

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Herndon ♦ ^{Oak Hill} Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

Gina Richard and Eric Cox: The heart and soul of Cox Farms.

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

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Swimmers, Take Your Mark

Mayor visits Herndon Olympics.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The 2022 Herndon Swim League schedule is a regular season this year after having been impacted by COVID in 2020 and 2021. That includes eight weeks of in person practices, team breakfasts, competitions, the Herndon Olympics, and the All-League Meet.

On Tuesday, July 12, league swimmers from Foxfield, Kingston Chase, Hunters Creek, Four

Seasons, Faircrest, Kingstream, Bradley Farm, Reflection, and the Community Center met at Kingston Chase to compete in the 2022 Herndon Olympics.

Sheila Olem, mayor of the Town of Herndon, who had been asked to attend, said, "I am honored to carry the Town of Herndon flag at the Herndon Olympics opening ceremonies today."

The final days of the Herndon Swim League season draw near. All-League Meets @ Four Seasons are July 23. Swimmers, take your mark.



It is the Herndon Olympics for swimmers in the 2022 Herndon Swim League.



Four Seasons Swim Team.



The Herndon Halibuts, Community Center.



The 2022 Herndon Swim League swimmers at the July 23 Opening Ceremony of the Herndon Olympics.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

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NEWS

GRCC Presents 2022 Awards for Excellence

Announces 2022-2023 Board of Directors.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce held its 2022 Awards for Chamber Excellence (ACE) Luncheon at Hidden Creek Country Club in Reston on Thursday, July 14. GRCC celebrated and recognized individual and corporate members nominated by their peers for their demonstrated excellence in business practices, leadership in industry innovation, and support for the mission of the Chamber over the past year.

The Committee/Council of the Year award went to the Chamber's LeadShare: Wednesday, co-chaired by Micki Moravitz of Century 21 New Millennium and Madhavi Rao of Prana Health Yoga and Wellness.

GRCC named SpeedPro Northern Virginia winner of the Small Business of the Year award; Guernsey, Inc. Medium Business of the Year; and Northwest Federal Credit Union Large Business of the Year.

Dayana Villanueva, M&T Bank

Reston, was awarded Member of the Year, while Samantha Marshall of Sweet Memories Photography was recognized as New Member of the Year.

The winner of the Contributor of the Year award was Mahjooba "MJ" Bianchi of the Three T Institute. Innovative Practice/Partnership of the Year award went to the Dental Group at Reston Station. Andrew Lampropoulos at CST Group, CPAs, received the Young Professional of the Year award.

Iris Britt of Iris Britt Consulting, LLC, is the recipient of the Pinnacle Award. Anne Rosenblum of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority received the President's Award.

As the 2022-2023 Board Chair, Kevin Taylor, Director of Business Development at ANALITK Marketing, spoke to the Chamber membership about his vision for the upcoming year. Charles Kapur, president and CEO of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, announced the newly appointed board members during the July 14 luncheon.

First-term directors include Matthew Brennan III, General Counsel, P.C.; Dr. Raj Chand, INOVA Fair Oaks; Katherine Deming, Business Engineering Inc.; Meredith Hovan, Cornerstones; Nohman Ishaq, Northwest Federal Credit Union;



From left, Charles Kapur, president and CEO of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, with the winners of the Awards for Chamber Excellence: Dr. Anthony Moawad, Dental Group at Reston Station; Samantha Marshall, Sweet Memories Photography; Iris Britt, Iris Britt Consulting, LLC; Dayana Villanueva, M&T Bank Reston; Jeff Bentley, Northwest Federal Credit Union; and Micki Moravitz, CENTURY 21 New Millennium.

Paul Kashchy, City National Bank; David Kelley, Fairfax County Economic Development Authority; John Kelly, Bean, Kinney & Korman, P.C.; Robyn McClure, Pinot's Palette - Dulles; Matt Rienzo, Weller Development Company; Michael

Romeo, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, P.C.; and Ken Traenkle, Verity Commercial Real Estate. Colin May, KME.digital, was appointed as a second-term director.

Reston Community Center, MillerMusmar CPAs, Inova Fair Oaks

Hospital, Northwest Federal Credit Union, Dominion Energy, and Verity Commercial Real Estate sponsored the event. For more information about GRCC, visit RestonChamber.org or call 703-707-9045.



