

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

Mountain View Grads Are Special

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Faculty Award winner Sofanit Gebremariam. The Faculty Award is given to the student achieving the greatest academic and personal success, despite significant obstacles.



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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

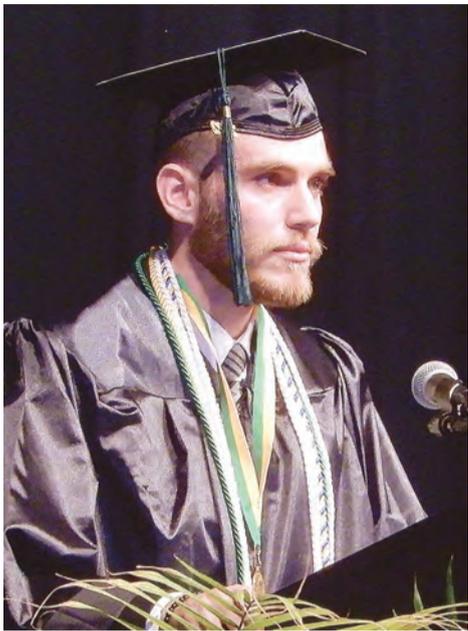
Recharging at Herndon Carnival

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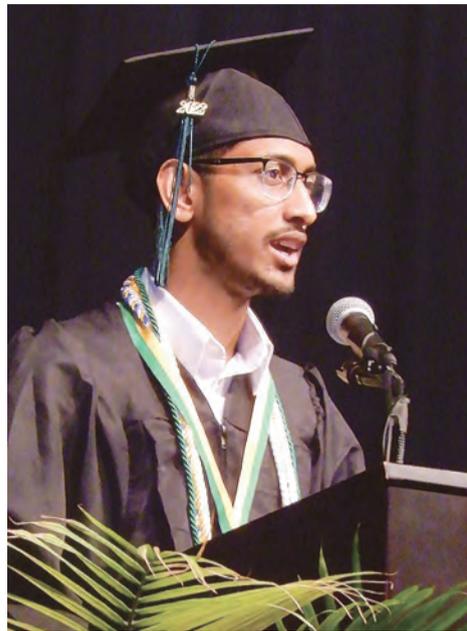
Pride Day Returns to Reston

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GRADUATIONS



Tariq Aldalou



Nuruddin Nabil



Sofanit Gebremariam



Citizenship Award winner
Nikolas Migliore

'Thank You for Helping Me See My Own Value'

Mountain View High celebrates Class of 2022.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

A Mountain View High graduation is always a mixture of joy, tears and pride – joy because of the students heading toward their futures, tears because of the heartfelt speeches describing all they've overcome, and pride because they've succeeded. And the ceremony last Tuesday, May 31, at Centreville High was no exception.

Mountain View holds both fall and spring commencements, and this one was the 52nd since the school opened, 26 years ago. Assistant Principal Catherine Stone said all the grads share the common bond of being part of the Mountain View family and embodying the school's motto of Family, Love and Respect. She also thanked their parents for "sharing your students with us and being part of their support system."

Principal Joe Thompson noted that the school's nonprofit Mountain View Foundation was responsible for this semester's grads receiving more than \$37,000 worth of scholarships. Acknowledging each graduate's "amazing contributions" to Mountain View, he said, "We believe you can succeed."

He also urged the grads to remember that "The unconditional support we've provided here for your growth and development never goes away. You'll always be part of the Mountain View family." (See sidebar for the rest of his speech.)

Since the majority of the students come here from other countries – often fleeing great adversity and not speaking any English – they must overcome tremendous obstacles the average FCPS student doesn't have. So their dedication and drive to obtain an education and graduate sets them apart. It's also illustrated in the stories related by each student speaker at graduation.

The first one, last week, was Tariq Aldalou. He's Palestinian but was raised in Syria. "Violence in the Middle East forced my



Personal Achievement Award winner
Kimberly Perez



Faculty Award winner Sofanit Gebremariam

family to seek a better life," he said. "I loved Palestine and my family and the olive trees there. But war forces us to make decisions



From left are Renee Harrison, grad Astrid Cordón and Jacqueline Bonilla.

that affect our future."

Eventually moving to America, he said, "People in the U.S. have different food, clothes and lifestyles. As an immigrant, I've learned you must be proud of what makes you unique and remember your values. I thank my father, who's helped me and always had my back, and my sister, who made me a better person. And I also thank everyone at Mountain View who helped make my dream of graduation come true."

Nuruddin Nabil immigrated from Bangladesh to the U.S. four years ago. "There were challenges – English isn't my first language," he said. "But coming to Mountain View is the best decision I made in my life. They made learning fun for me, and they have wonderful counselors and teachers." Case in point, directly addressing his math teacher, Dylan Thomas, he said, "Mr. Thomas, I like you, but I don't like math."

Continuing, Nabil said, "The teachers here

are so friendly and treat us like their own children. When I come to Mountain View, it's like coming to my second home. I'll always be grateful to Mountain View for helping me get my education. It isn't just a place of study; here, you realize you are not alone. Mountain View lets students catch their dreams."

Nabil also thanked his parents, sister and brother-in-law for supporting him unconditionally. Next, he plans to study information technology at NOVA and then attend Virginia Tech or GMU and eventually work in cybersecurity.

"I'm here because of the sacrifices my parents made," said Sofanit Gebremariam. "Four years ago, I couldn't have dreamed of graduating." She was born and raised in Ethiopia, but she and her sister and older brother were able to move to the U.S. And

SEE MOUNTAIN VIEW HIGH. PAGE 4
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NEWS

{PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Sandra Ofori receives her diploma from Joe Thompson.



Joe Thompson giving Brenda Martinez Solano her diploma.

‘Please Remember the Importance of Respect’

Mountain View principal shares words of advice.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

During Mountain View’s graduation last week, Principal Joe Thompson thanked the seniors for all the positive contributions they made to the school. He also offered them some words of advice.

