

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 3, 2022

Fort Belvoir Re-opens Dogue Creek Bridge

Access control
point open for
rush hours only

BY MARGARET STEELE
FORT BELVOIR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Leadership from Fort Belvoir Garrison and the Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, celebrated the re-opening of Belvoir's Dogue Creek Bridge, which was replaced in a 2-year, \$4 million project. The bridge reopened on Feb. 23.

"We worked closely with contractors, public works and stakeholders to deliver a fully modernized, functional, new bridge that maintains its historic aesthetic," Col. Estee Pinchasin, district commander, said. "With the new bearings at each end and the walkway on one side, this is a beautiful piece of infrastructure. This pays homage to the history of the old bridge, and is a real benefit to the Belvoir community."

Col. Josh SeGraves, Belvoir Gar-

risson commander, said, "Believe me ... this project was certainly a heavy lift," he said. "This means a great deal to Garrison, but also to residents, especially those from River, Dogue and George Washington villages."

"Everyone who worked on this project can take great pride in their contributions that help move Fort Belvoir into the future, with a bridge that's expected to last another six decades," SeGraves said. "Now, the Dogue Bridge is, once again, an integral part to our operations and is safe for everyone who drives over it."

SeGraves said the new bridge will be a quality-of-life improvement, for residents and commuters who can now access the installation more easily from the north and from the Mount Vernon area.

"We certainly appreciate everyone's patience, despite all the challenges," he said.

The ACP at Dogue Creek Bridge, Walker Gate, leads to Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Route 235. Walker Gate will be open 6-9 a.m., and 3-6 p.m., weekdays, manning permitting.



PHOTO BY MARGARET STEELE

From left, Col. Josh SeGraves, Fort Belvoir Garrison commander; Col. Estee Pinchasin, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District commander; Maj. Gen. Allan Pepin, Joint Task Force-National Capital Region and U.S. Army Military District of Washington commander; Command Sgt. Maj. Greg Kleinholtz, Fort Belvoir Garrison; and Dan Storck, Mount Vernon District supervisor from Fairfax County, Va. The group cut a ribbon, Feb. 23, 2022, reopening Fort Belvoir's Dogue Bridge, near Walker Gate.

Up in Smoke

Black market to remain underground for
now as lawmakers reject licensing scheme.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Virginia's black market for marijuana will remain underground for now. Earlier this week, a House subcommittee rejected a bill introduced by Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30) that would have created a way for the newly created Cannabis Control Authority to issue licenses to sell recreational weed.

"I'm very disappointed," said Ebbin shortly after the vote. "Years of work on establishing a regulated adult use market for cannabis has been dispatched by the House Republican majority without giving it thoughtful consideration."

Republicans started the session saying that ending the stranglehold on the black market was a priority. But the effort stalled when the GOP caucus was divided on the issue. Several House Republicans offered their version of what a marketplace could look like, but none of those bills passed. Now the delay will offer all of the many businesses wanting to do business in Virginia an opportunity to make campaign contributions in an election cycle where all 140 members of the General Assembly will be on the ballot.



Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30) presents his bill creating a marijuana marketplace to a House subcommittee earlier this week.

"We have folks who are still trying to grapple with the differences between CBD, the terms hemp, cannabis, delta 8, delta 9," said Del. Emily Brewer (R-64), chairwoman of the subcommittee that killed the bill. "There's a lot of confusion. So I really truly think for us to get to a regulated market, all the stakeholders need to get together."

Ebbin says the stakeholders are together, and he dismisses the idea that lawmakers are confused about a topic they've been debating for years.

"It's hard to read their minds, but I'd say they're unprepared to govern in this area and afraid of their base," said Ebbin. "I think they're afraid of cannabis, which the Gen-

eral Assembly has already made a public policy decision to legalize. And they didn't do their homework."

SOCIAL EQUITY LICENSES became one of the major flashpoints during the debate as Republicans pushed back on the idea that people convicted of misdemeanor crimes should get first dibs on getting a license to sell marijuana. Ebbin's bill also had preferential licenses for family members of people convicted of marijuana misdemeanors. Republicans campaigned against social equity licenses last year during the campaign, and now they feel they have a mandate to reject them.

"I'm opposed to taxpayer-funded money going to criminals to start businesses because they broke the law," said Del. Glenn Davis (R-84) on the campaign trail last year.

Republicans were also opposed to the idea that jurisdictions have been disproportionately policed. The Ebbin bill created a process for the Cannabis Control Authority to use Census data to determine which jurisdictions experienced disproportionate arrests

SEE UP IN SMOKE, PAGE 7

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'One' BRT Line Will Roll Down Route One



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CAZETTE

Chairman Jeff McKay is appreciative as the new logo and brand is unveiled.

The unveiling highlighted advantages and a new look.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

The new bus rapid transit system that will one day operate on a central lane system up and down Richmond Highway is newly named just "One," and puns flew around the launching event in reference to the name.

Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon) started it by reminding everyone that George Washington was the first president, the Mount Vernon corridor is the number one employment area, and it's Route One. "I think we're number one across the board here," he said, looking for agreement from Chairman Jeff McKay, who goes to events like this all week so there are other places that look for this designation too.

"For me, wherever I am at a ceremony, that's the 'one,'" McKay said.

But it was all about the One BRT system, and a main point in the system that doesn't hinge on the number one is the starting date, which is estimated to be in 2030, eight years from now. There is more than one thing being developed in the Richmond Highway corridor though, and residents are going to see several

projects move forward in the coming years. There's the widening of Richmond Highway which is being handled by the Virginia Department of Transportation and Fairfax County DOT. And then there's the EMBARK Richmond Highway project, a multi-faceted project to greatly change the corridor when it's completed. There is another "one," involved here, and that is the price tag of \$1 billion.

The One system will run on a separate lane that will be built in the middle of Richmond Highway, stopping at nine platforms throughout the corridor between the beltway in the north and Fort Belvoir in the south. The system will be in two sections, and the first section is planned for the stretch between the beltway and the Gum Springs station, with stops at Penn Daw, Beacon Hill Road, Lockheed Boulevard, and Hybla Valley. In section two, there will be stops at South County Center, Woodlawn and Fort Belvoir.

The stations will be more elaborate than existing bus stops. At the stations, there will be an elevated platform level with the bus, a longer station area and canopy, fare machines, messaging screens and better lighting. The system will use electric buses. The Fairfax Connector bus will continue to operate in this corridor on the outer lanes of traffic.

"When it's complete, it will be the biggest BRT in Virginia," said Monica Blackmon, the chief executive officer at the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority who was also at the unveiling.

More Than One

There are a lot of different entities in-



MAP BY FAIRFAX COUNTY

The "One" BRT line has nine stops planned.

involved with the transportation improvements and infrastructure along the Richmond Highway corridor. The Virginia Department of Transportation is widening three miles of Richmond Highway while the Fairfax County Department of Transportation is widening the rest. NVTA has contributed \$250 million to the BRT, and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has approved it

from their standpoint. Fort Belvoir is involved to some extent. Part of the corridor is in the Mount Vernon District and part in Lee District, so both Supervisor Storck and Rodney Lusk (D-Lee) are involved too.

But the whole project is under the umbrella of One Fairfax, as Lusk reminded the crowd at the unveiling. "It's a critical element in creating one community," he said.

