

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

AUGUST 18, 2022

New FCPS Superintendent Speaks to Businesses

BY HOLLY DOUGHERTY
MOUNT VERNON LEE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

New FCPS Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid spoke to the Mount Vernon Lee Chamber of Commerce last Thursday in her first public engagement outside of the schools.

Introducing Reid was Mount Vernon School Board Representative Karen Corbett Sanders. In her introduction, Corbett Sanders talked about the strategic investments being made in renovating local buildings.

She also mentioned schools with new principals for the 2022-23 school year including Bucknell Elementary School, Riverside Elementary School, and Lorton Station Elementary School.

"Fairfax County's strategic imperative is to have a strong school system that addresses the needs of the all," Corbett-Sanders said. She said 2022 graduating seniors at Mount Vernon High School received \$20 million in scholarships and are going "to the best schools."



Alison Ross, Chamber Chairman; Rodney Lusk, Franconia Supervisor; Dr. Michelle Reid, FCPS Superintendent; Karen Corbett-Sanders, FCPS School Board.

Dr. Michelle Reid began her presentation by saying that Fairfax County Public Schools is one of the largest and most revered districts in the country and her goal is to "help the hopes and dreams of each child be realized."

"Education is about the trajectory of a student's life," Reid said.

"Education will often determine what opportunities are available in their future." She also said that math skills determine 84% of a child's future education.

Showing various charts of data from 2008-2016, Reid said that children today are different than



Alison Ross, Chamber Chairman, welcomed new Chamber members; James Heo, Cox Communications; Sarah Jernigan, RLAH Real Estate; and Yibeli Galindo-Baird, Fort Belvoir MWR.

they were 15 years ago. There are fewer teenagers with jobs, a driver's license, or who have dated. These trends indicate youth are having fewer social interactions and such trends are a challenge for schools.

During the discussion, Supervisor Rodney Lusk emphasized the need

for schools to teach students to be innovative and entrepreneurial.

Reid will begin a strategic planning process for FCPS to re-imagine education in Fairfax County. The objective will be to decide what the community wants schools of the future to look like and what should be measured.

Renovation and Addition Planned at Mount Vernon Rec Center

New ice rink and fitness expansion scheduled to take two years.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

In early 2023, gym enthusiasts and ice skaters in Mount Vernon will have to travel to another location or hang up their skates for a while because a major renovation is coming to the Mount Vernon Recreation Center on Belle View Boulevard.

The \$67.2 million project is officially called the "Mt. Vernon Rec Center Renovation and Fitness Addition," and it includes an addition of a 35,000 square foot fitness center and multi-purpose areas, and the addition of a 31,000-square-foot NHL ice rink, team rooms and indoor track, Fairfax County information said. In September, the project will be put up for bid.

To add these features, the whole facility will be closed from early 2023-early 2025, but rec center officials have a list of alternate locations so current users can still maintain their program, it just might not be as convenient.

The closure will last 24 months but they will keep the second ice rink and end up saving \$2.5 million. Other options had it closed for



When completed, it will nearly double in size.

22 months, 36 months and 41 months, and the no-work option had a challenge listed as "Total Failure Could Occur." Officials looked at several options for the work but in the end, they went with "Option A."

A public meeting was held in May 2022 to discuss the plans; the presentation is currently available on the county website. The rec center was built in 1979, and the pool added in 1983, so it's been part of the Mount Vernon community for over 40 years.

To mitigate the impact on existing rec center users, current memberships will be accept-

ed at all nine county Rec Centers, and the hours at George Washington Rec Center will be expanded during closure. Prorated refunds will be available.

For the aquatic programs for example, George Washington Rec Center & Lee District Rec Center will expand learn to swim offerings and move water exercise classes, swim lessons will move to one of the other rec centers, and the swim teams will have options, the county presentation said.

