The vote was 8-1 with Councilmember Friedson opposed.

Before 2020, the Charter required that the County be divided into five Council districts.

The new requirement for seven districts applies to the 2022 elections, and the Council will consist of eleven members in total in December 2022. Seven district Councilmembers will be elected by registered voters who live in each district and four at-large members will be elected by all voters across the County.

In addition to creating two new Council districts, the Charter requires that each district must be compact in form and composed of adjoining, contiguous territory. The populations of each district also must be substantially equal.

The Council enacted the recommendations from the Montgomery County Commission on Redistricting Report with amendments that do the following: the Kemp Mill community becomes part of District 6 which moves Precincts 13-020 and 13-033 from District 5 to District 6;



County Council will have 11 members in total in December 2022. Seven district Councilmembers will be elected by registered voters who live in each district and four at-large members will be elected by all voters across the county.

the Northwest Park/Oakview neighborhood becomes part of District 5 with the rest of the Hill-andale community which moves Precinct 05-014 from District 4 to

District 5; the Willows of Potomac/Traville Gardens neighborhood is combined with the rest of this community which places Precinct 04-024 in the same district as Precinct

04-035 in District 3 and moves Precinct 04-011 from District 3 to District 1; the Aurora Hills community becomes part of District 2 which moves Precinct 02-006 from

District 7 to District 2; and the precincts in the Potomac/North Bethesda community just west of I-270 become part of District 1 which moves Precincts 04-032 and 10-011 from District 4 to District 1; and moves two precincts, Precincts 07-016 and 13-039, from District 1 to District 4; the Ken-Gar community in Kensington is moved from District 6 to District 4; and the Derwood/Redland community becomes part of District 7 which moves Precincts 04-019, 04-034 and 04-036 from District 6 to District 7.

The Commission on Redistricting was charged with presenting a redistricting plan for Council districts and a report explaining their recommendations to the Council. The eleven-member volunteer commission included registered Democrats, Republicans, independents and those who are unaffiliated. Residents can learn more about the work of the Redistricting Commission here. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/BCC/redistricting/>

The Council received a briefing from the Commission on Redistricting and their report on Nov. 9, 2021 and held public hearings on Nov. 16 and Nov. 18. On Nov. 30, the Council met to review the Commission's proposed map and several proposed changes to the map were reviewed prior to today's final vote.

Libraries To Expand Hours

Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) will expand hours of branch service to the community effective Jan. 2.

The hours of operation at all MCPL branches, except Maggie Nightingale (Poolesville) and Noyes Library for Young Children, will be:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday - 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

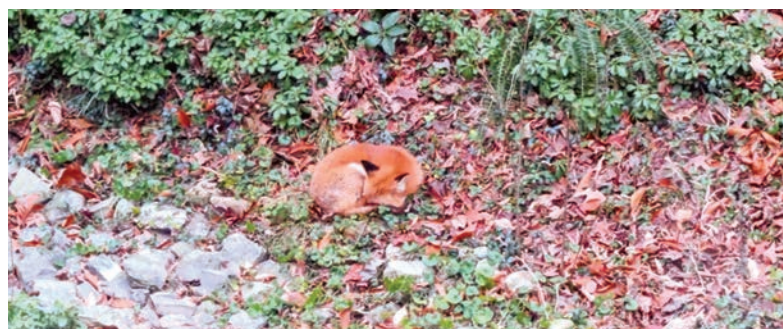
Friday, Saturday, Sunday - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The hours and schedule for Maggie Nightingale (currently closed for refresh) and Noyes libraries will remain as they currently stand.

For more information on MCPL services, please visit <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/>



PHOTOS BY MARY KIM



This fluffy, plump red fox was napping curled up in my Potomac yard this week, keeping its nose warm with its luxuriant tail. It was visible from my home office window.

Healthy Red Fox Napping in Potomac

The fox was still vigilant, picking up its head to look around now and then, and going back to napping shortly thereafter.

Inspiration for Holiday Décor

Ideas for understated designs in non-traditional colors.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE ALMANAC

The halls in the Alexandria home of Penny Bell are not yet decked and her search for a Christmas tree has been futile.

“Our home has always been decorated with beautiful red and green décor. Every year we usually have three trees that are about eight-to-ten feet high,” she said. “This year I’ll be lucky if I can find trees that are five feet high.”