Chamber Networking Fun

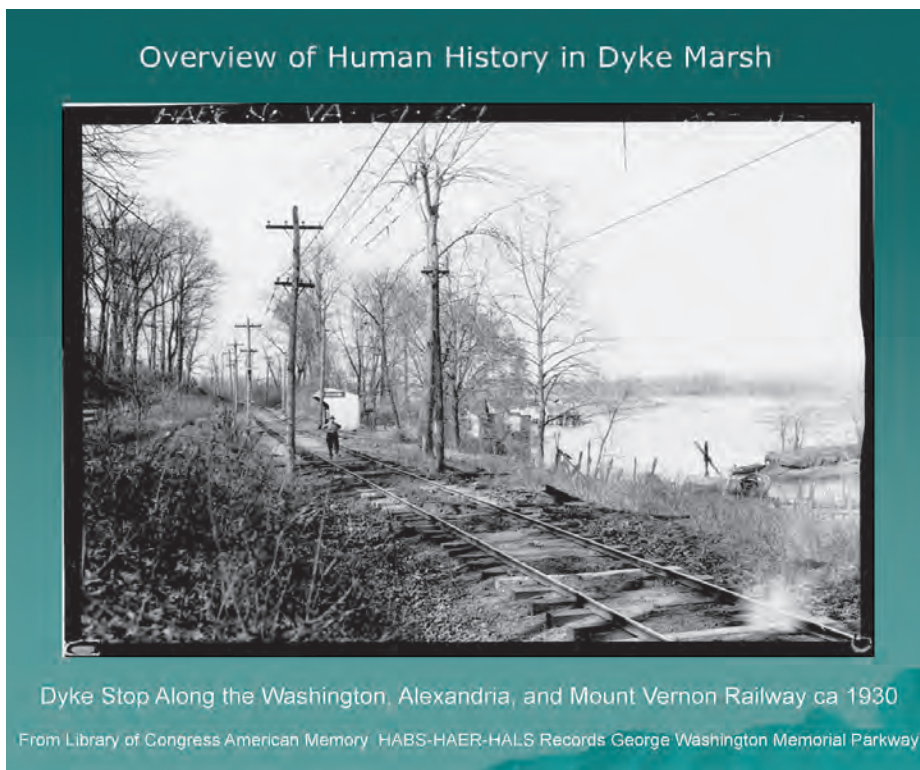
John Marshall Bank hosted the February Hello! Happy Hour networking event for Mount Vernon Lee Chamber of Commerce in the Franklin Street Branch. These events help businesses to develop relationships in a fun atmosphere. Visit www.MountVernonLeeChamber.org for more information about local businesses



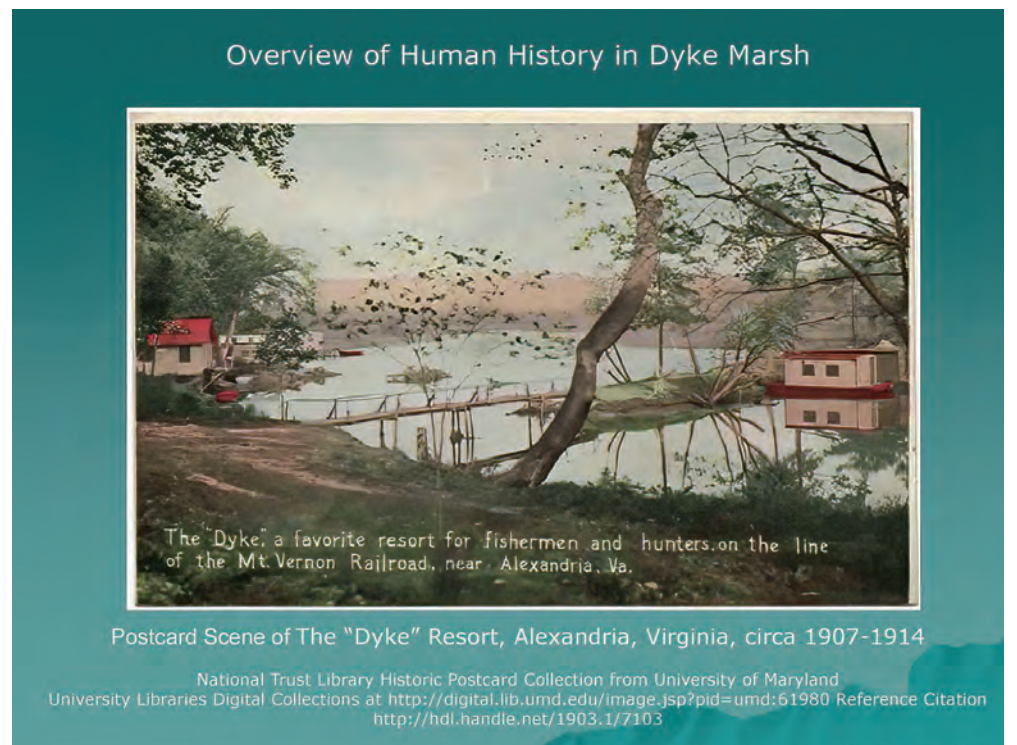
Unwined in Belle View and owner Vanessa Moore provided gourmet cheese, meats and crackers. Vanessa poured samples of the selection of fine wines at Unwined.



Sarah Locke, left, Old Town Tax Consultants, watches while Edwin Wright, Wright Whiskey, and Ken Board, John Marshall Bank, give away the door prize. Alison Ross Tompkins, The Fairfax, is the Chamber chairman.



The Dyke stop for the railroad with shacks in background.



A postcard of the "sportsman's resort" with an ark on the right, shacks on pilings, a bridge on pilings, probably docks nearby on pilings and pilings for boat tie-ups.

Remnants Tell Tales of Dyke Marsh's Past

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Most walkers, runners and bikers on the Mount Vernon Trail south of Alexandria don't notice the concrete chunks jutting out of the thick brush on the west side of the trail near Northdown Road, cement blocks soon largely to be covered with vegetation.

Tauxemonter Jack Hinman recalls playing in those slabs, walls and pillar pieces as a youngster in the 1950s. He speculates that the site was a gun battery, an observation outpost or pieces of a rail station for the former electric railroad which took passengers from Washington, D.C. to Mount Vernon from 1892 to 1932.

This cement jumble is in fact what remains of a private home, known as the J. W. Kruettner mansion that stretched across what is now the George Washington Memorial Parkway, according to Matthew Virta, Cultural Resources Program Manager for the Parkway. The four-level house had "the appearance of a European villa," according to a National Park Service document.

The chunks visible today could be parts of a wine cellar, walls and broken columns.

The Kruettner house was built around 1904 to 1906 of poured reinforced concrete and had stairs down the hill. Kruettner was president of the American Portland Cement Association. The Kruettners no doubt had a front-row view of Dyke Marsh.



Large pieces of rusted iron jut out of the water probably left from dredging operations.

Protruding Pilings

Many locals question the dark, deteriorating pilings and other debris that poke out of Dyke Marsh at low tide in what some call "Pipeline Bay," across from the turnaround north of Morningside Lane. Virta's best guess is that they are related to Mr. Almond "Cigarette" Dodson's enterprise.

"The gentleman known as 'Cig' had been essentially 'squatting' on NPS land after it was acquired from Smoot Sand and Gravel, who

had apparently let him live and run a business there for nominal rent," explains Virta. "Cig had some type of 'store' and marina operation besides his living quarters in that area before the NPS asked him to leave."