Attendees at GRCC's 2022 Awards for Chamber Excellence.



Attendees at GRCC's 2022 Awards for Chamber Excellence.



Kevin Taylor, ANA*LITK Marketing and 2022-2023 GRCC Board Chair.



Charles Kapur, president and CEO of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, and Tom Madden, Visual Impact Productions and 2021-2022 GRCC Board Chair.



Crystal awards.

PHOTOS BY
SWEET MEMORIES PHOTOGRAPHY



Charles Kapur, president & CEO of GRCC



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Guests enjoying the celebration's barbecue feast.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

From left, Beth Green-Tweddle, Lisa Barrett and Jeremy Gerken.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Cousins Diana Jimenez and Ivan Delao enjoyed working at the fall festival.



PHOTO COURTESY OF COX FARMS

Having fun on the Dino Slide.

'It's Like a Great, Big, Community Family'

Centreville's Cox Farms celebrates 50th anniversary.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Laughter, hugs, friends and families chatting, tasty food, and children happily playing outside – that's the vibe during Cox Farms' annual Fall Festival. But it was also the scene on Sunday, July 10, when this Centreville institution celebrated its 50th anniversary.

"Thanks to everyone who came out today," said co-owner Eric Cox to the 500-some people attending. "This is a celebration of 50 years of Cox Farms and the thousands of people – family, employees, vendors, suppliers and community members – who made it happen."

He and his brother Steven founded Cox Farms in 1972, running a farm stand in Vienna for 38 years, along with Eric's wife, Gina Richard, who became their business partner. Then in 1979, Eric and Gina bought 116 acres on Braddock Road, in the far western corner of Fairfax County, despite bankers and advisors saying no one would ever travel that far to visit them.

"We were looking for a farm to buy, and friends helped us with financing," said Cox. "Thanks to them and you, we've thrived – and we hope to do so for many more years."

However, when the couple first moved there, throwing gigantic festivals that eventually attracted thousands from throughout the Washington Metropolitan area wasn't their first plan.

"We wanted to grow vegetables and host pick-your-own strawberries for the public," said Richard. "But we quickly discovered the land wasn't fertile and we'd be better off doing more education and entertainment here." So that first year, Cox arranged a hayride for a group to pick pumpkins. And over time, they transformed 90 acres of their property into an autumn wonderland.

"This was just flat pasture," said Richard. "But when they started digging out the basements for the buildings at the Westfields Corporate Center [in Chantilly], people brought their dirt here. We also dug up our land to put in a pond, so that gave us more dirt – and that's how we built all these hills for the



PHOTO COURTESY OF COX FARMS

The hayride passing by the mountain slides.

mountain slides, etc."

Cox Farms' first fall festival was held in 1985 over just one weekend. Since then, its popularity has grown exponentially. At 15621 Braddock Road, the funfest runs almost every day from mid-September through early November.

Whether people come for the hayrides, rope swings, giant slides, baby animals, pumpkin catapult, apple-cider doughnuts, space aliens in the cornfield, or any of the other attractions, the festival offers something for everyone. The scarier portion, Fields of Fear, aimed at older teens and adults, comes alive at night.

The best part, said Richard, is "seeing kids get to run, play and be outside – and seeing their happy faces, picking out their pumpkins."

It's always been a family affair, with the Cox-Richard children helping as they grew. But as the event itself, got bigger, high-school students and area residents were hired to work at the festival, and it now takes nearly 600 people to put it on.

So, said Richard, the anniversary cele-

bration is spectacular; hopefully, they'll have 50 more years."

As a student, Katerina Chebotaryova managed lines of people at the ticket booths. "At times, they sold 20,000 tickets a day," she said. "Fields of Fear usually gets 7,000-plus people and sells out most nights. I was also a cashier on Saturdays and did customer service on Sundays."

"I loved interacting with people, and the Coxes treated me as an adult. I had fun helping people and seeing little snippets of everyone's day, such as parents corralling their kids into the lines."

Working at the festival since 2009, Jeremy Gerken also did a variety of jobs. At season's end, he drops huge pumpkins from a cherry picker, much to the crowd's delight. And as a Fields of Fear actor, he portrayed a chair that scared people when it "came to life."

