

Great Falls CONNECTION

FCPS hires educator
Catherine Coulter
through its teacher
residency program.

Residency Program Creates More Teachers

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Grange Board on Next Steps

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Brave in the Kitchen

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CLASSIFIED, PAGE 6 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 7

PHOTO BY FCPS PHOTOGRAPHER DONNIE BIGGS

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NEWS

FCPS Gets Creative to Fill Teacher Vacancies

New teacher residency program.

MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The twinkle is back in the eyes of newly hired educator Catherine Coulter of Burke, thanks to the recently launched Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) teacher residency program. People, such as Coulter, who has a master's degree in education and years of out-of-state teaching experience, can begin teaching in FCPS while completing licensure in Virginia.

Candidates are required to have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and a commitment to meet minimum qualifications to be eligible for a Virginia Board of Education license within the first year of employment.

The residency program may

SEE NEW TEACHER, PAGE 4



PHOTO BY FCPS PHOTOGRAPHER DONNIE BIGGS

FCPS hires educator Catherine Coulter of Burke through its teacher residency program.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

HILTON EXPANDS GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced that Hilton will retain its headquarters in Fairfax County, including significant upgrades to its facility at 7930 Jones Branch Drive in McLean. Hilton will re-imagine its space to create an even more vibrant place to convene and collaborate, fully integrating technology into the office experience to meet the needs of today's workforce. Hilton located its global headquarters in Virginia in 2009 and plans to create 350 net new headquarters jobs over the next five years. Founded in 1919, Hilton is a leading global hospitality company with a portfolio of 18 world-class brands comprising 7,000 properties and 1.1 million rooms, in 122 countries and territories.

OLD FIREHOUSE HISTORIC MARKER DEDICATION CEREMONY

The McLean Historical Society, the Fairfax County History Commission, the McLean Volunteer Fire Department and McLean Community Center (MCC) are celebrating the placement of a historic marker at the Old Firehouse Center (OFC) at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 21. A historic marker honoring the McLean Volunteer Fire Department was installed at OFC in 2019; however, the dedication ceremony was delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Old Firehouse, which now serves

as home to MCC's After School Program, was originally built in 1925 to house the McLean Volunteer Fire Department. The department was incorporated in 1923, according to historian Carole Herrick.

UNITEDHEALTHCARE DONATES \$1 MILLION TO NONPROFITS

UnitedHealthcare, a UnitedHealth Group company, is awarding \$1 million in Empowering Health grants to six community-based organizations in Virginia to expand access to care and address the social determinants of health for uninsured individuals and underserved communities. In total, UnitedHealthcare is donating \$11 million in grants through its Empowering Health program across 11 states. The grants will assist individuals and families experiencing challenges from food insecurity, social isolation and behavioral health issues, and support local health promotion and health literacy efforts.

Grant recipients in Virginia include: Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington, Northern Virginia – \$200,000 to expand Project SHINE (Staying Healthy through Improved Nutrition and Exercise), which delivers culturally and linguistically appropriate diabetes management, chronic disease management, healthy living cohort classes and health promotion information.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 4

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Great Falls Grange Foundation Town Hall Meeting

**Provides
update and
a look ahead.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Great Falls Grange Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors presented a Community Town Hall Meeting. Held July 27, Jorge Adeler, president and principal officer, and others provided a look back on the work that has been done since April 4, 2022, followed by current and next steps. April 4, 2022 marked when the Foundation, a nonprofit human services organization (ruling date 2019), assumed management of the craftsman-style Great Falls Grange Hall No. 738 (1889), Forestville School, and the adjacent picnic pavilion through a public-private partnership with Fairfax County Park Authority. The lease agreement with FCPA permits the Foundation to operate and raise funds while FCPA retains property ownership.

Adeler announced the addition of two local arts organizations to the Foundation board, Arts of Great Falls and Great Falls Studios.

The Foundation's board members are Bill Canis, Great Falls Citizens Association; Linda Thompson, Optimist Club; Nancy Knight, Rotary Club; Tom Tucker and Richard Kelley, The Arts of Great Falls; and Kim Abod, Great Falls Studios. John McGeehan, an attorney, serves as an at-large member. The Foundation reportedly established seven volunteer-staffed committees to focus on maintenance and preservation, landscaping, fundraising, historical research, chil-



Jorge Adeler on April 4, 2022.

**Forestville
Schoolhouse,
Great Falls, Va.**



Landscape Phase 1 completed.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

dren's programs, grant research, and performing arts.

Adeler introduced Julie Maher of Great Falls, the Foundation's program director. Before taking questions and comments from the audience, Maher gave a presentation. Documents can be viewed at <https://www.gfgrange.org>.