Mount Vernon resident Eugene D. Vinogradoff knew Cig and shared this memory: "Cig and his wife lived in a wooden shack, with a tar-paper roof, built on top of a wooden barge located in the inlet just offshore from today's 'Cigarette

Turnaround.' Their barge and shed were located on the south side of this inlet, tied by ropes to a couple of trees that grew on the shore."

Dodson was an enigmatic "entrepreneur," mostly a trapper, says Vinogradoff. "He caught muskrats, beavers and occasionally foxes and rabbits and sold their pelts. He also had a fishnet or two. The nets were held up by lines of wooden poles driven into the muddy bottom of the Potomac. The ice pulled them up each winter, so they had to be

re-driven in the spring. He caught mostly white perch and carp."

Cig also rented out duck blinds and would dispatch his Chesapeake retriever to swim out and bring the dead ducks back to shore. Waterfowl hunting fed people in the area in the 1930s, said the late John Andrews, who grew up near Dyke Marsh.

"Cig drank bourbon and, as his nickname suggests, he smoked," Vinogradoff recalls. "In the afternoon and evening, he offered visitors a shot of bourbon, followed by a glass of water. Cig collected rainwater and, when that ran short, he also took water from a spring on the shore."

Cig was a rumored bootlegger and with jurisdictional responsibilities murky in marshes and rivers, nefarious activities could probably thrive. At some point after the Civil War, "arks" appeared, 10-foot by 24-foot boats with a 12-inch draft, moored in Hunting Creek, the Potomac and the marsh.

According to local lore, bootleggers operated stills in Dyke Marsh. Small skiffs arrived in the black of night and left with "products."

A 1931 Washington Post article reported that police raided "Gus Quayle's place on the Dyke near New Alexandria," and arrested him after watching him haul liquor from the bottom of the river and making a sale. Officers found 138 bottles of alleged home brew and seven pints of liquor in gunny sacks under the water. Before his death, Andrews offered, "My dad saw the local sheriff get his payoff every Friday night from the boot-

PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH



PHOTO BY CLENDIA BOOTH

Large pieces of concrete are visible in Dyke Marsh.

Remnants Tell Tales of Dyke Marsh's Past

FROM PAGE 4

leggers down there."

At Congress's direction, the Park Service built the parkway as a memorial to George Washington and in 1932, the 200th anniversary of his birth, opened the south section. The Park Service evicted the Dodsons in 1960. "I remember when Cig had to leave the marsh. He had a small-ish outboard motor on the back of a skiff, a flat-bottom wooden rowboat, which was pushing from behind his barge with their shack on it. He and his wife set off down the Potomac River. I took my boat out and met them in the channel to say goodbye. I remember that Cig said he did not know where they would try to settle. He was just going to play it day by day for a while, getting further and further down the river."

The remnants at the site of the Dodsons' former operations could also be pilings and pieces of structures related to the "resort" of ramshackle fishing and hunting shacks, says Virta. An early 20th century postcard advertises "Dyke" as a fishing and hunting "resort," showing an ark moored against a surviving section of an attempted dike and connected by a small suspension bridge. The electric railroad had a stop on the marsh's shoreline in this area called "The Dyke."

Dredging Debris

In several places in Dyke Marsh today debris protrudes from the water, possibly left by Smoot Sand and Gravel's dredging operations. The company hauled away around 270 acres or 54 percent of Dyke Marsh from 1940 to 1972. In 1972 after flying over the marsh, Secretary of Interior Nathaniel Reed, wrote that he "was horrified. If the work is legal – and I doubt that – it is amoral. ... I do not want the remaining marsh turned into an upland 'recreation' area. I want a MARSH," he stressed. "Just figure out

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a way to stop what you are doing now – promptly."

Two U.S. Geological Survey studies in 2010 and 2013 found that sand and gravel dredging was a strong destabilizing force that "shifted Dyke Marsh "from a semi-stable net depositional environment ... into a strongly erosional one," leaving it by 1976 in a "net destructive phase."

The Park Service is implementing a stabilization plan now and has completed construction of a sill and a breakwater to replicate a former protective promontory.

Andrews remembered a four-masted schooner named the Cumberland Queen used as a breakwater near today's Belle Haven Marina so pieces of that vessel could be around.

For years, many people viewed wetlands as dumping grounds so some of the debris could have been intentionally deposited or some brought in by storms. Trash is unending. Volunteers have found things like barrels, refrigerators and a sofa in the marsh.



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General Assembly Punts Cannabis Reform

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

This week, the House General Laws subcommittee on ABC and Gaming (on which I serve) voted on party lines not to move forward with Senator Adam Ebbin's SB 391, legislation that would have, among other things, expedited the regulation and enforcement for the legal sale of cannabis for adult use in the Commonwealth.

I am very disappointed by this outcome. Similar legislation on the House side was also defeated earlier this session, leaving no remaining vehicle to send to a conference committee to continue working on this critical issue during these next two weeks remaining in session. I believe it was premature to abandon the mission of this legislation without giving it a fair hearing.

Indeed, the inception of this legislation was the culmination of diligent work from both sides of the aisle; as Chairman of this very subcommittee during the past two sessions, I also sit on the Joint Cannabis Oversight Commission, where my colleagues and I from both chambers met several times in the past year over the interim to hold hearings with stakeholders across

the Commonwealth to develop a comprehensive legal-use framework. This bill was the culmination of our Commission's legislative recommendations.

As Democratic Delegates David Bulova and Dawn Adams noted in this subcommittee meeting, a vote not to move forward with this legislation was a vote to allow the black market to proliferate for yet another year.

This legislation would have addressed three key goals: health concerns, public safety, and equity.

While July 1, 2021, marked the beginning of the legal possession of up to an ounce of cannabis for adult use in Virginia, there is currently no legal way to purchase cannabis within the Commonwealth.

This raises an important question: if someone wants cannabis to possess and use legally, where do they buy it? The answer, unfortunately, is either from a street dealer (some of whom now operate online delivery services) or by bringing it into Virginia from another state or DC. These options are all illegal and can be unsafe.



Krizek

An unregulated product endangers public health. Were pesticides, weed killers, or fungicides applied to the plant during cultivation? Were chemicals used during processing? Cannabis is a known "hyper-aggregator," plants that are highly adept at absorbing substances from their environment like pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, heavy metals, and other toxins and contaminants. Indeed, cannabis and hemp are excellent agents to effectively clean up the soil after environmental disasters. However, in the context of plants intended for human consumption, these toxins and contaminants remain in the plant after harvest and are then transferred and can harm any person that consumes it.

Sadly, in Northern Virginia, a cannabis user recently overdosed and died after using fentanyl-laced cannabis.

Right now our citizens do not have access to a safe and legal product. This legislation would have green-lit some industrial hemp processors and Virginia's four pharmaceutical processors

of medical cannabis — located in Manassas, Richmond, Norfolk, and Abington—to sell adult-use cannabis by Sept. 1, 2022 as a bridge to legal sales until the full market roll out starts the following year. Most significantly, medical cannabis, because it is highly regulated and tested, is a safe and reliable adult-use product. SB 391 would have also required these medical operators who participate in early sales to create incubator programs to establish small independent marijuana businesses that qualify as social equity applicants. Social equity candidates were narrowly defined in the legislation to focus on startup businesses operated by Virginians most affected by marijuana law enforcement.