He then supervised other actors and headed up the nighttime hayride. "I'm now a scare director and also in charge of the Corn Nightmare and the Dark Forest," said Gerken. "I like it best because I get to be creative, designing the mazes and thinking up themes for them."

John Lord worked 10 years at the festival. "I drove tractors for the daytime hayrides, and then at night, once Fields of Fear started," he said. "I liked the old tractors and the people coming here. And I loved the way the Cox family treats people – especially young, first-time job holders. They knew them by name and gave them the tools and resources they needed to be successful."

"The Coxes have always said the customer experience is the most important thing," continued Lord. "They want people to have fun, and each employee is empowered to make that happen. And that relationship with the customers makes it like a great, big, community family."

He recalled one time when a family visiting the fall festival ran out of gas as they were leaving. So, said Lord, "I went to the fuel shed here, got five gallons of gas and put it into their van. I didn't ask permission because I knew the Coxes would want me to do that – and they did."

In 2017, Ivan Delao was a Fields of Fear actor. "I was a clown with a chainsaw and would sneak up and scare people on the hayride when the lights went off," he said. "I

didn't feel like it was work; I had a good time. And in the daytime, I sugared or boxed doughnuts or gave them to people, and that was fun, too. I also liked the people I worked with – it was a great atmosphere. In fact, you see people work here, and then – years later – their kids work here, too."

He was at the anniversary celebration with his cousin, Diana Jimenez, a festival employee since 2016. "I started in the daytime on the Mountain Team, helping kids go down the slides, and I also helped set up the festival," she said. "Then I acted with my cousin, haunting people on the Fields of Fear hayride. I did theater in high school, so it reminded me of that – getting into costume, putting on makeup and being part of a family."

"My brother and another cousin also work here," added Jimenez. "There are lots of families

working here." What makes Cox Farms special, she said, is "the community you build here and the acceptance you feel. And they've built a lot of traditions for many people."

As for the 50th-anniversary celebration, Gina Richard – who retired last year – said, "I'm thrilled to see everybody. We're proud of the business and the job our kids are doing, and we're glad they're being innovative and carrying the torch."

Siblings Lucas Cox-Galhotra and Aaron Cox-Leow run Cox Farms' daily operations, with sister Lily Cox-Richard doing administration. "At our core, we share the same values and ideals," said Cox-Leow, who's devoted to dismantling systems of oppression. "We're committed to actively resisting white supremacy and fighting injustice – from our road signs to our policies, staff

training and social-media presence.

"Our broader mission is working together to create the unique and magical Cox Farms experience – creating joy, making memories that'll last forever, having fun, exceeding [customers'] expectations with great service and quality products, while striving to be our employees' best job ever. It's a joy and a challenge to work toward that every day. We really do love sharing our farm and celebrating the seasons with our community. It's an honor to carry on the tradition as our family business continues to grow and evolve."

This year's fall festival begins Sept. 17. For all the dates, plus ticket information, go to <https://coxfarms.com>. Work applications are at workcoxfarms.com.

OPINION

A Slide Backward

DELEGATE KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

For a record-breaking two years in a row, 2020 and 2021, Virginia was ranked as the number one state in the country for business. Unfortunately, when the results were announced recently for 2022, Virginia had slid backwards to number three. It was replaced at the top by North Carolina and at number two is Washington. To rank America's Top States for Business, CNBC scores all 50 states on 88 metrics in 10 broad categories of competitiveness. The results are studied closely by businesses as they represent the most objective measures of how states are doing in attracting and keeping businesses and jobs. The results are of interest as well to educators and social scientists on how the states are doing on issues like workforce training, access to education,

health care, worker protections, and discrimination.

Contrary to messages of some politicians, business interests go well beyond who has the cheapest labor, the fewest regulations, and the lowest taxes. Businesses, especially in the era of technology and innovation, have a brand or reputation to protect as well as an obligation to get the best employees who can grow their enterprises. The lowest paid and least educated workers may have been acceptable in the industrial era but not in the modern economy. Additionally, business leaders making decisions on locating their companies must take into account living conditions for their employees and their families.

For these reasons North Carolina, after a number of bipartisan actions taken by the Democratic governor and Republican legislature on education and training programs as well as worker welfare, put it to the top of the list as the best place to do business.

Unsurprisingly, Mississippi for the same considerations made the very bottom of the states for business.