For the skaters, they are exploring the possibility of FCPA "Learn to Skate," classes at

another facility. Skating coaches may move their private lesson students to other skating facilities, offer freestyle skating, and high school skating off-ice programs at neighboring schools on weekends either as regular classes or as workshops. Officials are working with hockey rental groups to find ice time elsewhere where possible.

For more information or to submit a question, go to: [HTTPS://WWW.FAIRFAXCOUNTY.GOV/PARKS/PLANNING-DEVELOPMENT/DEVELOPMENT/MOUNT_PARKMAIL@FAIRFAXCOUNTY.GOV](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/planning-development/development/mount_parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov)

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NEWS

New Bike-Ped Bridge Gets Boost with RAISE Funding

River crossing is needed for safety.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Mount Vernon bike trail users may have another Potomac River crossing coming in the form of the Long Bridge Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge. The Long Bridge recently got closer to fruition with a \$20 million grant from the \$2.2 billion from the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program the Biden administration recently secured.

This bridge will be located alongside a few existing road and rail bridges in the heart of the mid-town transportation links between Arlington County and Washington, D.C.

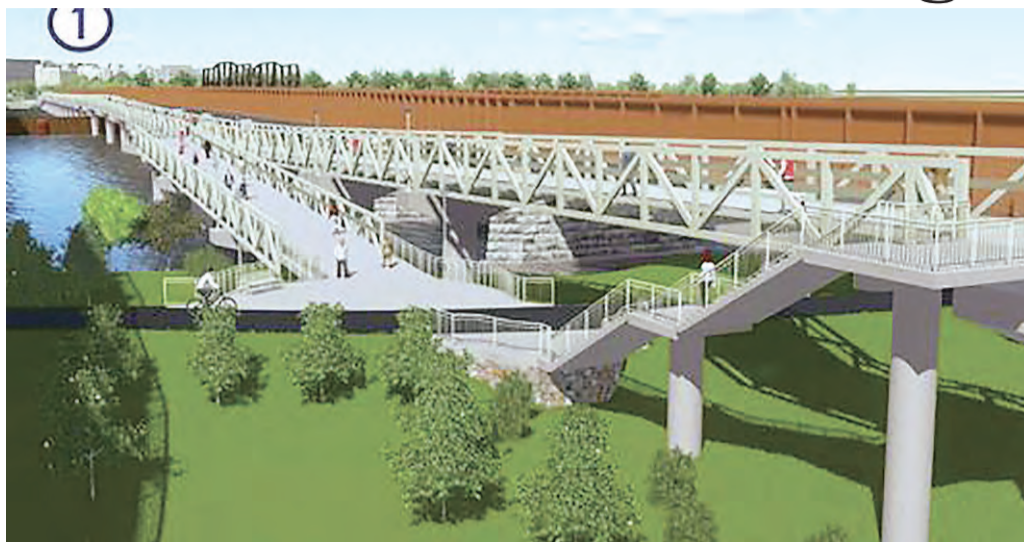
Among the supporters of this bike link are the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail, who look at this future bridge as a big gain for pedestrians and bicyclists because it will be

separate from the traffic. Currently there are crossings, like on Memorial Bridge for example, but pedestrians and cyclists are just a few feet from the traffic. The stand-alone bridge is a solution to that danger.

"This will be the only Potomac crossing for bicyclists and pedestrians that is separated from loud and high speed highway traffic which makes crossing the river stressful," said Judd Isbel, the president of the Friends group. He also touted the fact that the new bridge will provide a direct connection between the Mount Vernon Trail and destinations in National Landing and East Potomac Park.

In addition, the 2,300-foot-long bicycle-pedestrian bridge will create an accessible and more affordable way for the community to connect to the surrounding Virginia and District of Columbia areas through a network of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, DOT information said.

According to the DOT, the RAISE program



ARTIST RENDERING

The new crossing will link two parks on either side of the Potomac River.

is one of several ways communities can secure funding for projects under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's competitive grant programs. Later this year, the Biden-Harris Administration will announce recipients of the first-ever National Infrastructure Project

Assistance (MEGA) program, as well as the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program and the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program (RURAL), their information said.