By not moving forward with this measure, the Commonwealth has not just punted on cleaning up the illegal and dangerous black market but has passed up the opportunity to collect an estimated \$180-\$234 million in tax revenue that could support our communities with contributions to public schools, public health initiatives, and other investments. In a recent estimate, the illicit market in Virginia averages \$1.8 billion per year and is growing.

Budget Will Reflect Values, Priorities

BY SEN. ADAM EBBIN

Virginia operates on a biennial budget comprising some \$158 billion in spending on state programs and services. This budget must pass each legislative body and receive the Governor's signature after our "long" 60-day session. During the process, each body reports their version of the budget, which includes some of the amendments offered by members for funding that was not originally included in the introduced budget. These two, often competing, budgets must then be negotiated and reconciled in a "committee of conference" during the final two weeks of session.

A budget is more than a balance sheet — it reflects the values and the priorities of those who craft it. It tells us, arithmetically, what areas, issues, projects, and programs are most important by those who influenced the budget. With differing parties holding majorities in the Senate and House this year, the reported versions of the budget are vastly different and reflect the difference in the priorities and values

of each body. These differences create a significant challenge for those tasked with negotiating a compromise proposal. The Senate proposal contains major investments in education and unemployment benefits, prudent tax cuts, and a number of key wins for the 30th District which I hope will be retained in the final spending bill.

A major theme on the campaign trail this year was needed investments in education. I am glad that the Senate budget invests in our teachers, our school infrastructure, and critical programs including Pre-K for at-risk students. We increased the number of student support positions such as school nurses, counselors, and reading specialists from 17.75 per 1,000 students to 20 per 1,000 students, and proposed a five percent raise for all teachers, along with a one-time, \$2,000 bonus. Our teachers have worked diligently and dedicatedly during the pandemic under unforeseeably difficult circumstances — their prioritization



Ebbin

in the budget begins to reflect this.

Additionally, we increased the investment in educating at-risk Pre-K students by \$700 per pupil per year and proposed \$500 million for school construction. More than half of Virginia's schools are over 50 years old, and the renovation of existing facilities paired with the

construction of new ones is critical to providing a healthy, functional learning environment for our students, teachers and staff.

We continue to work on reforming the Virginia Employment Commission, proposing \$110 million to replenish our depleted unemployment trust fund and \$500,000 to initiate a comprehensive review of the efficiencies and processes of the Commission.

SEE BUDGET WILL, PAGE 14

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Budgets Differ Dramatically

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

In the sixth week of the General Assembly Session each chamber offered their proposed budgets. Each chamber's budget is very different.

First, I was able to secure several changes to the budget that are important to our community.

The Senate Finance Committee included \$10 million in the budget to fund the Phase II improvements at Widewater State Park. Phase II will include a new visitor center, new trails, a loop road, parking areas, and picnic areas. I have been fighting for this for five years and I am working with Del. Candi King and Del. Tara Durant to ensure the House of Delegates will agree to fund it.

Next, the Senate budget includes language repurposing \$2 million for River Farm previously secured by Del. Paul Krizek and Sen. Adam Ebbin by allowing it to be spent on public access improvements on the property. This will help River Farm truly become a public asset.

I also worked with Del. Paul Krizek to secure \$250,000 in both chambers' budget to help Good

Shepherd Housing continue to provide services to families who received Temporary Aid to Needy Families. The Senate also included \$50 million in new financial funding for Pell Grant eligible college students at universities with smaller endowments such as James Madison University, George Mason University, Longwood, Radford and Mary Washington.

Gov. Northam previously included \$17 million in his budget to connect the Town of Quantico to public water service. This has been a major source of friction between the town and Marine Corps Base Quantico and I am pleased it was left in both budgets.

He also included \$3 million and \$300,000 in stormwater grants for the Town of Dumfries and the Town of Quantico, but these were removed in the Senate. I am hopeful they will be restored during the budget negotiations.

More globally, the House Budget relies on over \$3 billion of tax cuts whereas the Senate Budget



Surovell

fulfills our obligation to pass a balanced budget by only cutting state tax on groceries. Without these tax cuts, the Senate budget provides funding for a 5% raise on teacher salaries. The Senate Budget also provides about \$500 million to help fund the

state's \$26 billion school maintenance deficit which mostly exists outside of Northern Virginia. It also provides \$1 billion towards the state's \$6 billion shortfall in the Virginia Retirement System.

The Senate budget also provides a 5% raise for all state employees and a one-time \$1,000 bonus. It also includes \$388 million in new funding for public safety including raises for law enforcement. It provides \$85 million to pay down the \$300 million maintenance backlog in our state parks; funds \$289 million of improvements at the Virginia Port Authority which provides goods for nearly every big box store in Virginia; and also over \$300 million for the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund. The Senate budget also fulfills our con-

stitutionally required Rainy Day Fund deposit which would leave \$3.9 billion available for the next downturn.

These budgets are substantially apart due to the House of Delegates irresponsible decision to cut taxes. Our nation is currently experiencing 7% inflation which is helping to generate the revenue surpluses and we are not even providing pay raises to allow our teachers, police and other government employees pay raises that keep up with that.

At this time, it is not clear how we will reach a compromise.

We still have two Supreme Court vacancies that we need to fill and a vacancy on the State Corporation Commission (SCC). Most people have never heard of the SCC, but it decides how much you pay for electricity, water, gas, all types of insurance, regulates banks, credit unions and railroads, and runs our state healthcare exchange. We have two weeks to figure these out.

Please consider completing my constituent survey seeking your feedback on important issues this session. You can complete it at www.scottsurovell.org/survey. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

Up in Smoke

FROM PAGE 1

and convictions during the failed war on drugs. Del. Michael Weibert (R-18) introduced a bill that would have ditched this approach.

"You can have some wealthy areas that have been targeted by a cocaine bust," said Weibert.

HELPING ECONOMICALLY disadvantaged areas emerged as a rare point of agreement during the debate. Ebbin's bill included language directing the board of directors of the Cannabis Control Authority to use Census tract data to identify areas that are "economically distressed." Republicans were also hoping to add preferential licenses for women- and minority-owned businesses.

"I don't think Republicans necessarily hate the idea of equity licenses," said Del. Paul Krizek (D-44)., "Maybe they hate the word equity. I mean it seems like it's a verboten word these days. But they want to do the same thing that we want to do, and that's right the wrongs of the past."

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Uncommon Valor



Survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima gather for a photo following a wreath laying at the Marine Corps War Memorial Feb. 18 in Arlington. Pictured left to right are: Roy Earle, John DeGennaro, Louis Bourgault and Ivan Hammond.

Survivors mark Iwo Jima 77th anniversary.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Roy Earle was just 18 years old when he enlisted in the Marines shortly after graduating from high school in 1942. For the next three years he would mark his birthday in the midst of some of the worst battles fought in the Pacific Theater of World War II, including his 21st birthday as the Battle of Iwo Jima raged around him.

“For several years, I never celebrated a birthday,” said Earle, who will turn 98 on March 5. “The best I can say is that I marked the occasion lucky to be alive.”

Earle was one of four survivors to gather in Arlington over President’s Day weekend to mark the 77th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima, one of the bloodiest in U.S. history.

“Two years ago we had more than 50 Iwo Jima survivors gather for the 75th reunion,” said David Fields, a board member of the Iwo Jima Association of America that sponsored the gathering. “This year only four veterans were able to return.”

Fields, a Vienna resident who served six years as a Marine infantry officer, is the son of the late Col. Thomas Fields, a veteran of Iwo Jima who went on to serve in Korea and Vietnam.