He said they’ve shown “amazing resilience and commitment” en route to receiving their diplomas. “Your Mountain View family has made it our mission to provide a rigorous, educational experience in a warm and caring environment,” said Thompson. “And we’re proud and grateful to be part of this celebration.”

“We challenged you to work for your diploma, and you’ve earned it. So please take a moment to celebrate yourself, and those that helped you along the way. We hope Mountain View has proven to you how important it is to maintain the values of family, love and respect. In life, getting and keeping anything you value requires not just hard work, but engagement in it, and the resilience to pursue that which you value.”

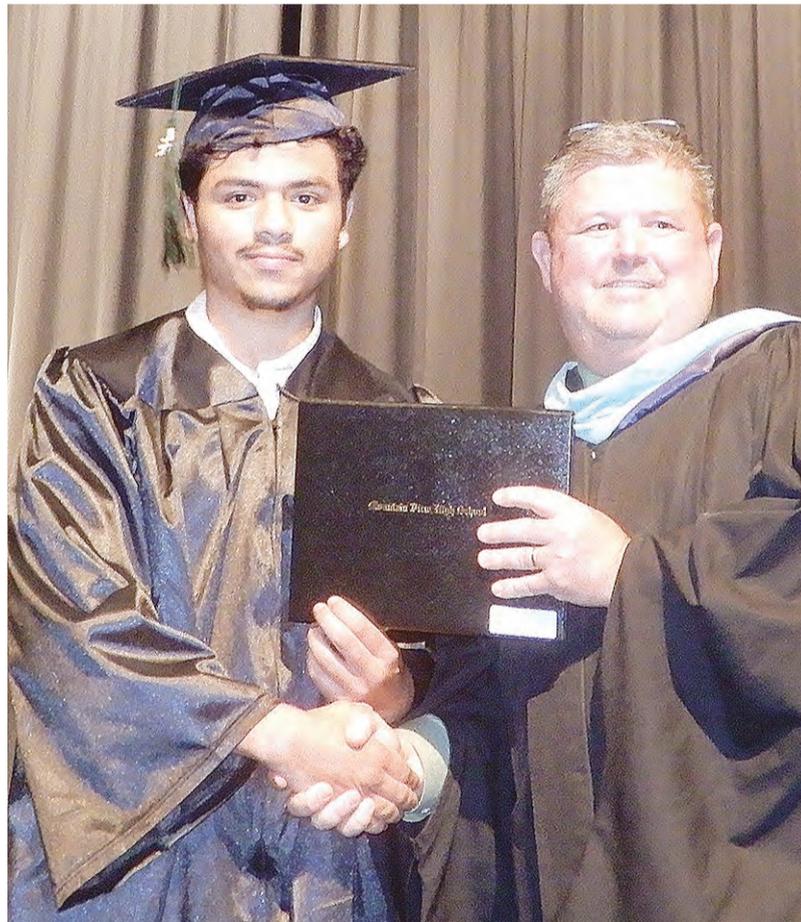
Thompson said the school’s motto of Family, Love and Respect starts with the students respecting their own strengths in reaching this day. “What makes your accomplishments, and those of the staff, even more astounding is the resilience each of you displayed in working through multiple virtual courses, in-person courses and mitigating strategies over the past two-and-a-half years to complete your studies,” he said. “That creativity, poise and sense of community will carry you in all aspects of your life.”

“There were a ton of new demands on teachers and students, and we were all learning daily how to make it work,” he continued. “The confidence we all had that we were going to find a way to succeed, despite the challenges, is rooted in our value of love. We all fail, but love erases the fear of failure and gives us a sense of belonging and confidence. Love not only permits, but requires, resilience.”

Furthermore, said Thompson, “You had to endure a worldwide pandemic on the way to graduation. Had you given up when times seemed most difficult, some would have accepted or even expected it. However, you continued to pursue your diploma and we’re proud to see how you bounced back from adversity to make it happen.”

He said the seniors set goals and built relationships with people who care about them. “You achieved success during one of the most tumultuous times in our country’s history,” said Thompson. “Your children and grandchildren will want to know how you managed to live life during this pandemic. I hope you’ll proudly tell them about your resilience and how you found the values of family, love and respect at Mountain View.”

Thompson also told the students that



Christian Araniva Lopez gets his diploma from Joe Thompson.

graduation isn’t their finish line, but the beginning of the rest of their lives. He said the lessons they’ve learned at school will become even more relevant as they grow, and the relationships they’ve developed at Mountain View will help them navigate future life challenges.

“We all live lives requiring us to overcome obstacles and difficulties; they’re unavoidable,” he said. “When you encounter them, use the lessons you’ve learned to connect to

people who’ll help you.”

Furthermore, said Thompson, “Please remember the importance of respect. At Mountain View, students come from 14 different schools. That means 14 different neighborhoods – not to mention the many different countries and languages and customs you shared in this building. In your class projects this year, in your online classrooms before that, and in our hallways, you’ve demonstrated an amazing ability to respect each other as individuals.

“Our communities will grow and improve because of your skills in respecting others. Your generation will ultimately decide how we, as a country, interact with each other in the future. Please take the lessons learned here and teach those around you that respect for others makes your life and theirs better.

The current division we see in our country along racial lines – the diminishing of our neighbors based on color, religion or culture – should not be your future.”

Lastly, Thompson told the students to “Never forget you’re important, you’re valued, and you deserve success. We’ll always be here for you, and we want you to stay in touch – that’s what families do. Congratulations to the graduating class of 2022 on all your successes today, and those yet to come.”



Grad Sofanit Gebremariam with her brother, Tinsaye Kebede, and sister, Mesenbet Gebremariam.



New grad Didier Lopez with (from left) friend Esmeralda Gutierrez, sister Astrid, mom Maria and brother Julian.