Interestingly, in the never-before accomplishment of making the best for business for two years consecutively, Virginia took significant actions that some would have argued would have made it less attractive to business. For example, the General Assembly and the governor working together raised the minimum wage on a schedule to get to \$15 per hour over the next several years. Collective bargaining was approved for government employees. A human rights law was passed to outlaw discrimination in the workplace and community. Criminal justice laws were reformed. Record expenditures were made for public schools and colleges and universities. A free community college program was established. An energy plan was adopted to put Virginia on the path to energy independence and zero emissions.

Already, there have been actions

taken by the new governor that may in part explain the slide backwards that Virginia has taken in its ranking as business friendly. While the tall, affable governor and his success in the financial world may make for a handsome salesperson for the Commonwealth, his words belie a philosophy from times since past that no longer fit the modern economy. Removing Virginia from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) costs the state money while ensuring that citizens of the state may be exposed to greenhouse gasses and a changing climate. Appointing cast-offs from the Trump administration and believers in the most perverse theories about education will cripple and not improve our schools.

Virginia has started a slide backwards to the past. We need to act now to stop that slide before the state is too damaged and finds itself tumbling in the rankings among states.



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SATURDAY MORNINGS
Summer Programming for Kids. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Reston Museum, 1639 Washington Plaza, Reston. Reston Museum is launching new summer programming for kids! Visit the Reston Museum to participate in fun and creative activities inspired by Reston's history. Program is free and everyone will receive an Explore Reston packet.

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

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/>

MCLEAN FARMERS MARKET
The McLean Farmers Market opened for the 2022 season on May 6th, at Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The market will run every Friday from 8 a.m. to noon through November 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. For more information, see: <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 AUG. 26 (FRIDAYS)
Storytime for Little Historians. 11 a.m. The second annual Storytime for Little Historians program returns this summer. Reston Museum invites our youngest visitors to the Reston Museum every Friday at 11 a.m. to listen to a story about Reston or one of Reston's founding principles. Books for the program come from the Reston Museum and Reston's Used Book Shop. Program is offered free of charge and each child will receive a goodie bag. Program is recommended for children under 7. Visit www.restonmuseum.org.

NOW THRU JULY 24
"Memory and Illusion." At Jo Ann Rose Gallery, 1609-A Washington Plaza, in Reston. A retrospective exhibit of more than 50 original paintings by Reston-based painter Sandra C. Dovberg will be shown in the Jo Ann Rose Gallery at Reston Community Center-Lake



Lil'Maceo will appear in Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park in McLean on Sunday, July 24, 2022.

Anne. Dovberg's solo exhibit, "Memory and Illusion," is a highly eclectic collection of paintings that show the versatility of the artist who is also an award-winning silversmith and jewelry designer. Everyone is welcome to an informal reception to meet the artist at the gallery on Sunday, July 10 from 2 until 4 p.m.

NOW THRU JULY 31

Art in Motion. At Reston Art Gallery, 11400 Washington Plaza West, Reston. Mobiles and Stables by Wayne Schiffelbein on display. An array of mobiles suspended from the ceiling and stables displayed on tabletops are presented by Wayne Schiffelbein in his show, "Art In Motion." The show offers 20 pieces of Schiffelbein's latest 'Calder-esque' works that range in size from 1 1/2 inches to 46 inches in width, each with its own distinctive character in combinations of colorful aluminum and glass balanced with stainless steel.

NOW THRU AUG. 18 (THURSDAYS)

Farmers' Market Fun Days. At Town Green, 730 Elden Street, Herndon. Enjoy free kid-friendly entertainment on Thursdays running July 7-August 18 from 10:30-11:15 a.m. on the Town Green, 730 Elden Street. Before or after the performance, people are welcome to shop the locally grown and homemade goodies at the Farmers' Market from 8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., on Lynn Street in historic downtown Herndon. If inclement weather occurs, call the Inclement Weather line at 703-435-6866 for the status of the performance.

Entertainment Schedule:

- July 21: Marsha and the Positrons - songs about science and how the world works
 - July 28: Mr. Jon and Friends - Parents Choice Award winning music for kids
 - August 4: Milkshake - music for little dudes
 - August 11: Groovy Nate - fun and educational shows using exotic musical instruments
 - August 18: Rainbow Rock - plays original children's music for the tot rock set
- To learn more about the Town of Herndon Parks and Recreation Department, visit herndon-va.gov/recreation, or call 703-787-7300.