A dearth of holiday décor lends itself to a minimalist theme and non-traditional colors, say some local designers. “If there’s one thing we’ve learned over the past year, it’s to simplify,” said Anne Walker of Anne Walker Design and Farm & Feast in Potomac, Maryland.

Begin with the entryway, which sets the tone for the entire house, said Sallie Lord of Grey Hunt Interiors in Chantilly. “Decorating the space at

the front of your home starts and keeps the spirit flowing,” she said. “Pair whites, blacks and golds for a glamorous, yet modern look and feel. Who said Christmas can’t be chic?”

Even though they might be hard to find this year, “the Tannenbaum is still the star of the holiday show,” continued Lord. “A Christmas tree is the focal point of every living room during the holiday season,” she said. “You can achieve a sophisticated and elegant tree by wrapping it with delicate ribbon or gorgeous lights.”

From an elaborate dinner or simple lunch, hosting guests is often a part of seasonal festivities. A tablespace that incorporates natural elements can be both understated and elegant, advises Walker. “Whether candles are made from [materials like] reindeer antler and laser cut wood Christmas trees in soft shades of beige, the lack of embellishment allows each element to have a huge impact. Guests will want to linger in this peaceful, elegant space.”

“Make your table feel inviting by adding small touches of luxury like a velvet ribbon to serve as napkin rings,” added Lord. “Coziness should envelop the entire space. Have your guests feel right at home as soon as they sit down. They’ll be embracing the holiday spirit.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREY HUNT INTERIORS

“You can achieve a sophisticated and elegant tree by wrapping it with delicate ribbon or gorgeous lights,” said Sallie Lord of Grey Hunt Interiors.



A table adorned with fresh greenery and accented with black and gold accessories is non-traditional but elegant, said Sallie Lord of Grey Hunt Interiors in Chantilly.



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Indulge Me And/or Indulge Me



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Give me whatever I want and/or let me be however I want. I have cancer and if you don’t like it? Raspberries. I remember what a friend told me soon after I was diagnosed with cancer: “It’s all about you now, Kenny.” And it’s friendly advice I’ve shared/passed on to other newly cancer “diagnosees.” And it’s always been received with such appreciation as if newly diagnosed cancer patients need a sort of permission to be more concerned about themselves than about others.

For many, it’s a bit of an unnatural position: to concern yourself with yourself. But I must tell you, when that hammer is dropped that you’ve been diagnosed with cancer, your world shrinks. It’s almost impossible to think of anything else. You just don’t know if something you do or don’t do will affect your cancer/life expectancy. And so, cancer becomes the center of your universe. Moreover, you wonder if what you normally do: eat, drink, be happy, be sad, really matters to the outcome of your treatment.

I mean, it’s not as if there’s a dos and don’ts handbook for newly diagnosed cancer patients with easy-to-follow instructions for who to call/where to go for who knows what. And since you’ve been diagnosed with an extremely serious disease, you just as soon not get your homework assignments wrong. When your life is snatched away and/or your world is turned inside out/upside down, you really don’t want to be the cause of your own demise. For cancer, there’s hardly any guarantees. Survival is a long way from six-hour chemotherapy sessions every three weeks and scans every three months. Being a cancer patient is very hands-on – by you and/or the medical staff, so you must pay attention. To say your life might depend on it might be a bit much but it’s not totally wrong. Once you get diagnosed into the cancer world, everything about your health seems to lead to the oncology department.

Having to deal with this unexpected/new centrality in your life, a life which, depending on the type and staging of your cancer, you may be in danger, is scary as hell. And if that’s the case, the disease may very well be in control and this ongoing fear/angst is the axis upon which your world now turns. Every action, reaction, “proaction,” is taken in the context of your having cancer. What it all means, what it all does, if and when you have to do it again or not, are all definite maybes. Your oncologist becomes your new best friend. You hang on his/her every word. To think that a person you had never previously met is now in charge of your life requires an acceptance of reality, possibly a grim reality, for which there may be no escape and worse, requires total compliance.

You bet I require kid gloves. You bet I require a wide berth. You bet I require anything my heart desires because learning from oncologist that you have a “terminal” diagnosis, is about as unsettling as it gets. Any port in a storm you might say? Heck, how about any port no matter the weather? If Bette Davis were alive today and had been a cancer patient, she might update her famous lament: “Being diagnosed with cancer ain’t no place for sissies.”

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

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