Grad Hector Ordoñez with his mom, Doris Jaico, and brother, Luis Ordoñez.

Mountain View High Class of 2022

FROM PAGE 2

although her mother is still in Ethiopia, when Gebremariam was 13, she helped her father come here, too.

“My parents are precious to me – a source of inspiration and encouragement,” she said. “My mother was my first teacher; she was my guide and my friend, and she taught me to be wise. And my sister sacrificed herself many times to make me happy.”

When Gebremariam came to the U.S., she, too, had to learn a new language. And she did that, and more, at Mountain View. “This school helped me to learn and grow, be responsible and proud,” she said. “If you fail, the teachers tell you to try again ‘til you succeed. They motivate you to work hard.”

Tearing up, she then thanked the school,

her parents and her siblings for “being there for me – and my aunt, for being a second parent. And thank you to my teachers for encouraging me to learn and helping me to see my own value. I also thank God; I feel blessed for all the good things that have happened to me.”

Stepping to the podium afterward, Stone thanked the speakers for “sharing your stories with us. You are the reason we come to school every day.”

Special awards were then presented to three deserving students chosen by the teachers. The winners were as follows:

- ❖ The Citizenship Award is given to a student who’s helped build a positive school community. Thomas presented it to Nikolas Migliore.

- ❖ The Personal Achievement Award goes to a student who succeeded academically and personally, despite having adult responsibilities, such as a job or a child. This award, presented by math teacher Jennifer Lee, went to Kimberly Perez.

- ❖ The Faculty Award is given to the student achieving the greatest academic and personal success, despite significant obstacles. ESOL teacher Lora Bates presented it to Gebremariam.

“Imagine traveling 7,200 miles on a 23-

hour flight to come to the U.S.,” said Bates. “But that’s what Sofanit did. Without parents in the country, she was living on her own with her siblings. She works 40 hours a week and had almost perfect attendance at school. She’s the Mountain View epitome of perseverance and resilience.

“She won department awards in math, science and English and won two scholarships. She wants to go to college and become a math teacher, and we’re incredibly happy to see Sofanit making her dreams come true.”

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

JUNE 8 TO JULY 14

Chronic Disease Self-Management. 10:30 to 12:30 p.m. At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 Saint Germain Drive, Centreville. Learn strategies to manage pain, fatigue, eat better, stay active and more in this free 6-week workshop. Register for this free event with the Fairfax County Agency on Aging by

calling (703) 324-7721 or going to <https://tinyurl.com/CDSMP123>.

JULY 6-29

Host French Teens. Ten volunteer families are needed to host French students from July 6-29. Enjoy an international experience and help promote international understanding and worldwide friendships,

Call Tiffany 484-347-3459. Visit the website: <https://www.smores.com/n2csd>

SHEPHERD’S CENTER OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA SPRING 2022 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The Shepherd’s Center of Northern Virginia continues to offer educational, health and wellness and entertain-

ing programming to our Senior Community. The programming includes Adventures In Learning, Active Wellness Classes, Great Discussions Book Club, Caregivers’ Support Group and much more. The Adventures In Learning program began in April and repeats every Thursday for 8 weeks. There is ongoing AIL programming all year long. Topics this session include

Health & Wellness, Arts & Entertainment & Travel as well as World Affairs Past & Present. The Active Aging and Wellness Program is an Exercise Class to improve strength, balance and mobility for older adults. This class is held on Wednesdays (via Zoom) from 10:45-11:45 a.m. for eight week schedules. The cost is \$50/session and you can learn more about it and register on the website.

BUSINESS

Grand Opening for Highland Title & Escrow

New home in historic Town of Herndon building.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Mike McFarlane, president and chief counsel of Highland Title & Escrow, has long desired a permanent, larger location. McFarlane, a real estate attorney, founded the company in 1999, and it currently employs 42 people in 15 settlement offices throughout Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. “So, I thought, why not be in downtown Herndon, in the historic district and one of the most remarkable buildings,” McFarlane said.

Highland Title & Escrow, located at 783 Station Street in downtown Herndon, celebrated a delayed Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting on Friday, June 3. The office is located on the first floor of the former National Bank of Herndon building, a brick two-story Classical Revival structure with a 1910 construction date on the pediment and is designated as Virginia Division of Historic Preservation Landmark 235-69.

“We opened our Herndon office a year ago. Like all of you, we have been waiting for COVID to go away before having a Grand Opening celebration... But we decided that this is as good a time as any,” McFarlane said. “Many of our key employees live in



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

The Grand Opening and ribbon cutting for Highland Title & Escrow in the Town of Herndon (from left) Lisa Goldman, staff, Highland Title & Escrow; Mike McFarlane, president and chief operating officer, Highland Title & Escrow; Mayor Sheila Olem, Town of Herndon; Mike O'Reilly, former mayor Town of Herndon (2004-2006) and former Town Councilmember (2000-2004); Nicolas A. Pasquini, real estate agent, CENTURY 21 Redwood Realty Arlington; Jenny Phipps, Herndon aide for Supervisor John W. Foust, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (D-Dranesville District); John Boylan, president and CEO, Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce; and Sarah Fri, staff, Highland Title & Escrow

Herndon [and] three of us can walk to work,” he said. According to McFarlane, many people want to live in the little town of Herndon because of the restaurants, activities, and other facilities.

“Congratulations on your first year in business in the town and many more to come,” said Mayor Sheila Olem of the Town of Herndon.

ST Engineering iDirect, 2022 Community Champion

Satellite company helps Food for Neighbors provide for 3,400 students.

Food For Neighbors has named ST Engineering iDirect as a 2022 Community Champion. With its generous donation and volunteer support, the global satellite company is a key Food For Neighbors partner in providing a reliable and nutritious food source for approximately 3,400 students in Northern Virginia.