“Dad felt he was an old man at age 26 when he served in Iwo Jima,” Fields said. “When he talked about his experiences there, he always said that the credit goes to the 18-year-olds, who fought with immeasurable courage. In his Company D battalion of the 5th Marine Division, 250 men in his company walked in and only 19 walked out.”

The Battle of Iwo Jima began Feb. 19, 1945. It was the first day of an intense, 36-day battle that became one of the major turning

ankles. Mount Suribachi was an active volcano and the Japanese had fortified the island with 15 miles of tunnels so you never knew where or when you would be attacked.”

Recalled Fields, “Dad would say that the Japanese were not on the island, they were in the island.”

Approximately one-third of all Marines killed in action during World War II were killed on Iwo Jima. More than 100,000 Americans fought there and 6,821 died as a result — 5,931 of them Marines. An additional 19,000 troops were wounded in the battle that claimed more than 21,000 Japanese lives. Of the 23,000 Japanese troops defending Iwo, only 1,083 were taken prisoner.

In addition to Earle, Iwo Jima veterans attending the reunion at the Hilton Crystal City included Ivan Hammond, John DeGennaro and

points in WWII. Situated 791 miles from Japan’s capital city of Tokyo, two airfields on the small volcanic island were seen as vital in order to achieve victory in the Pacific.

The raising of the American flag by six Marines on Feb. 23, 1945, was immortalized in a Pulitzer-Prize winning photograph by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal.

“I was in the fourth wave to land on Iwo Jima,” Earle recalled. “Iwo was a very soft ash — when you stepped on it you went down to your

Louis Bourgault.

Virginia Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears, a Marine Corps veteran, was the keynote speaker and the recipient of the first Iwo Jima Association of America’s Woody Williams Award. The award is named in honor of Herschel Woodrow “Woody” Williams, a Marine survivor of Iwo Jima and the last living Medal of Honor recipient from WWII. Williams virtually presented the award to Sears.

“What an incredible honor to sit in a room full of veterans and



Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears, center, receives the Iwo Jima Association of America’s Spirit Award Feb. 19 in Crystal City. With her are IJAA President Lt. Gen. Norman Smith, USMC, Ret., and Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Schultz.



John DeGennaro.

“In [Col. Thomas Fields] Company D battalion of the 5th Marine Division, 250 men in his company walked in and only 19 walked out.”

— David Fields, speaking of his father



Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears greets Iwo Jima veteran Roy Earle Feb. 19 at the Hilton Crystal City.

their families, including those who fought at Iwo Jima,” Sears said. “I heard stories and thoughts from veterans and Gold Star families, reminding us that freedom isn’t free.”

The four-day series of events included a veterans panel, a visit to the National Museum of the Marine Corps at Quantico and wreath-laying ceremonies at the WWII Memorial and the Marine Corps War Memorial.

Earle, who lives in Maine with his wife Linda, was in constant combat against the Japanese in

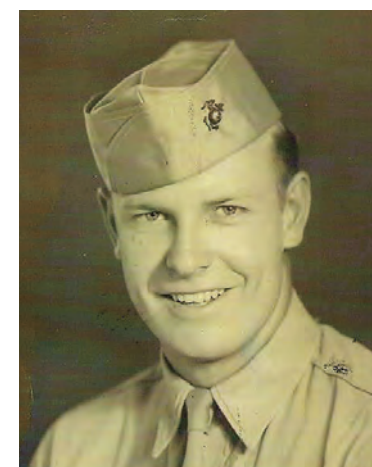
the Marshall Islands, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. For his service he received the two Presidential Unit Citations awarded the 4th Marine Division, the Navy Unit Citation awarded JASCO, the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with four bronze battle stars, and the World War Two Victory Medal.

“I walked off of every battlefield, I was that fortunate,” Earle said. “I was proud to be a Marine. More specifically I was proud to be a 4th Marine Division Marine. We fought four battles and won them all.”

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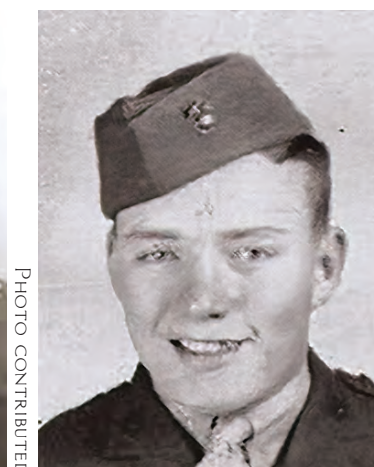
Survivors of the Battle of Iwo Jima gather for a photo following a wreath laying at the Marine Corps War Memorial Feb. 18 in Arlington. MGySgt Roger Roll, holding the wreath, is pictured with Iwo Jima veterans Roy Earle, John DeGennaro, Louis Bourgault and Ivan Hammond.



Ivan Hammond.



Louis Bourgault.



Roy Earle.

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Honduran School Restored After Hurricane



Before the badly damaged school building got some needed attention, the plants thrived.

The Alexandria South Rotary Club was there to help.

SUBMITTED BY
BRUCE TINKER, PRESIDENT
ALEXANDRIA SOUTH ROTARY CLUB

Remember Hurricane Iota? Nov. 17, 2020? The people of La Guadalupe, Honduras, do. And so does Blanca Vasquez, a member and past president of Alexandria South Rotary Club.

The hurricane was the second of two to sweep through Honduras in two weeks. It devastated the school in the small community of La Guadalupe in south central Honduras, making it incapable of holding classes. The roof was broken and scattered. There was no shelter from the elements. Electronics could not be protected, so connection to the internet was lost. And the children had no place within an hour or more of travel to get their education. The best they could do was meet once a week in a home with cellphone connection to the internet.

Blanca Vasquez taught at that school many years ago, before coming to the United States and becoming a community organizer for United Community. When Vasquez told the club about the children who were no longer able to get an education in that small community, Alexandria South Rotary Club was very moved. Right away the group considered whether they could make a difference with a grant from Rotary District 7610.

It turned out that a Rotary Club in Choluteca, Honduras, was already aware of the situation, but did not have the funds or the ability to do anything immediately, since they were already involved in another project. So Alexandria

South Rotary began planning their 2021-2022 District Grant with the Rotary Club of Choluteca.

Alexandria South Rotary reached out to other clubs in Northern Virginia, and found a partner in Mount Vernon Rotary Club to pool their District Grant money. And with the virtual connection through Zoom, and the language interpretation through Blanca Vasquez and her son in Honduras, planning and implementing the project was underway.

When the grant money was available in November 2021, the Choluteca Rotary club was almost ready to go. They had previously priced out materials and labor near Choluteca for one classroom. Then they priced out materials closer to La Guadalupe and found prices enough lower that they could complete two classrooms for the same amount of money. They started the improvements in January 2022, and were done in less than three weeks. The workers actually slept in the school in order to safeguard the materials and avoid the long travel time to commute to the village.

On Jan. 26, 2022, a ceremony was held to open the school. Alexandria South Rotarians, including Bruce Tinker and Blanca Vasquez were able to attend on What's App.

A Rotarian from Choluteca addressed the group of community residents and children sitting around the edge of one of the new classrooms. He spoke of his club's pleasure at being able to provide a place for the children of the community to continue their education, and how important that is to the future of their country. Then a member of the community stood and spoke a prayer of gratitude for a few minutes. And others around the room had a chance to make comments. They said that so many people had come to see the damage to the school and take pictures. People from the government, from the school system, from churches. But no one did anything for them until the Rotarians did. They said



The residents of La Guadalupe, Honduras gathered for a picture.