Construction dates have not been set yet.

FCPS Gets Creative to Fill Teacher Vacancies

New teacher residency program.

MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

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 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 po-

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sition 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 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."



PHOTO BY FCPS PHOTOGRAPHER DONNIE BIGGS

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

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.

OPINION

The Inflation Reduction Act Fights Climate Crisis and More

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

The Inflation Reduction Act passed by Congress last week and awaiting President Biden's signature will lower healthcare costs, combat climate change, and raise taxes on the largest corporations. The bill is a big win for American families, seniors, and workers; it makes historic strides when it comes to nationally addressing the worsening climate crisis. It directly targets two of the biggest drivers of inflation: health care costs and energy prices.

Let's start with what it does for the planet. The Inflation Reduction Act is the largest bill ever passed to address climate change. It invests \$369 billion to cut climate emissions 40% by 2030 and promotes climate justice. And for American families' energy budgets, the Inflation Reduction Act will help reduce our energy bills by \$500-\$1000 per year when all of its programs are implemented. Disadvantaged communities also benefit, with \$60 billion allocated towards climate justice and pollution clean-up. The bill allotted \$4.5 billion towards rebates of up to 100% for low-income families to purchase energy-efficient appliances, including dryers, water heaters, and stoves. The green economy also benefits through various tax credits intended to lower the cost of renewable electricity investment and production. These credits should speed up the adoption of zero-emission trucks and vans, will produce more air capture technology to remove carbon pollution from the atmosphere, will promote green hydrogen, and incentivize the reduction of emissions in com-

mercial buildings. It even supports electric vehicle purchases for the Postal Service. This Act strongly fights climate change and is a solid step in the battle for net zero emissions, and at the same time, provides more green, union job opportunities boosting domestic production of clean energy.

The Inflation Reduction Act also helps with family healthcare expenses, especially by capping out-of-pocket spending for prescription drugs at \$2,000 per year for Medicare recipients. Moreover, the IRA extends Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidies through 2025 preventing 3 million people from becoming uninsured. Indeed, this issue moved me to write a letter to our Senators on July 11th urging them to convince their colleagues to pass this healthcare extension. My goal was to provide them the tangible support of a state representative close to the ground who represents thousands of Virginians soon to be affected by a big jump in healthcare premiums otherwise.

And there is more! Under the Inflation Reduction Act, the government can negotiate directly with drug companies to lower prices for medications and save Medicare billions of dollars. In the past, Medicare was forced to accept the prices given by distributors, which then elevated the prices paid by those in need of medicine. Medicare will save \$265 billion with these lowered prices, which in turn helps to fund other parts of this legislation. The other big win for families is that the act limits the monthly cost of insulin to \$35 for Medicare partners. Unfortunately, due to Republican parliamentary efforts, this won't apply to patients who are privately insured.

The bill is further funded by new taxes, which aim to ensure the wealthy pay their fair share. One of these provisions is a 15% minimum tax on the book income (the income a corporation tells its shareholders) of large corporations (those with over \$1 billion in annual profit). This tax is anticipated to generate \$222 billion for the government in the next 10 years, and further funds the bill. Additional funds for the IRS will prevent high-income taxpayers from dodging their fair share in taxes. A 1% Stock Buyback Fee will further prevent corporations from avoiding taxes on their profits and will generate an additional \$74 billion in revenue for the IRS. The days of 100% corporate tax write-offs will finally come to an end.

The White House predicts "downward pressure on inflation by reducing the government's budget deficit by an estimated \$300 billion over the next decade." The idea is that reduced government spending and higher taxes will help to shrink the deficit and allow companies to keep their prices low.