JULY 22-24

"The Show Must Go On!" 8 p.m. At The Alden Theater in McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Show Must Go On! A Musical Revue marks the return of the McLean Community Players to the Alden Theater after a three-year hiatus because of the pandemic. This gala revue remembers songs from past shows and looks to the future with songs from shows MCP has not done yet.

FRIDAY/JULY 22

"Something Different." 6:30 p.m. At the Vienna Town Green, Vienna. Come to a free outdoor family friendly performance suitable for ages 3 and up. Presented by Vienna Theater Company's TFYA (Theatre for Young Audiences). Produced by: Mary Ann Hall and directed by: Holly Harrington.

SATURDAY/JULY 23

Block Party. 4:30-7 p.m. At St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 432 Van Buren Street, Herndon. Food trucks, Moon Bounce, and fun activities will be available. Picnic on the church lawn and listen to Big Al's Garage perform live music.

SATURDAY/JULY 23

Food and Hygiene Event. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The Rotary Satellite Club of Herndon-Reston holds a Nonperishable Food & Hygiene Event monthly on the fourth Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Items may be dropped off at Arts Herndon, 750 Center Street, Herndon benefiting LINK and F.A.I.T.H.

SUNDAY/JULY 24

Concerts on the Green. 6-8 p.m. At the Village Centre Green, Great Falls. Featuring Ranger Rik & The Trash Pandas - Dumpster-diving Rock-n-Roll so good you can't get the taste out of your mouth. Come relax at the Village Centre Green and enjoy laid-back evenings of good music and good times with your neighbors.

SUMMER SUNDAY CONCERTS

The Alden at the McLean Community Center is bringing great music to the great outdoors with its Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park series. The concerts are for all ages and include a wide range of music genres, from South Asian, to indie rock, to hip-hop, to Southwest Native American jazz fusion. The free concerts are being held at 3 p.m. on Sundays through July 31. The park is located at 1468 Dolley Madison Blvd. Sunday, July 24, 3 p.m. Lil'Maceo. Old-school funky, foot-stomping R&B saxophone. Lil' Maceo's musical roots in funk, pop, dance and contemporary jazz will get you up and partying.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 27

Town Hall Meeting. 6:30 p.m. At 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The Great Falls Grange Foundation will host a Town Hall Meeting open to the public at the Grange. Come and learn about all the exciting things happening there. Board members will provide an update on investments, introduce the new program director and announce an expansion of board members. Email info@grange.org.

JULY 28-AUG. 7

The Logan Festival of Solo Performance. Presented by 1st Stage of Tysons. In the show, "Tomatoes Tried to Kill Me but Banjos Saved My Life" by Keith Alessi, Keith tells the story of his boyhood, meteoric rise in the boardroom, and the startling news that changed his life forever. He candidly reveals how he used that obstacle to find a new passion in music and a cathartic outlet in storytelling. It will run on July 29 at 8 p.m., July 30 and 31 at 2 p.m., and on August 2 at 7:30 p.m. In "Spanking Machine" by Marga Gomez, Marga performs her by turns funny, intense, and heart-rending memoir of growing up brown and queer in Washington Heights. Devil Dogs, sadistic nuns on poppers, childhood pranks, assault, and suppressed memory play their parts in Marga's shift across gender, latitudes, and generations. It will run on August 3 at 7:30 p.m., August 5 and 6 at 8 p.m., and August 7 at 2 p.m.

"Wanda's Way" by Caleen Sinnette Jennings is the first of 1st Stage's Commissions of Solo Work to premiere at the Logan Festival. Based on real interviews, Wanda's Way explores the journey of a Black female police officer as she explains how and why she got into law enforcement. This intricately woven tale is one of corrupted dreams, seemingly impenetrable systems, and the extreme consequences of both acting and failing to act. It will run on July 28 at 7:30 p.m., July 30 at 8 p.m., July 31 at 7 p.m., August 4 at 7:30 p.m., and August 6 at 2 p.m.