The restored and repaired school now has two classrooms. A joint project with the South Alexandria, Mount Vernon and Choluteca Rotary Clubs made the renovation possible.



The restrooms before the Rotary Club assistance.



The restrooms after the Alexandria South Rotary and Mount Vernon Rotary Club assistance.

that the completed school was like "a dream come true" and "an answer to our prayers". They said they could not see the Rotarians that day that had participated, but they could "see their hearts."

The Rotary Clubs of Alexandria

South and Mount Vernon and Choluteca are happy with what they were able to accomplish.

They are considering another damaged building at La Guadalupe for another District Grant. It has the potential to be a library and

community meeting place. Maybe other clubs would like to join us for 2022-2023.

Contact Bruce Tinker, President, Alexandria South Rotary Club
AlexSouthRotary.org bruce.tinker@gmail.com

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New TJ Policy Invalidated

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Friday, Feb. 25, a federal judge for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division ruled that the Fairfax County School Board's new admissions policy for Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, first implemented for the Class of 2025, is "discriminatory."

In his ruling, Claude M. Hilton, United States District Judge, wrote, "The proper remedy for a legal provision enacted with discriminatory intent is invalidation."

Hilton itemized within his 31-page Opinion the School Board's process and reasons for bringing about racial balance at TJ. He discussed how TJ's admission change was "infected with the talk of racial balancing from its inception."

According to Hilton, the purpose of the Board's admissions overhaul was to change the racial makeup of TJ to the detriment of Asian-Americans. "The Board's overhaul of TJ admissions has had, and will have, a substantial impact on Asian-American applicants to TJ," added Hilton in his Opinion.

"For the foregoing reasons, Plaintiff The Coalition for TJ is entitled to Summary Judgment, and the Defendant Fairfax County School Board's Motion for a Summary Judgment is denied."

According to Erin Wilcox, Pacific Legal Foundation attorney and lead attorney for the TJ case, the summary judgment is a final decision from the federal district court judge.

TJ is an elite, regional Fairfax County Public School and a Virginia state-chartered magnet school, often ranked as the top high school in the nation. The school is under the sole direction and control of the Fairfax County School Board. It admits students who meet the eligibility requirements not only from Fairfax and the City of Fairfax but four participating Northern Virginia school divisions — Arlington County, Falls Church City, Loudoun County, and Prince William County. TJ admits slightly more than 400 first-year students from over 3,000 who apply each year.

According to Hilton, the altered TJ admissions policy did away with the previous three merit-based standardized tests, a minimum core 3.0-grade point average, and that students have completed or be enrolled in Algebra I. The policy changed other minimum application requirements as well.

For students to be eligible for TJ under the new policy, they must maintain a 3.5 GPA, be enrolled in a full-year honors Algebra I or higher course, an honors science course, and at least one other honors course, or the Young Scholars program.

Additionally, the new policy, implement-

Policy is discriminatory, writes judge in win for plaintiff, Coalition for TJ and Pacific Legal Foundation.

ed in late fall 2020, moved away from the multi-stage evaluation process to a one-round holistic evaluation. It weighed GPA, a student portrait sheet, a problem solving essay, and "experience factors," attending a middle school deemed historically underrepresented at TJ, coming from an economically disadvantaged family, and statuses as an English language learner and a special education student, into admission considerations.

"The challenged policy renders their children (the Coalition's) unable to compete on a level playing field for a racial purpose," Hilton wrote. He ruled that the case presents substantial evidence of disparate impact. According to Hilton, for the Class of 2025, the proportion of admitted Asian-American students fell to about 54 percent. Whereas, "for the previous five years, Asian-American students never made up less than 65 percent of the admitted class," Hilton wrote.

"The undisputed evidence demonstrates precisely how the Board's actions caused and will continue to cause, a substantial racial impact. The Board instituted a system that does not treat all applicants to TJ equally," Hilton wrote.

While the new process allots seats equal to 1.5 percent of each school's eighth-grade

class, applicants who do not attain a place at their school must compete for one of only approximately 100 unallocated seats throughout the area.

In the decision, Hilton said that the set-aside disproportionately forces Asian-American students to compete against more eligible and interested applicants. When applicants outside the top 1.5 percent are placed in the unallocated pool of 100, they are also treated unequally.

FCPS declared that the "experience factors" would be used in their holistic review. "One of these factors is whether a student attends a middle school deemed 'historically underrepresented' at TJ. According to Hilton, none of the six primary FCPS TJ feeder schools qualify for that consideration, so students at these schools are at a disadvantage in the unallocated pool of 100 possible seated applicants compared to their peers from disadvantaged schools.

According to Hilton, the Board's main problem is its concentration on the goal of having TJ match the demographics of the surrounding area, which is predominantly expressed in racial terms. "Far from a compelling interest, racial balancing for its own sake is 'patently unconstitutional,'" Hilton

SEE NEW TJ POLICY, PAGE 14

THE CONNECTION Newspapers & Online

Special Connections Calendar 2022

Advertising Deadlines are the previous Thursdays unless noted.

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3/9/2022.....HomeLifeStyle
3/16/2022.....A+ Camps & Schools
3/23/2022.....Senior Living
3/30/2022.....Spring Family Fun

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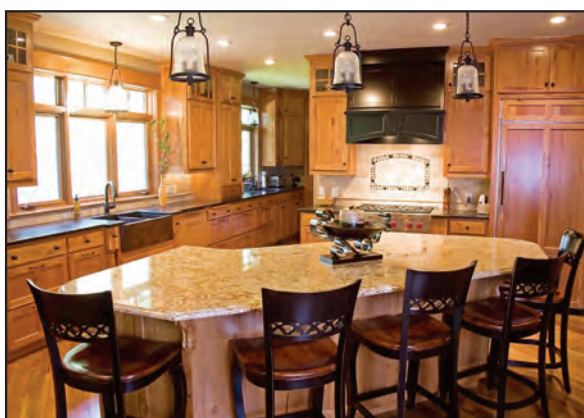
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Managing Anxiety Triggered by News From Ukraine

Music and meditation among the ways to cope.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

Sitting on yoga mats with their eyes closed as meditation music fills the air, Stephanie Dowd's yoga and meditation students seek a sense of calm. For the past two weeks, the Arlington instructor offered a special class for those who are seeking solace in the midst of an abundance of disturbing news about the crisis in Ukraine.

"My students have come to class talking about the sadness and stress they're feeling," she said. "They're looking for ways to decompress from the upsetting headlines."

The onslaught of disturbing images and news headlines about the crisis in Ukraine can take a toll on one's mental health. While feelings of stress over negative events is normal, there is a point in which these feelings can become unmanageable.

"It's normal to feel some level of anxiety over negative national and international events," said Bethesda psychologist Michele Windsor. "The key is having enough self awareness to recognize those when feelings are interfering with your ability to carry out daily tasks."

"Deep breathing, meditation or just spending five minutes sitting quietly and without access to news, smartphones and social media can help cultivate that self awareness," Windsor said.

When members of her prayer group began to express feelings of profound sadness over the crisis, Yves Jaffe said they discussed some of the ways in which they can find comfort in their faith. "I play the flute and I've started playing at the beginning and end of our gatherings."