In Fall 2016, Karen Joseph built Food For Neighbors on the concept of reaching vulnerable students through schools supported by their local communities. The nonprofit is fortunate to have 29 participating schools, over 1,700 food donors, and approximately 1,400 volunteers. Providing a

foundation to these three pillars of community support is the important funding donated by local government organizations, foundations, and businesses. ST Engineering iDirect is one of these key businesses, and, in addition to being a leader in satellite technology, the company is a leader in community spirit.

Joseph, the Founder and Executive Director of Food For Neighbors, met with ST Engineering iDirect representatives Kevin Steen, CEO, and Donna Wilson, CFO, at the company's headquarters in Herndon, VA. Joseph conveyed her gratitude for their generosity as



PHOTO BY RENEE MAXWELL

Food For Neighbors celebrates ST Engineering iDirect as a 2022 Community Champion. Pictured, left to right, are Kevin Steen, CEO, ST Engineering iDirect; Donna Wilson, CFO, ST Engineering iDirect; and Karen Joseph, Founder and Executive Director, Food For Neighbors

well as the positive impact the company is making on the lives of students in Northern Virginia.

“We are thrilled to partner with ST Engineering iDirect,” said Joseph. “The company's generous community spirit is key in our fight against teen food insecurity. This support is more than a financial contribution. It represents the larger community's recognition of the challenges our most vulnerable

students face as well as an affirmation of the positive impact our volunteers are making every day.”

SEE FOOD FOR NEIGHBORS, PAGE 12

OAK HILL/HERNDON / RESTON / CHANTILLY CONNECTION / CENTRE VIEW ❖ JUNE 8-14, 2022 ❖ 5

ROUNDUPS

Public Safety Day at London Towne Elementary

Fairfax County's Communities of Trust Committee will host a Public Safety Day at London Towne Elementary School, 6100 Stone Road in Centreville. The event is slated for Saturday, June 11, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and will feature food and games plus various police vehicles on display. For more information, email fairfaxCOTC@gmail.com.

Car Seat Inspections, June 16

Parents may get their children's car seats inspected on Thursday, June 16, from 5-8:30 p.m., outside the Sully District Police Station. It's at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants are asked to wear a mask and adhere to social-distancing and safety precautions.

They should also install the child safety seat themselves, so the inspection can be performed. The seat will be properly re-installed, if necessary, and parents will be taught how to install the seat properly, in the future. Another car-seat inspection is scheduled for June 30, at the same place and time.

Basketball Court Gets Lighting Upgrade

The Fairfax County Park Authority recently began a basketball, lighting-upgrade project in Chalet Woods Park at 14912 Cranoke St. in Centreville. The work includes removal of the existing poles and fixtures, followed by the installation of new poles, fixtures and a push button for basketball-court lights.

The power to the basketball court's lighting fixtures has been turned off but is expected to be back on by the end of June. During this time, the basketball court will be open for daytime play only; lighting will not be available after dusk. For more information, contact Project Manager Wendy Li at fu.li@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-223-4989.

Sully Antique Car Show

The 47th Sully Antique Car Show will be held Sunday, June 19, from 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m., at the Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way in Chantilly, jointly sponsored by the Fairfax County Park Authority and the George Washington Chapter Model A Ford Club. Tickets are available online; walk-in admissions are also accepted at the gate.

On Father's Day, dad and the family will enjoy this classic show's long-awaited return, after a two-year hiatus. Stroll among 350 classic and antique cars, a Car Corral, special displays including Hit 'n' Miss engines and a “take-apart” Model T Ford demonstration. Entertainment includes live music from two bands and children's activities.

Check out the flea market and food vendors. End the afternoon with a Century parade featuring cars at least 100 years old. Tours of the first floor of the historic house are included with the price of admission: \$12 adults, \$10 seniors and \$8 for children. Trophies will be awarded at 3 p.m.

For Juneteenth, visitors may explore Sully's historic past at the 18th century, slave-quarter area, where enslaved people lived prior to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Learn the meaning of Juneteenth and why it's celebrated. Also learn about little-known, late 19th to early 20th century, African American inventors and patent holders who contributed to American transportation.

World Blood Donor Day, June 14

Donate at Inova Blood Donor Services

The World Health Organization established World Blood Donor Day as a celebration of all blood donors. Every year on June 14, Inova Blood Donor Services and blood collection organizations all around the world provide special recognition of the gift of life that our donors provide.

The history of the recognition day relates to the memorial of Karl Landsteiner, a former Nobel Prize recipient for the discovery of the ABO blood group system. Without Landsteiner's research, the transfusion medicine world would not have ad-

vanced to where it is today.

This summer, blood centers across the country are at critically low levels for nearly all blood types. Please take the time to make an appointment to donate on June 14, or whenever you have time, to help boost the blood supply and ensure there is an adequate supply for our community in case of accidents and emergencies. There is no substitute for blood when needed for patient care — it can only come from volunteer donors like you. All donors who donate on World Blood Donor Day will receive an exclusive t-shirt as a thank-you gift.

RESTON PRIDE



U.S. Postal Carrier Petra Loebach, transgender woman: "I'm enjoying this event in Reston. During my lunchtime, I'm going to get to as many booths as possible I can."



From left Ken Williamson and Morris Smith, both of Reston



Reston Pride 2022 patrons



It is a community for all, according to Rachel Eisenfeld, owner of Elden Street Tea Shop in Herndon, and her friend, Keven LaBlanc, who announced he is running for one of the six councilmember seats on the Herndon Town Council.



Dulles Triangles is an LGBTQ+ social club outside the beltway that sponsors weekly Happy Hours and events, including bowling, movies, hiking, amusement parks, book clubs, billiards, dinners, and such.



Kyle Rowen (they/them), president of Reston Pride. It is fiscally sponsored by and a D.B.A. of CORE Foundation Inc, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that advocates for, educates on behalf, supports, and celebrates the LGBTQIA+ community in Reston, VA, and its surrounding area.