The Great Falls Grange Hall and Forestville School are listed as significant landmarks on the Virginia Landmarks Register (2004) and the National Register of Historic Places (2004). All Foundation projects, whether for preservation or maintenance, must be approved by the Fairfax County Board for Historic Properties and adhere to the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service's (NPS) Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. NPS states, "They (the standards) promote historic preservation best practices that will help to protect our nation's irreplaceable cultural resources."

The goal of the Foundation is to transform the Grange into a community center with performances,

programs, and events and ultimately reduce community use fees while ensuring its operational sustainability. Current rental prices of the structures, which are competitive with similar venues, are based on estimates of overhead expenses borne by the Foundation. Nonprofit community organizations will receive a discount.

All funds raised by the Foundation are used to enhance the experiences of those who rent the structures. The Foundation held the First Annual Great Falls Grange Foundation Gala on May 6, 2022, which raised \$95,000 for improvements.

Regarding enhancements, the first phase of the approved landscaping project is completed with donated materials and labor. The planned connection to the county water line falls under the purview of preservation-restoration initiatives. Foundation board members completed FCPA's Mastenbrook Volunteer Matching Fund Grant Program application form. For projects in Fairfax County parks, the grant provides limited matching funds of up to 50 percent. The

Foundation will be responsible for the \$21,000 cost of installing the county water line. Lauren Liess/Property Collective would provide a concept design for the Grange Hall's interior spaces.

The total costs estimate, including the county water line additional improvements and expenditures, is \$92,055. The projects planned for the Grange are to install a generator, touch-up interior walls, paint, and renovate bathrooms. The schoolhouse and the

Grange require refinishing their wood floors, and the installation of air conditioning is needed in the schoolhouse.

Upcoming dates for some of the Foundations events:

- ❖ Thursday, Sept. 8, Grand Opening Celebration, 5:30-7:30 p.m.;
- ❖ tentatively, on Sept. 23-24, For the Love of Great Falls Tag Sale;
- ❖ Oct. 16, Oktoberfest; and
- ❖ Dec. 3 and 10, Holiday Afternoon Teas in the Schoolhouse.



April 4, 2022 marked when the Great Falls Grange Foundation assumed management of Great Falls Grange Hall No. 738 (1889), Forestville School, and the adjacent picnic pavilion through a public-private partnership with Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA).

Current Commercial Rental Rates and Information

The Grange Hall

Maximum Seating Capacity- 120, Maximum Capacity 200

Weekend Rental - \$2050 for five-hour rental (\$250 for each additional hour)

Weekday Rental - \$1200 for five-hour rental (\$100 for each additional hour)

Rental includes tables and chairs

The Historic School House

Maximum seating capacity - 40

Weekend Rental - \$500 for five-hour rental (\$50 for each additional hour)

Weekday Rental - \$250 for five-hour rental (\$25 for each additional hour)

Rental includes tables and chairs

The Grange Picnic Pavilion

Maximum Seating- 40 people at 6 picnic tables

All day rental for \$85.00 per day

Rental rates (Source: <https://www.gfgrange.org>)

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NEWS

New Teacher Residency Program

FROM PAGE 2

have provided Coulter with something more vital to her being. The program's support and respect for her expertise and experience have rekindled Coulter's passion for teaching and may have prevented her from joining the record number of educators who are leaving the profession.

Coulter and Fairfax public schools Media Relations Specialist Kathleen Miller answered some questions about the county's program. Coulter was one of the first hires by the school district under the program. "We are just gearing up," Miller said.

Coulter attended White Oaks Elementary School in Burke and graduated from Lake Braddock Secondary School. Six years ago, she accepted her first teaching position in Louisiana, where she was certified to teach sixth through twelfth grade. Three years later, Coulter moved back to Northern Virginia in late summer. She accepted a teaching position in the District of Columbia, where she stayed until this summer.

"Each time I've made the switch, it has been because I've been almost at that point where I knew I needed to make a change or I might not be a teacher anymore," Coulter said. Although she desired to teach for Fairfax County Public Schools, she hesitated to apply until a friend informed her about the residency program.

"Virginia has so many requirements," Coulter said. "I didn't know if I had time to get it all done. I had a 15-minute conversation with someone from human resources who laid out how simple the process was."

Coulter submitted her application for the position of fifth-grade teacher at Fairview Elementary in Fairfax Station. Coulter said she had two requirements to fulfill for licensure in Virginia. The first step was to take and pass the English, mathematics, science, and social studies Praxis 5001 exams for elementary education. The Virginia State Board of Education establishes testing requirements and minimum passing scores. "I passed all those," she said. Next, Coulter needed to take a 4-week online class on elementary instructional practices. The course begins on Aug. 23; the first day of school in FCPS for students is Aug. 22.