The sounds are peaceful and give us a sense of calm. There's another woman in our group who's a pianist and she plays, "Let there be Peace on Earth" while we sing it.

In fact, spending time with friends and setting limits on news consumption can reduce anxiety, says Windsor. "Because we're all attached to our smartphones, get news alerts and spend time on social media, we can lose track of the amount of negative news we're getting," she said. "Make a conscious effort to unplug. Set aside a certain amount of time each day to stay off the internet and social media. There are very few reasons why most of us can't choose to stay away from these things for at least three hours each day. It can do wonders for our mental health."

"The key is having enough self awareness to recognize when those feelings are interfering with your ability to carry out daily tasks."

— Michele Windsor

NOW THRU MARCH 6

Artist's Exhibition: Oenone Hammersley and Darren Smith. At the Athenaeum Gallery, Alexandria. Artists Meet and Greet, Sunday March 6, 2 — 4 p.m. Oenone Hammersley's paintings depict abstract water patterns in mixed media on canvas and wooden panels. The panels are cut to resemble water cascading or waves breaking. Darren Smith uses his creative vision while leading the foreign-language editions of National Geographic Magazine. He applies the same skills to making his handmade photo collages. The Athenaeum Gallery is open Thursday to Sunday 12 to 4 p.m.



Homeschool Day will take place Monday, March 7 at George Washington's Mount Vernon.

MARCH 2-31

Woodlawn's 2022 Needlework Show, Common Threads: Connecting People, Families, and Communities, Past and Present, in person. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. The 59th Annual Woodlawn Needlework Show's theme "Common Threads" focuses on the threads in life that connect us as a community and the commonalities that exist among all people, as demonstrated through the pursuit of craft. Every day except Tuesdays. For more information on the theme and submitting work, www.woodlawnpopeleighey.org. Call 703-780-4000 or email woodlawn@savingplaces.org

THURSDAY/MARCH 3

Club Meeting. 9:30 a.m. to noon. At Yacht Haven Yacht Club, 4817 Tarpon Lane, Alexandria. The Yacht Haven Garden Club meeting program is about Shade Gardening by Anne Alexander, Certified Master Gardener. Visitors are welcome. Call 703-304-0156.

MARCH 4-26

Flora & Fauna Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features art that explores the interdependence of plants and animals, combining art with science. Exhibit is open at Noon, Thursdays - Sundays, from Friday, March 4 to Saturday, March 26. It closes at 6:00 pm, except Saturdays it is open until 9 p.m. Visit the website: <https://delrayartisans.org/2022/01/flora-fauna/>

SATURDAY/MARCH 5

Pen and Ink Workshop. 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Enjoy the "Watercolor Workshop - Pen and Ink." By the end of this class, you will be confident drawing with ink. Bring in a drawing or watercolor painting that you do not like and see how to improve it by adding ink. This class is appropriate for those 16 years and older. A supply list will be emailed before class. Bring a lunch. The cost is \$105 per person. Call 703-642-5173.

SATURDAY/MARCH 5

Meatball Madness Relay. 10 a.m. to noon. In honor of National Meatball Day, Lena's Wood-Fired Pizza & Tap is hosting their First Annual Meatball Madness Relay. Individuals are

welcome to gather teams of four to see if they can balance Lena's Giant Meatball on a spoon without dropping it in record time. As teams win, they will advance to the next round in this fast-paced tournament. Teams will check-in at Lena's and the race will happen across the street from Lena's at the Lenny Harris Memorial Fields at Braddock Park (1005 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria). Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lenas-first-annual-meatball-madness-tickets-269719858357>

SATURDAY/MARCH 5

Special Garden Tour - Witch Hazels. 10-11:30 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Celebrate Green Spring's signature shrub! An Extension Master Gardener docent-led tour showcases our nationally accredited witch hazel collection, featuring over 200 specimens with blooms that glow red, yellow, purple and copper from fall through March. \$15 per person. Code U52.S2P8. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

SATURDAY/MARCH 5

Getting the Most Out of Small-Space Urban Gardens Virtual Program. 1-2 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Using examples from area gardens, Kathy Jentz, editor and publisher of Washington Gardener Magazine, will illustrate basic design principles for maximizing garden space. Get ideas for common small-space challenges, such as creating privacy, adding light to shady areas, and finding low-budget design solutions. This program will be presented virtually. A Zoom link will be emailed no later than the morning of the program. \$15 per person. Code 4PD.8XP8. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

SUNDAY/MARCH 6

Afternoon Tea: The Femme Fatale. 1-3 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (Adult) The femme fatale has used her "deadly" charms to lure and entrap men throughout the ages. Explore how this dangerous siren is depicted in mythology, literature and film. In celebration of Women's History Month consider her an example of female independence and empowerment. \$38 (lecture + tea); \$15 (lecture only). A traditional English after-

noon tea served in the 1784 Historic House follows each program. Full tea includes finger sandwiches, pastries, and scone with cream and jam. Specially prepared tea boxes to go are also available with advance purchase. Programs are by reservation only. Call Historic Green Spring at (703) 941-7987.

MONDAY/MARCH 7

Homeschool Day. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy, Mount Vernon. Discover the 18th century by exploring the Farm at Mount Vernon. Watch costumed historic trades interpreters produce 18th-century goods and learn about George Washington's innovative farming practices. Visit activity stations and enjoy specially scheduled programs. Special rates for homeschooling families. Kids 6-18, \$12; Adults, \$14. Visit the website: <https://www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/calendar/events/homeschool-day/>

THURSDAY/MARCH 10

Spanish Guitar Music. 7-8 p.m. At The Rectory on Princess Street, 711 Princess Street, Alexandria. Sip Spanish wine as you journey from Southern Spain, through North Africa, all the way to Afghanistan. Join them in the Atrium for a pre-season display of improvisation, virtuosity, and an unforgettable exchange between cultures. Guitarist Wadih Ettabbakh returns after opening our autumn season with his distinctive blend of flamenco and Moroccan music, joined by newly arrived Afghan musician Hamid Habib Zada playing the tabla, the ancient hand drums central to musical traditions across South Asia. Visit the website: <https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgardenconcerts/>

THURSDAY/MARCH 10

Grand Opening Event. 6-8 p.m. At Nepenthe Gallery at Hollin Hall Shopping Center, 7918 Fort Hunt Road, in Fort Hunt, Alexandria. Named after the Greek term for "a place of no sorrow," Nepenthe Gallery will be the first of its kind in Alexandria - a vibrant artistic oasis that gallery owners and Alexandria natives Jim and Carrie Garland hope will also serve as a community gathering spot. Every Thursday from 6:00-7:30 p.m., Nepenthe will host an art, wine and cheese event that highlights an artwork, artist or special guest or genre.

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BULLETIN

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

THURSDAY/MARCH 3

Club Meeting. 9:30 a.m. to noon. At Yacht Haven Yacht Club, 4817 Tarpon Lane, Alexandria. The Yacht Haven Garden Club meeting program is about Shade Gardening by Anne Alexander, Certified Master Gardener. Visitors are welcome. Call 703-304-0156.

VIRGINIA STATE PARKS IS HIRING

There are numerous opportunities to join the team at one of Virginia's 41 state parks. Whether you enjoy working outdoors, sharing your educational or historical expertise, or planning events and programs, there are plenty of choices for fun jobs this year. The experience, knowledge and skills that you will gain are unique and valuable.