The Rev. Jessica Holthus, St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Reston



The Rev. Scott Alexander Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston



The Rev. Emma Chattin, Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia in Fairfax



The Reston Pride 2022 crowd

Reston Pride 2022 Affirms Gender Identity Choice

Celebrates past work and acknowledges threatened future progress.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Pride community gets to say who they are: lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, trans, intersect, queer, questioning, gender non-binary, gender expansive, genderfluid, genderqueer, and more. "We exist, by God, and we do so proudly," said the Rev. Emma Chattin, senior pastor, Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia, a speaker at Reston Pride 2022.

On Saturday, June 4, 2022, the Reston Pride Festival came back for its third year at Lake Anne Plaza in Reston to celebrate LGBTQIA+ people living authentically and their equal right to thrive while flying their gender identity flags.

Sex and gender are different. While there are two biological sexes, there are many genders, according to P.E.L.A.G., the first and largest organization for (LGBTQ+) people, their parents, families and allies.

One of the two biological sexes, male or female, is assigned based on physical characteristics at birth. However, this does not mean that there are two gender identities. There is a rainbow of genders: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and others, hence LGBTQIA+. The "+" also includes gender allies.

Under the banner theme of Reston Pride 2022, "You Belong Here," Kyle Rowen, president of Reston Pride, welcomed everyone to the event and introduced emcee Ken Williamson, minister of music for Washington Plaza Baptist Church. "Let the magic and

festivities begin," Williamson said before introducing festival speakers, local elected officials, and faith-based leaders.

The speakers emphasized that the equity battle for gender and sexual orientation is ongoing. The allies talked about how they are catalysts acting with the LGBTQ+ community to address troubling findings of inequality, face down discrimination, and take tangible actions.

Del. Ken Plum (D) said that when he looks back, the only thing he's sorry about is that they didn't start the festival "a whole lot earlier."

"When you think about what makes Reston special, one of the things to think about is inclusiveness," Plum said. He added that it has only been in recent years that they have recognized that inclusiveness includes not only racial issues but also gender issues.

"I look forward to representing you in the House of Delegates. When I say you, I am talking about members of the L.G.B.T. community. Your concerns are my concerns. Your rights are my concerns. Being able to represent you fairly and effectively is something I want to do. So, bless you all for being here," said Plum.

Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) said that one of the things he wanted to bring to Reston Pride was to reaffirm, on behalf of the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County, that "we are a welcoming community."

Supervisor Alcorn said, "We are an inclusive community. And frankly, we are very, very focused on how we can become more inclusive — how we can find situations where some in our community are not acting



Del. Ken Plum (D), member, VA House of Delegates, 36th District



Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill District), member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (center back)



The Rev. Michelle Nickens, Washington Plaza Baptist Church on Lake Anne Plaza.



The Rev. Daniel Park, Restoration Church in Reston

that way."

According to Alcorn, not only are the battles of yesterday relevant to today, not only are equal rights an issue in the past, but they are also an issue today. As the community moves forward, Alcorn said the Board of Supervisors will watch for employment discrimination and housing discrimination. They need to make sure that the community is living up to the ideals of those in Reston set out many years ago.

"Because once we take those for granted, they can go away. So, let's not do that, please," Supervisor Alcorn said.

Emcee Williamson said that when Reston Pride founded the festival years ago, some local churches immediately stood up to help make things happen. Williams introduced the Rev. Michelle Nickens of Washington

za Baptist Church on Lake Anne Plaza.

The Unitarian Universalist Church founded Reston Pride, according to Pastor Nickens. They had a vision for the festival, and it continues to grow every year.

The Rev. Daniel Park, the pastor of Restoration Church in Reston that celebrates at South Lakes High School in Reston, said it was important that they were all together and experienced the wide welcome love of God together. Park invited everyone to come by because they were writing affirmation matters to transgender youth partnering with Reston Pride.

The Reverend Jessica Holthus, the rector at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Reston, began her ministry in February of 2022. Introducing herself by her title, Mother. Hol-

thus spoke of the progressive church being a welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ folks and put out an invite to anyone. "God loves you, no exceptions. Come as you are. Hear that message loud and clear," Holthus said.

The Rev. Scott Alexander, interim minister of Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston, said that their church began the Pride Festival because of its tradition of all inclusion. "The first principle of our faith is the inherent worth and dignity of every person... No exceptions," he said.

The Rev. Emma Chattin, the senior pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia, closed the speakers' presentation. "I am lesbian, gay, bi, trans, intersex, queer, and questioning at any point in my life. I've lived authentically and have had each one of these identities. I am certifiably

queer.. By God, I am my own rainbow," Rev. Chattin said.

Chattin said that the community didn't "storm into existence" in the 1960s. They have always existed. Chattin said, "We just didn't have a way you could find us in history."

Chattin said that there are those today who are trying to take away their names; they are trying to remove their books, stories, and histories from schools. "They are trying to take away the places for youth to exist safely in school. Take away the medically-proven pathways that are life-saving for trans youth. This is happening," Chattin said. She added that they tell their youth, "It is okay to be who you are."

"For those on the margins, those at the greatest risk, those who are most vulnerable,



Cora Thompson, 5, of Reston poses with her dad, David at Reston Pride 2022.



Drag performance entertains the crowd at Reston Pride 2022.

we have a name, and ... we have formed a diverse community composed of so many letters, shapes, sizes, and colors," Chattin said. She told those at the festival to always remember that the social highways the community travels on today were hard-earned and paid for by those who came before. The community owes them a great debt, but they must pave the way for the future.