Late last week, Coulter said she had the opportunity



SCREENSHOT

Fairview Elementary, Fairfax Station

to begin moving supplies into her 5th-grade classroom at Fairview Elementary in Fairfax Station. Asked what she would hang first, Coulter said, "I like Star Wars, and I have a big Baby Yoda poster that says 'READ' on it. He's holding a book; I've had that poster in my last couple of classrooms. It's something I carry with me everywhere."

After two different school districts, Coulter said she finally feels like she is coming home. As an educator, she is open to feedback. "I want to be the best teacher possible. ... This is special. I think I do have a twinkle in my eye again. I'm excited to start and haven't felt that in a long time. Fairfax County has so many great resources, and excellent leaders, who I know will support me throughout this journey."

Stepping back from teaching is not an easy decision. Many teachers wonder if it is worth continuing because of the long hours, the lack of support, and the emotional disconnection. Whether part of the Great Resignation or Great Reprioritization, professional distress for educators is a concern.

"Educators are leaving in record numbers," the National Education Association stated. On June 8, 2022, NEA President Becky Pringle testified at a hearing held by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, saying, "Educators are leaving the best profession in the world in droves...driven out by the pandemic, book bans, and the lack of respect for their expertise and experience."

On Saturday, Aug. 13, the online FCPS Instructional Vacancy List at <https://careers.fcps.edu/vl/vacancy.htm> numbered 261 teacher vacancy positions across all grade levels, in addition to other positions for instructional assistants, counselors, public health attendants and public health training assistants.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 2

Capital Area Food Bank, Northern Virginia — \$160,000 to incorporate medically tailored food options and information about chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, into the online ordering system for food pantry network partners.

THE ALDEN AND FURIA FLAMENCA ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP

The Alden at the McLean Community Center (MCC) is pleased to welcome local flamenco dance company Furia Flamenca (FF) as its 2022-23 Artist-in-Residence. The partnership will involve a number of events that will be open to the public, as well as MCC serving as an incubator for Furia Flamenca's work. During the residency, Furia Flamenca will perform and hold open rehearsals, workshops and

lectures for the public, including a flamenco dance workshop for MCC's active seniors program, Seniors in Action. The theater is located at 1234 Ingleside Ave. The first public performance will be an interactive Hispanic Heritage Month show for families at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 8, in The Alden. "A Trip to Spain" introduces children to flamenco music and dance, shares some of the art form's history and invites audiences to participate in flamenco-making. Tickets are \$15, \$10 for MCC tax district residents. For more information visit: www.aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

GrandInvolve Seeks Volunteers. Would you like a unique and interesting volunteer experience to make a difference in a school, classroom, or in one child's life? GrandInvolve.org facilitates

rewarding, flexible adult volunteer opportunities at Fairfax County Title I elementary schools, providing classroom assistance with math, reading, and other simple educational tasks. Visit www.GrandInvolve.org/volunteer-with-us for details and to complete an interest form. Or email info@grandinvolve.org.

SATURDAY/AUG. 27

Parking Reimagined Public Meetings. MCA community engagement opportunities for the Parking Reimagined Project are coming up this summer, as the project team continues to review and do an in-depth analysis of the county's off-street parking and loading rates and regulations (Article 6 of the Zoning Ordinance). For more information and links to sign up for these public events, visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/zoning-ordinance/parking-reimagined>

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Culinary Instruction Without Borders

Virtual platform takes Melanie Underwood from Fairfax farm to nationwide classroom.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

It started with a pastry. Eight-year-old Melanie Underwood trudged through a grassy field in Northern Virginia in search of her father. Finding him on a tractor, she presented him with her latest masterpiece: a platter of eclairs, a confection that is both sinfully decadent and extraordinarily difficult for an elementary school student to master.

Decades later, Underwood, who is the youngest of six daughters, is helping her father celebrate his 81st birthday in Fairfax this week. She's no longer an enthusiastic novice serving dessert on a plate, but a licensed culinary arts instructor and founder of Gather, a school that allows her to share passion for food with others.

"An essential part of my class is teaching confidence, creativity and calm in the kitchen, along with technique," said Underwood. "Almost anyone can follow a recipe, but I help students to learn what to do if whatever they are making doesn't come out as expected."

Through virtual learning platforms that are still on trend post-COVID, Underwood has a worldwide classroom that reaches students from elementary school through retirement.