Utilize your technical, historical, educational, organizational, communication or customer service skills while connecting to nature. Daily duties will vary for each job and there are different needs at each park location. For example, you may have the opportunity to present nature, culture, and history programs for all ages; provide friendly customer service at a park contact station, camp store or visitor center; perform the routine grounds care, maintenance, light construction, and cleaning tasks necessary to operate State Park facilities. Visit <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/jobs>

WALKING GROUP

Let's Walk! Let's Walk! is a community walking initiative whose goal is to achieve and maintain optimal health through walking. The members consist of women who are retired or work from home and want to connect with others who share common interests, life experiences and fitness goals. The group meets at 2 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at a central location on Fort Hunt Road and walks for approximately 1 hour weather permitting. Contact information: 703-780-1145 or email; ecenglish@cox.net.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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

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More Than a Virtue



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I sit and write this column on Sat., February 26, 2022, it is 13 years, almost to the day (it was a Thursday actually, Feb. 27, 2009) when Team Lourie (me, my wife, Dina and my brother, Richard) first met an oncologist who would become the center of my universe. This initial meeting WAS to review your recent diagnostic medical history and discuss treatment. Moreover, once this meeting occurs and a cancer diagnosis is confirmed, your oncologist is placed on speed-dial and his/her email is auto-selected every time you type the first few letters of their name. This oncologist becomes your lifeline, phone a friend and/or the person you ask about all thing's cancer related. And there's plenty to ask, especially if you're clueless to begin with, as was Team Lourie.

I wouldn't say I've learned my lessons well, but after so many years, one does accrue a working knowledge/familiarity with certain practices and procedures. And though I never mastered the pronunciation of some of the early-on/heavy-duty chemotherapy I infused, I always knew where to be and when. As a result, I was described as a "compliant" patient. Meaning I did what I was told and never missed any appointments. (You mean not all patients are compliant," I remember asking. The answer I received: "You'd be surprised." After a diagnosis of cancer, how does a diagnosee not show up for treatment, et cetera? Apparently, it happens, more than I can understand.)

But I never had to be told twice. And though text and emails were sent with regularity by my provider, I was always aware in advance and even though I was contacted multiple times on multiple devices, I never needed to be reminded. I was ready, willing, and able. As was the case with "Deets," (Danny Glover's character in "Lonesome Dove"). When he died, Capt. Woodrow Call (Tommy Lee Jones) carved the following sentiment on his headstone: "Never shirked a task. Cheerful in all weathers." He was dependable and reliable, as have I been during this cancer adventure.

Now whether my compliance and cheerful attitude has had any bearing on my survival, or whether a possible misdiagnosis – which led to my diagnosis being changed in 2020 to papillary thyroid cancer from the original non-small cell lung cancer after multiple biopsies confirmed the rediagnosis, Team Lourie can't know for sure – and of course, no one is admitting it. I've been told that papillary thyroid cancer, generally speaking, is a slow-moving (perhaps that's why I've survived so long), curable type of cancer. Quite a bit different than the "terminal" diagnosis/"13 month to two years" prognosis I initially received back in 2009.

Maybe that's why I am alive and reasonably well. When you're told that you have two years to live, maximum, it's hard to be mad if you're still alive 13 YEARS LATER. Over these many years, I have learned to roll with the punches and go with the flow because if being diagnosed with cancer has taught me anything, it has taught me how to be patient – and how to be one as well.

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

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OPINION

Budget Will Reflect Values, Priorities

FROM PAGE 6

The Senate included some \$300 million in funding to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which builds and subsidizes affordable housing. We additionally included \$47 million in tax subsidies for the construction of new affordable housing. I have long been an advocate for deliberate investment in affordable housing and am glad we are finally moving to meet the market demand which is felt so strongly, especially in Northern Virginia.

The Senate budget also includes thoughtful, pragmatic tax relief for Virginians to reduce the increasing cost of living caused by supply chain issues, conflict in Ukraine, and inflation on certain goods felt heavily in Northern Virginia. We provided a one-time tax rebate of \$250 for single taxpayers and \$500 for married taxpayers filing a joint return, reduced the grocery tax by 1.5% while retaining the locality share for school and transportation funding, and expanded the refundability of the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income Virginians. This will provide crucial dollars directly back into the pockets of those who need it most, without gutting ongoing funding for the programs and infrastructure of the Commonwealth.

I was pleased to get a number of key priorities included in the Senate budget via amendments offered in subcommittees. During the interim, constituents often approach me with very specific, niche concerns related to the state budget, which are frequently not on the radar of the Governor or the Secretariats who help prepare the introduced budget. This year I was glad to get \$200,000 to preserve and digitize records at Central State Hospital at the request of Racial Justice Alexandria. These funds will support a research team currently digitizing the records of Central State, which served as the first segregated Black sanatorium in the United States, opening nearly immediately after the end of the civil war. Without digitization, these records are at risk of deterioration and eventually will be lost to history.

I was also able to obtain \$8.8 million to complete the installation of air conditioning at several adult correctional facilities which are currently without AC, subjecting those incarcerated to severe summer heat.

I worked to secure funding to establish an education center on naval history in Alexandria supporting the Tall Ship Providence. The John Warner Maritime History Center will serve as a major tourist and economic development draw to the waterfront and enhance the already rich history of our city.

We also allocated \$200,000 for a Veteran Farmer Training Program through Arcadia Farms in Mount Vernon, which I visited along with Governor Northam this summer. Since 2016 Arcadia has trained 125 military veterans, active-duty service members and family members for new careers in agriculture. Arcadia offers three training tracks: the Veteran Farmer Reserve, the Veteran Farm Fellowship, a GI Bill-compliant on-the-job training program apprenticed to professional farmers, and the Arcadia Veteran Farm Incubator.

Additionally, I was glad to see \$2 million included in the Senate budget to increase public access to historic River Farm, which has been saved from sale and development due to ongoing advocacy from local and state leaders and citizen activists.

Finally, the Senate budget retains key funding for the remediation of Alexandria's combined sewer overflow system. The House budget fully removed this funding, which is incredibly concerning for ratepayers in the city, and I will work to ensure it is reinstated in the conference committee.

We will have to wait a couple of more weeks for the differences in the Senate and House budget to be reconciled and for the final budget to be announced. It will be the result of collaboration and compromise, and I hope it will reflect our values while bringing much-needed and worthy investments to every corner of the Commonwealth.

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

New TJ Policy Invalidated

FROM PAGE 11

wrote. He added, "The Board cannot transform racial balancing into a compelling interest simply by relabeling it 'racial diversity.'"

Finally, Hilton said that even if the Board could establish a compelling reason to justify racially discriminatory changes to the TJ admissions process, the Board must demonstrate that the revised policy is "necessary" to achieve that interest.

According to Hilton, the plan must be a "last resort" to accomplish the purportedly compelling interest. He suggested increasing the size of TJ and providing free test prep before defaulting to a system "that treats applicants unequally in

hopes of engineering a particular racial outcome."

"This is a monumental win for parents and students here in Fairfax County, but also for equal treatment in education across the country," said Pacific Legal Foundation attorney Erin Wilcox. "We hope this ruling sends the message that government cannot choose who receives the opportunity to attend public schools based on race or ethnicity."

As for the next steps, for the defendant and plaintiff, Wilcox said, "The defendant has 30 days to appeal the district court's decision to the US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Because they prevailed, the plaintiff has no next steps at this time."



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