Chattin questioned how many of their siblings and ancestors were swallowed up and lost in the past and never recognized or acknowledged. "We will not let that happen again. Do not let anyone take away your pride

ever. Do not let them take away your hope, and never let them take your faith from you," Chattin said. She said that religion had been used against their community as a weapon. But religion also brings healing and strength to those who have affirmed, their allies, and others who unite and do not divide. She closed with an affirmation, saying in part that the peacemakers and the reconcilers among us who draw together and help share the beauty of all people for celebrating sexual and gender diversity are "a blessing that enriches us all ... We say thank you."

HERNDON CARNIVAL



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Amusement rides at the Herndon Carnival

Herndon Carnival 2022

The fun returns after a two year COVID pause.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fun awaited families and individuals at the Thursday, June 2 through Sunday, June 5, 2022, Herndon Carnival when it returned to its 2019 home, the parking lot of the Northwest Federal Credit Union (NWFCU) headquarters at 200 Spring Street, Herndon. Due to the pandemic, the much-loved Herndon Festivals in 2020 and 2021 had to be canceled, breaking what would have been the 40th and 41st

consecutive years.

In preparation for the 2022 event, the town's Parks and Recreation department, which produces the festival, had to develop a new idea that would pose less financial risk. The event could be canceled at the last moment because its production would depend on COVID-19 transmission levels in the area. Town staff pivoted to a smaller-scale event, a carnival.

The Herndon Carnival featured free admission, 22 rides, games, seven food vendors, and a free shuttle bus service. The 5K Race and Fitness Expo at the Community Center occurred on Sunday. According to a statement on the website for the Herndon Festival, patrons can "look for a full Herndon Festival in 2023." The site is not disclosed.



Since they were invented, Ferris wheels have delighted carnival goers.



From left, Reston teens Grace Yazgan, 15, Toleen Alhussaini, 16, Ayza Ahmed, 15, and Khadija Zamani, 16: "We wanted to hang out with our friends, and we need to recharge at the Herndon Carnival," Ayza said. School exams start on Monday.



Joined by Herndon Police officers (from left) PFC M. Vance and J. Dean, four children from Reston take turns trying out the officers' face cut-out photo prop. The children look like they are patrolling on a police Segway.



A cook from Taste of the World grills a large batch of chicken as the sun sets Friday evening of the Herndon Carnival. The family-friendly event remained open until 11 p.m.



Cartoon style caricatures with big heads are always a draw and make people laugh.

HERNDON CARNIVAL

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS



Amusement rides at the Herndon Carnival.



Ticket lines move quickly.



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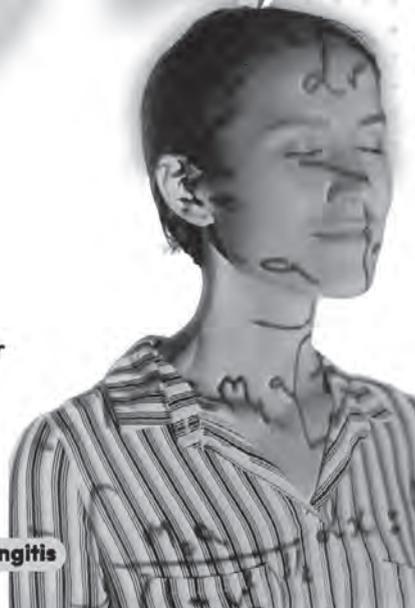
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CALENDAR

SATURDAYS UNTIL DECEMBER

The Reston Farmers Market (sponsored by the Fairfax Co. Park Authority) will take place at Lake Anne Village from 8 a.m.-noon. SNAP beneficiaries receive up to \$20 match. Visit <http://restonfarmersmarket.com/>

NOW THRU JULY 4

Paper Jewels. At Reston Art Gallery and Studios, 11400 Washington Plaza West, Reston. Julia Malakoff presents her newest mixed media artworks to stimulate the senses of sight, smell, and taste through vivid colors and textures in her solo show, "Paper Jewels," featured at Reston Art Gallery and Studios (RAGS) from June 2 until July 4. Malakoff's own senses of smell and taste were altered by a case of Covid in 2020, but as a professional artist she has been able to put her imagination to work to ease the challenges of being a long-hauler, and to bring joy. Visit <https://juliamalakoff.com/>.

NOW THRU DEC. 31

Crafts for Kids. 10 a.m. to 12 noon. At Reston Art Gallery and Studios, 11400 Washington Plaza W at Lake Anne, Reston. Free, themed art projects for children (with guardian) are offered at Reston Art Gallery and Studios every Saturday from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. Visit the website: www.restonartgallery.com

MCLEAN FARMERS MARKET

The McLean Farmers Market opened for the 2022 season on Fridays at Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The market will run every Friday from 8 a.m. to noon through Nov. 11. Local farmers and producers will sell fresh produce and fruits; breads and pastries; prepared foods; meats; herbs; flowers, and more. All products are grown or produced by the vendors and come from within 125 miles of Fairfax County. Visit: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/>

HERNDON FARMERS MARKET

Thursdays through Nov. 3, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. 765 Lynn St., Herndon, VA, 20170 <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/herndon>

GREAT FALLS FARMERS MARKET

The Great Falls Farmers Market Outdoor Market is open every Saturday, Spring and Summer, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., 778 Walker Road, Great Falls. For vendors and weekly highlights see <https://www.greatfallsfarmersmarket.org/>

NOW THRU JUNE 19

HomeAid Diaper Drive. At HomeAid Office, 3684 Centerview Drive, Suite 110B, Chantilly. HomeAid Northern Virginia is currently hosting their annual Builders for Babies diaper drive. With the drive closing on Father's Day (June 19th) they encourage everyone to get involved to reach our collection goal of 50,000 diapers and wipes. Then, on June 24th, they will be distributing to roughly 20+ of our nonprofit partners in need in Northern Virginia and Winchester. Contact Georgeanne Harter at gharter@homeaidnova.org or 703-953-3529. Visit the website: <https://homeaidnova.org/>

JUNE 2-19

"Under the Sea." At 1st Stage in Tysons, 1524 Spring Hill Road Tysons. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$50 general admission, \$47 seniors (65+), \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org.