"Some students watch, and some students actively participate," she said. "I watch what everyone is doing and give feedback in real-time. I also answer any questions during this time. We discuss the techniques of what we are making and how to make substitutes. I encourage tasting as we go and get students to talk about what they are tasting."

The name of her school is an homage to her grandparents and their tradition of gathering family and friends for meals made using ingredients like cream that was milked from cows on their farm and fruit grown on trees on their land.

"These were the building blocks to some unusual and delicious



PHOTO BY AIKO AUSTIN

Culinary instructor Melanie Underwood teaches students to be courageous in the kitchen.

"An essential part of my class is teaching confidence, creativity and calm in the kitchen, along with technique."

— Melanie Underwood, culinary arts instructor

dinner and dessert offerings," said her sister Lori Page who lives in Fairfax. "Meals were not simply nourishment for the body ... they were also nourishing to the senses, to the soul. They were an event in many ways [and] something to look forward to. ... It's not a surprise that Melanie would grow up to cook and to develop recipes that use ingredients in nontraditional ways."

Underwood works to set an anxiety-free tone in her classes where whimsy is prioritized over perfection. Families stuck in a culinary rut with a repertoire of three dinner recipes that they cook on repeat will get a boost of originality. Her students might learn to make chicken salad by swapping celery and mayonnaise for curry paste and arugula.

"We made homemade gnocchi, freely chatted about food and fami-

SEE CULINARY, PAGE 6

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PHOTO BY AIKO AUSTIN

Culinary instructor
Melanie Underwood

Culinary Instruction

FROM PAGE 5

ly, all while learning and practicing techniques together,” said Joanna Dewey, who is one of Underwood’s students. “I was so hesitant signing up for my first online cooking class [but] my fears of being judged or too inexperienced immediately dissipated.”

Taped classes allow families to have culinary experiences that are not bound by hectic and often conflicting schedules.

“Now, my nine-year-old daughter and I catch any episodes she is hosting and enjoy baking her recipes together,” said Dewey. “I’m already planning on giving her classes to family members, and also using them in the future to gather friends from all over the country for a virtual ladies night out.”

Through classes that she creates specifically for children, Underwood uses a holistic approach to education and helps her young charges develop a palate that extends beyond chicken nuggets, French fries and juice boxes.

“I know the importance of designing classes to incorporate math, reading, critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity through the life skill of cooking while having fun,” she said.

Her family’s time-honored tradition of using food as a vehicle for community building and social connections guided the mission that Underwood established for Gather. “Cooking can break down all types of barriers and unite us all. I’ve repeatedly observed how learning to cook and bake enriches lives, connecting with friends, and family, creating community, and developing self-confidence.”

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CALENDAR



The Swamp Romp will play at Frying Pan Park in Herndon on Thursday, Aug. 18, 2022.

REGISTRATION OPEN

2022 Northern Virginia Senior Olympics. Sept. 10-24. Register online at www.nvso.us, \$20 for unlimited events. Go to the website for events, rules, eligibility, photos, past results. For information, email nvso1982@gmail.com.

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 in Reston 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

www.connectionnewspapers.com

and each child will receive a goodie bag. Program is recommended for children under 7. Visit www.restonmuseum.org.

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:

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.

THURSDAY/AUG. 18

The Swamp Romp. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Improvisation, audience interaction, humor, joy and audacity all combine to create a musical gumbo unique to each occasion. Concerts are held outdoors and may be canceled due to inclement weather. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) for inclement weather updates.

FRIDAY/AUG. 19

Dan Navarro. 8 p.m. At Jammin Java, 227 Maple Ave. East, Vienna. Tickets are \$22-\$25. Visit www.jamminjava.com.

FRIDAY/AUG. 19

"Honey I Shrunk the Kids" Movie. 7 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Part of the Outdoor Family Movie Night on the last Friday of the month. Make sure to bring your chairs and blankets for a movie under the stars! Complimentary popcorn and soft drinks will be provided (while supplies last).

SATURDAY/AUG. 20

Bill Kirchen's Rockabilly. 7:30-9 p.m. At Arrowbrook Centre Park, 2351 Field Point Road, Herndon. Grammy-nominated guitarist, singer and songwriter Bill Kirchen is one of the fortunate few who can step on any stage, play those trademark licks that drove the seminal Commander Cody classic Hot Rod Lincoln into the Top Ten nationwide, and elicit instant recognition. You can also enjoy wine tastings and sales by the Winery at Bull Run and Paradise Springs Winery. Concerts are held outdoors and may be canceled due to inclement weather. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) for inclement weather updates.