Visit www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

SUNDAY/JULY 31

Concerts on the Green. 6-8 p.m. At the Village Centre Green, Great Falls. Featuring Hit or Miss - Classic folk and rock songs from the '60s, '70s, and today Hosted by TD Bank, Great Falls. 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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More Than I Bargained For



By **KENNETH B. LOURIE**

As a longtime homeowner of a historic home, one dating back to the early 1800s, to say there's ongoing upkeep/maintenance required is to state the obvious. What wouldn't be so obvious is the total inability of yours truly, cancer notwithstanding, to do any kind of constructive, presumed-to-be-within-the-man's purview-type repairs. Moreover, home improvement projects and/or any number of garden variety/common sense modifications like adding shelves, changing light switches/adding a dimmer, fixing a toilet, hanging pictures, et. cetera, are also outside of my comfort zone. A zone which barely exists. Nothing too complicated in the scheme of things mind you, but way too complicated for me. In addition, as you might imagine, tools are not my friends. In fact, they are my sworn enemies. If I pick up a hammer or a chain saw (which I do own), I'm more likely to hurt myself than I am to hit my target. I can live with my shortcomings. However, it's becoming increasingly difficult for my wife, Dina, to endure my incompetence.

Aside from my shortcomings, not being able to do anything costs money. And to hire anybody to do these kinds of homeowner tasks costs big money, usually a retail-type of cost to what it might cost compared to what it might cost a more capable homeowner - unlike myself, to do the job himself (wholesale). And other than Ghostbusters, who you gonna call? If you're lucky, you have a referral to somebody reliable and knowledgeable. If you're me, you don't so you have to find some other trusted resource. And that resource amazingly exists online. You simply list your project, your zip code and other pertinent information (cell phone and email specifically) and wait for the feedback. It's almost immediate. Within seconds almost, the phone rings and/or your email receives - with offers. Within these offers are typically star-type evaluations and comments from previous users of this specific service. It's all, in my limited experience, reassuring and so I've hired these "pros" on multiple occasions and so far, so good. I still feel helpless, but I don't feel directionless - if that's even a word.

But there's a downside. The amount of communication either over the phone or electronically before the job and/or after the job has been completed is relentless. It's nonstop. Initially, there is the solicitation of the job which spawns any number of calls/emails offering. Once you're able to commit and hire the pro, the solicitations don't stop. On occasion, I've received calls/emails for another day or two until my non-reply eventually stops the outreach. It's intrusive enough before the job, but after, it's worse. In the pursuit of feedback, presumably (I've only responded electronically, never on the phone though), the calls continue for days. The caller ID tells me who's calling so I don't have to answer but I still make note - mentally, of who called. I don't tally the calls, but I can tell you, it's been upwards of a dozen over a couple of days - along with emails. I can appreciate that the service wants feedback from the person who hired the pro to post it on their site to educate the public, so to speak, but enough is enough. A good faith effort to contact me is all that's required. If I don't respond after a few calls, leave me be.

Nevertheless, because of this service, I have been able, recently to get out of my own way and let a professional handle the work. And so far, I have had good luck - with a plumber, an electrician, and a gutter/air-duct-cleaning service, to name a few. I feel as if we've made some progress, which as the owner of a historic home (yes designated as such), is a constant battle, one which I have consistently lost - for years. But I don't feel as irresponsible since I have a resource. I still can't do any homeowner-type stuff myself, but I can certainly hire someone. I just wish the cost - literally and figuratively, for the experience was less. Because, unfortunately for me, the demand far outweighs the supply, and the end is nowhere in sight.

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

Powerful Messages Via Sacred Threads Quilts

The Sacred Threads quilt exhibition comes every two years to Floris United Methodist Church, 13600 Frying Pan Road in Oak Hill. Within each work, artists tell stories of joy, grief, healing, inspiration, spirituality, and peace and brotherhood. Now in its 14th year, this national juried exhibition of more than 200 quilts runs now through July 24, Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1-4 p.m. Tickets: \$10, adults; \$5, children 5-12.

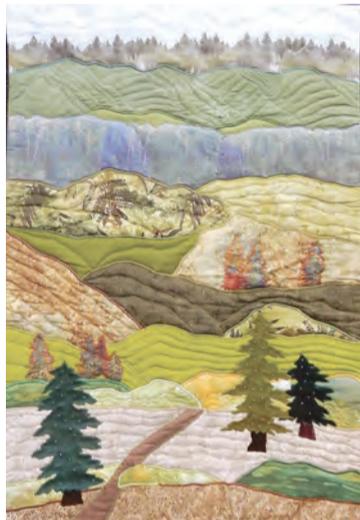
❖ This week's photos, Part I, depict inspiration, peace and brotherhood, and joy. Part II, depicting the other themes, will be in next week's paper.