WEDNESDAY/JUNE 8

Mary Gauthier with Special Guest Jaimee Harris. 7:30 p.m. At Jammin Java, 227 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. Visit www.jamminjava.com

WEDNESDAY/JUNE 8

Princess Diana: Accredited Access Exhibition. At Tysons Corner Center, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. This exhibition features photos and never-before-heard stories of

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The political comedian Bassem Youssef will appear at the Alden Theater in McLean on Friday, June 10, 2022.

the People's Princess from her Official Royal Photographer, Anwar Hussein, and his sons, Samir and Zak, who are now Official Royal Photographers for the next generation of Royals. Tickets are available here: www.PrincessDianaExhibit.com/Washington.

THURSDAY/JUNE 9

Get to Know. 5-7 p.m. At Brightview Great Falls, 10200 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Explore the community, enjoy cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and meet the team at Brightview Great Falls.

FRIDAY/JUNE 10

The Winery at Bull Run Anniversary. 6:30-9:30 p.m. At 15950 Lee Highway, Centreville. Featuring the Special Occasions Band in concert on Hillwood Park. Tickets are \$10.

FRIDAY/JUNE 10

Political Comedian Bassem Youssef . 7 p.m. At The Alden Theater, 1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean. Egyptian heart surgeon turned world-famous political comedian, Youssef was dubbed the Jon Stewart of the Arab World. He was the creator and host of the first political satire show in the Middle East and the most watched show in the Arab world, with 30 million viewers each week. Visit: www.aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

Public Safety Day. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At London Towne Elementary School, 6100 Stone Road, Centreville. Fairfax County's Communities of Trust Committee will host a Public Safety Day. The event will feature food and games plus various police vehicles on display. Email fairfaxCOTC@gmail.com.

SATURDAY/JUNE 11

The 28th Tinner Hill Music Festival. 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. At Cherry Hill Park, 312 Park Ave., Falls Church. In addition to great music, there's food, craft beer, vendors, kids' activities, and more to delight and entertain the entire family. Festival Lineup: Rebirth Brass Band, Marcia Ball, Dale and the ZDubs, Carly Harvey's Kiss & Ride, Batala Washington, Gordon Sterling and the People, Mr. Jon & Friends, DJ Stylus "The Vibe Conductor." An enticing array of activities and vendors will be found throughout the park in the Interactive Villages. Visit www.tinnerhill.org.

SUNDAY/JUNE 12

Concerts on the Green. 6-8 p.m. At the Village Centre Green, Great Falls. Featuring Timmie Metz - Rock & Roll with a soulful, slightly gravely touch. Hosted by The Old Brogue and Katie's Coffee House. Come relax at the Village Centre Green and enjoy laid-back evenings of good music and good times with your neighbors.

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It's My Idea, and I Do Think Much Of It



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

And while I ended last week's column referring to two cities, Rome, and Milwaukee, that weren't built in a day (figuratively speaking), neither as it happens are they cities that I've visited. In fact, there are lots of cities that I've not visited, for all the usual reasons. Reasons which, after receiving a diagnosis of "terminal" cancer, become insignificant, and life in the post-cancer diagnosis years takes on a whole new/urgent meaning. A meaning which invariably presents itself in the organization and planning of a presumptive "bucket" list, a list of people you want to see, places you want to go, and things you want to do before you succumb to your disease.

It is a question/concept I have been presented with frequently over my many cancer years, most of them while characterized as "terminal." Even my oncologist suggested it one time after a particular infused medication I had been taking stopped working and we were deciding how next to proceed. He said that perhaps I should stop treatment for a while, and since I was likely feeling as good as I ever would, perhaps take that trip I had always dreamed of. He added that I might feel worse after we started new treatment; never knowing exactly whether the side effects would be manageable, or even if the treatment would work.

As it has turned out, I never took my oncologist seriously. I figured my treatment was not something to stop just to take a vacation - because it might get worse if I didn't. I just didn't think like that. My thought was keep doing what we're doing and not allow the cancer - to the extent we had any control, to get any kind of foot hold. To me, it felt like giving up/giving in to the cancer, and I never wanted to do that. And pursuing one's bucket list, during, and as direct result of, the intervals of my cancer treatment, seemed ill-advised, or at least, ill timed - to me. Just because my treatment wasn't working at a certain point, never seemed like a good reason to do even less and try to live more. My attitude was then and is now to live as normally as possible and not create artificial diversions/accomplishments to satisfy some arbitrary list that might not otherwise exist if you weren't "terminal." I never wanted to realize that the reason I was doing something was because I was dying, and it needed to be done - or else. I never wanted to impose that kind of pressure on myself. Cancer creates enough pressure on its own. A cancer patient doesn't need to increase that pressure by trying to check off a list.

But perhaps I'm just being contrary. I've heard much about a so-called "bucket list" these last 13 and half years. And as I've said, I've never bought it to it because I thought the price was too high. I never have wanted to deny my cancer reality by living a life unsuitable to who I am at my core. I'm not exactly Popeye the Sailor Man, but "I am who I am," and if I'm not doing things that I normally do, and instead doing things that I don't normally do, I would know the only reason I'm doing these things - that I don't usually do, is because I'm dying. To me, I'd be reinforcing a negative, and the last thing I've wanted to do during my cancer career was allow negativity to take root anywhere, anyway, anyhow. I've always felt that when I die, I want to die on my own terms, doing my own things for my own reasons.

To summarize my philosophy, I don't want to do things because I have cancer, I want to do things as if I don't. Granted, some days are harder than others, but at the end of every day, I'm more determined than ever to make the best of a bad situation. And for me, a vacation from my treatment was never going to work.

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

Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage

Recognize surge in hate crimes, discrimination.