SUNDAY/AUG. 21

Concerts on the Green. 6-8 p.m. At the Village Centre Green, Great Falls. Featuring Something's Brewing. Hosted by John Nugent & Sons - HVAC, Plumbing and Electrical. 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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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped to keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

Each local newspaper's mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before Federal PPP funding arrived, and both made our survival possible. We now await a decision for a grant from Rebuild Virginia in early February that we hope will help us in 2022 and beyond. But we need help to survive the first quarter, always a brutal time for cash flow in weekly newspapers. Thank you.

Please, help save these historical papers.

All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

The ongoing pandemic continues to crush many newspapers across the country, and our newspapers continue to be at risk. The Northern Virginia area's best read and most trusted source for community news includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Connection Newspapers in the metropolitan region.

The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyper local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning in 2020. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. In the fall of 2021 we saw the return of some advertising for events and Grand Openings, but now omicron clouds the horizon in so many ways. Revenue still remains short of expenses despite our greatly curtailed costs.

Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless residents have grown up with these papers covering significant moments in the lives of family and children, news, community events, school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cats. Internet news and large national newspapers cannot provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers and the Alexandria Gazette Packet provide. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of local community newspapers.

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Less Than Twenty-Four Hours Later



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Last week's patient has already had an unexpected bleeding event and has been transferred back to ICU. Now, the patient is in Medical ICU. Previously, he had been in Surgical ICU. (Incidentally, this hospital, I was told, has nine different ICUs.) And what's the difference between the two ICUs? So far as I can tell: one letter. MICU appears to be equally hands-on with 'round-the-clock super attentive care with an ever-present nurse and other related medical staff always within earshot and able as well to view the patient's status (heart rate, pulse, blood pressure, et cetera) on various monitors and computer screens. So, it's nice to be back (that's easy for me to say) in the loving and caring arms of the ICU. Although, I wish we were anywhere but here, if you know what I mean? But if I'm being selfish, I want this patient to receive the best care possible and in his present state, a 24-7 ICU offers his best chance of surviving.

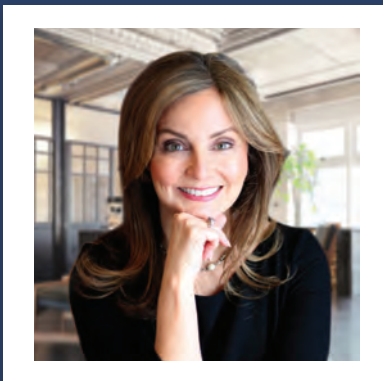
Now we wait for the doctors to evaluate his condition and determine a course of action which addresses the bleeding that prompted his transfer back to an ICU in the first place. And in the second place, I can't help wondering if successive struggles like this and others that have occurred since his three-weeks ago emergency ambulance ride to the hospital, have had a cumulative effect and the more upsets/complications like this that the patient experiences, the greater the chance that this patient will succumb to the stresses placed on his body. But what do I know? No joke here. I'm a very interested party who's scared and extremely uncertain of the eventual outcome. It's a day-to-day existence for all of us. Unsettling doesn't begin to describe it.

The problem/reality is that the doctors don't know about tomorrow until they evaluate the information gathered today as well as assess the patient's overall progress/appearance. Monitoring the patient's behavior combined with having gathered a wide range of medical data will help determine, maybe overnight, after us interested parties have long since left the facility, what the plan is going forward, at least until the staff repeats today's orders and gathers even more data. As I've learned recently, medicine is not like arithmetic, there are no straight lines of treatment. There's an endless list of variables. As we've seen/been told, assessing the patient, and planning a course of action is dependent on any number of moving parts, so to speak, especially with this patient.

Twice now, medical emergencies have occurred which has postponed treatment of the underlying problem which was the reason this whole medical mess devolved. A little bit of chemo leading to a nearly non-existent white blood count caused this patient to be susceptible to infection with limited means to defend himself. He went into septic shock as a result and the hospital has spent the last three weeks trying to stabilize/regain control of the patient's major organs which had all shut down due to the sepsis.

Through all this tumult, the patient has been unable to talk due to tubes in his mouth from a ventilator initially, progressing to a trach tube in his throat (a tracheotomy needed to be performed) currently. Consequently, he has been unable to express his wishes, share his frustration or interact too much, even with his doctors. All he can do is mouth words and/or communicate with his eyes, facial gestures, and hand-arm movements. It's been challenging. More so, for him, than us. Since we don't know what the future holds, we'd really like to have greater communication in the present. Nevertheless, we must focus on how much better he is today than he was just last week. As The Three Stooges said: "Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither was Milwaukee."

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



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