Joy: "Innocent Prayer" of a young girl.



Inspiration: "The More Excellent Way: A Tribute to John Lewis," who promoted peace, love and nonviolence.



Joy: "Quiet Moment."



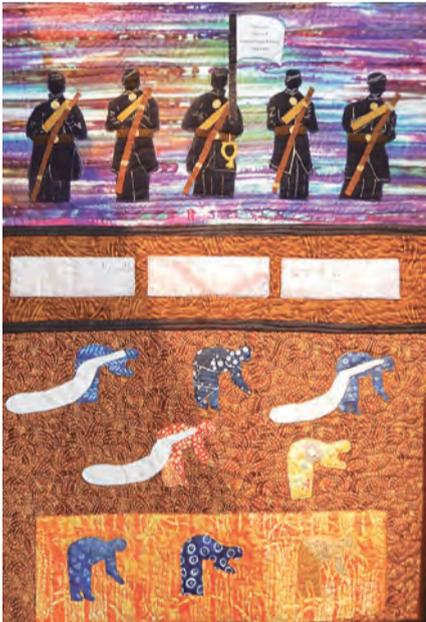
Joy: "Wild and Wonky Garden."



Peace & Brotherhood: "Peace and Harmony" honors voices worldwide joined for good.



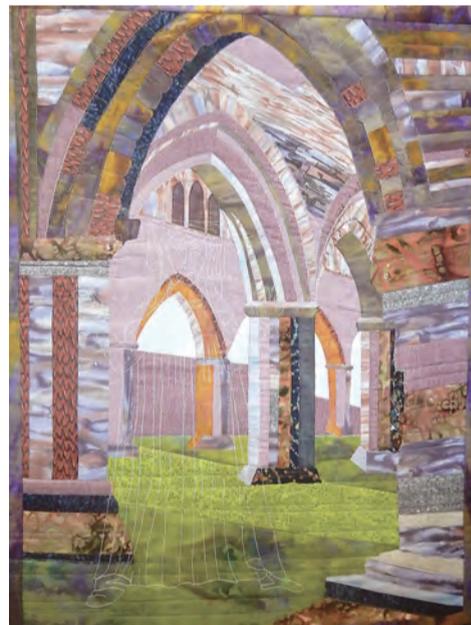
Inspiration: "Learning to Fly" is about this quilter's grandson, who has autism, but keeps trying new things.



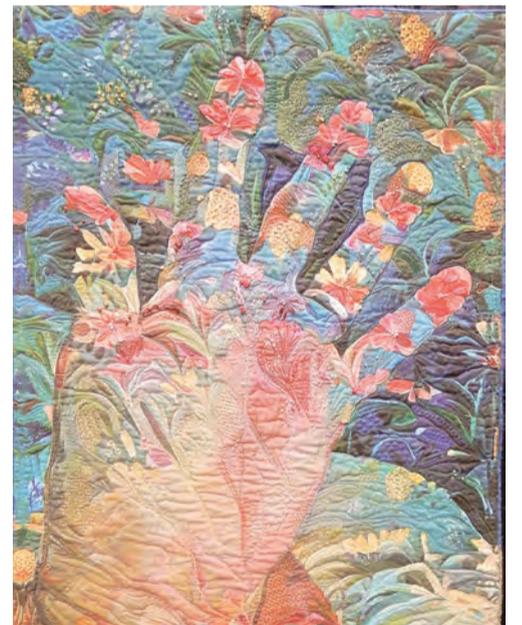
Peace & Brotherhood: "Up from Slavery" is about an enslaved couple who worked in the fields, but escaped to freedom in another state, where the husband joined the Union Army.



Peace & Brotherhood: "Hope" is in honor of the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



Inspiration: "Sweetheart Abbey" in Scotland.



Inspiration: "The Creative Hand."



Peace & Brotherhood: "Remi's Rainbow" celebrates global diversity.



Peace & Brotherhood: "Peace in our Hands" is self-explanatory.



Joy: "Where's Walleye?"



Joy: "Tree of Life."