BY DEL. KATHY KL TRAN

While Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month has just ended, communities throughout Virginia recognized the many contributions of AAPIs to our Commonwealth and country.

AAPIs include people with roots in dozens of countries and are the fastest growing minority group in Virginia, making-up seven percent of the population. In Fairfax County, AAPIs are the largest minority community, comprising over 20 percent of the population. I hope you have had an opportunity to celebrate the rich diversity of Virginia's AAPI community by participating in cultural festivals or learning about a community changemaker.

While we celebrate, it is important we also acknowledge obstacles AAPIs continue to face. For example, we are currently experiencing a rise in hate and violence towards AAPIs that can be traced to former President Trump and his allies' racist COVID-19 rhetoric.

From March 2020 to December 2021, 10,905 hate incidents nationally were reported to Stop AAPI Hate, including harassment, workplace discrimination, assault and murder. Of these,

185 incidents were reported in Virginia. Last year, the horrific attacks in the Atlanta area that killed eight people, including six AAPI women, shed light on the disproportionate targeting of AAPI women.

AAPIs have dealt with systemic discrimination and racism throughout U.S. history, from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, to the prohibition until 1952 on Asian immigrants becoming naturalized citizens.

We also confront pernicious stereotypes on a daily basis. The "perpetual foreigner" myth furthers the notion that AAPIs are not truly American. This othering erodes our sense of belonging and sows distrust about the AAPI community. A recent study by Leading Asian Americans to Unite for Change and The Asian American Action Fund found 33 percent of U.S. adults believe "Asian Americans are more loyal to their country of origin than to the United States," up from 20 percent last year.

At the same time, AAPIs are often stereotyped as the "model minority" — polite, hard working, self-reliant, and prosperous. While seemingly positive, this myth obscures the racism AAPIs face and the economic, educational, and

health disparities within the AAPI community. It is also a deliberate effort to drive wedges between AAPIs and other minority communities.

I joined other AAPI state legislators to co-found the General Assembly's Virginia AAPI Caucus in 2021. Our caucus lifts up the concerns and priorities of AAPI Virginians and works closely with other caucuses to support the wellbeing of vulnerable Virginians. This year, we introduced legislation and budget proposals to strengthen public education, expand health care, increase language access, grow entrepreneurship and small businesses, and improve refugee services as well as to address hate. You can learn more at <https://www.vaapic.org/>.

As AAPI Heritage Month comes to a close, we should celebrate the contributions of the AAPI community, reflect on the racism and discrimination AAPIs continue to face, and recommit ourselves to working for a Commonwealth that is more just, equitable, and inclusive.

Kathy Kl Tran serves in the Virginia House of Delegates representing the 42nd District, which includes parts of Mount Vernon, Lorton, West Springfield and Fairfax Station. She is the first Vietnamese American elected to Virginia state government and is the First Vice Chair for Policy for the Virginia AAPI Caucus.

More Than Enough

DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

The world watches in astonishment as Americans kill each other with guns at a rate that is 25 times greater than in any other developed country! Those killed are not just adults as increasingly the target of gun terrorists are children. Already in 2022 there have been more children slaughtered by gun-toting terrorists than the total shot in any other developed country.

There is an increasing plea made most recently by our President that "enough is enough!" I submit that we are well past the point of reaching some indicator that we now must act. There is an epidemic of gun violence affecting not only those who are shot and killed but also those who are shot and do not die, those family members and friends of the victim, and those who are traumatized in their homes, schools, churches, and community by the increasingly real potential that they could be next. Gun violence is a public health crisis.

There are those who point to the Second Amendment and use it as an excuse for the most violent in

our society being able to stockpile guns of massive destruction and rounds of ammunition that can be used to kill innocent citizens. Such an excuse ignores the reality that the Second Amendment in its time related to citizen militia when there were no standing armies. Furthermore, none of the freedoms are so absolute that you can use your freedoms to end the right of other citizens to enjoy their freedoms. The Second Amendment is no more absolute than are the freedoms of speech, assembly or the press.

I have no problem with individual persons owning guns for their own hobby or recreational use. In the many years I have been in the legislature I have never known of a bill being introduced that would have denied the right of responsible citizens owning guns nor any bill that would confiscate guns from owners. My concern is with our insistence that every whacko be able to have a gun even if there is a likelihood that person will harm others. I believe that public safety requires that reasonable, common-sense gun safety laws be passed.

Why do we not have common-sense gun safety laws? State

Food for Neighbors

FROM PAGE 5

During the 2022-2023 school year, Food For Neighbors hopes to roll out services to students at five new schools, and Steen and Wilson expressed a strong desire to continue to help in various ways.

As Wilson noted earlier, "Giving back to our community through local nonprofits is extremely important to us. With our ST Engineering iDirect headquarters located in Herndon, we are proud to partner with Food For Neighbors to provide nutritious food to middle and high school students in Northern Virginia. No

child should go hungry, or worry about when their next meal is, and it's in our best interest to keep our future generations well-fueled and ready to take on the world."

ST Engineering iDirect is not new to thinking about ways to make tomorrow better for everyone. The company believes a fully connected future will create smarter nations, cities, industries, schools, governments and people. To learn more about this community and globally-minded company as well as about Food For Neighbors partnerships, please visit <https://www.foodforneighbors.org/partners/>.

legislators and members of Congress have not had the political will or courage to take the steps supported by the American people that would remove the plague of gun violence from our society. There are too many examples of politicians losing their political office because they supported the most reasonable of gun safety measures. Make candidates for office hear from you that we have reached the point of where action must be taken on ending gun vio-

lence and that your vote depends on their gun safety positions. If you belong to the NRA, let the organization know that the responsible members who support the end of the gun-related carnage outnumber the crazies who seem to love their guns more than the lives of others including our children.

If we are not past the point of agreeing that enough is enough, will gun violence have to visit our community to have us realize that we are past the point of enough?