The Inflation Reduction Act is truly a monumental step toward reducing the high prices Americans are facing today, and lowering the strain of the environmental crisis for the generations to come. The dream of a major cut to emissions by 2030 has now become a reality, and this bill is a critical step forward in fighting climate change and saving our beautiful planet, all the while helping American families by lowering health care and energy costs. A large amount of gratitude must go to our two Senators, Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, and to our Congressman Don Beyer, for their hard work to make this historic legislation come to fruition.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Call to Engage: A Suburban Mom's Path to Activism

When my oldest daughter was 11 years old, she cried when a tree was cut down in our northern Virginia neighborhood. I thought her empathy was endearing, but perhaps I should have seen that her seed of passion was the start of something huge. Since then, my daughter has become a full time environmental activist, working and fighting for the trees and people harmed by oil and gas pipelines. She teaches me what it means to participate with passion and radical love, and I couldn't be more proud.

Early on in her activist days, I, a former helicopter mom, wanted to understand her life that was such a departure from the more "standard" careers her peers had followed. So I visited her as she fought pipelines (the Mountain Valley Pipeline and the now deceased Atlantic Coast Pipeline) in southwest Virginia. I was sleeping in a motel (no tents for me, thank



you!), learning about the history of the area and non-violent direct action, and, perhaps most importantly, meeting her friends.

I met locals who had their land taken from them or had their wells gone bad due to an attempt to lay a 42 inch pipe for natural gas through the Appalachian moun-

tains, crossing streams and threatening clean water in an area with marginalized people. It was clear that these new pipelines, and many others, do not benefit the people living here and will only speed up the destruction of our already warming planet.

After one of my many weekend

trips to visit southwest Virginia, I came home to my comfortable life in Alexandria with the feeling that maybe I should be a little bit more like my daughter.

To give myself some credit, I
SEE CALL TO, PAGE 9

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NEWS

Governor Endorses Outing Students to Parents

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

There is a genuine possibility that the nine-member Virginia Board of Education, now with five newly appointed members (June 30, 2022) by Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin, will pass a regulation in line with the governor's Aug. 9 endorsement to "out" students to their parents. The combination has local and state-wide transgender students and their allies expressing outrage while sounding the alarm.

"It is unimaginably cruel that Governor Youngkin would politicize the safety of students across Virginia. As Queer students who rely on these protections, we hope the governor reconsiders his stance and safeguards our rights," stated the Aug. 12 release by the Pride Liberation Project. It is a student-run group of Queer and allied students in Virginia, many in Northern Virginia, who advocate for the rights of LGBTQIA+ students.

What triggered the recent heightened student concern is that on Aug. 9, Youngkin endorsed schools' outing of students to their parents. With the governor having a majority on the Virginia Board of Education, the path is laid for possible future regulations.

Youngkin was responding to an inquiry about his thoughts on schools that keep information about a student's gender identity or sexual orientation from the student's parents.

"With regards to informing parents with the most important decisions about their children, I think everybody knows where I stand. Parents matter," Youngkin said. "Parents should be at the forefront of all of these discussions, and I firmly believe that teachers and schools have an obligation to make sure that parents are well informed about what's happening in their kids' lives." During his campaign for governor, Youngkin advocated for implementing such a policy.

Rivka Vizcardo-Lichter is a Pride Liberation Project leader. "Schools would be disclosing sensitive information, that of a student's identity, to their potentially unsupportive parents and guardians," she said in an interview. "[It] would make school an unsafe place to share your identity."

Aug. 12, Pride Liberation Project condemned the governor's view, citing concerns for safety and that removing public schools' privacy protections would negate schools' role as an inclusive space. In their release, PLP said familial rejection rates are incredibly high in the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Human Rights Campaign, stating that only 25 percent of LGBTQIA+ youth can be out in their homes, and 67 percent of LGBTQ youth hear their families make negative comments about LGBTQ peo-

ple. "Consequently, countless students rely on privacy protections to access critical support structures at schools, including affirming staff members, mental health support, and accepting clubs," according to Pride Liberation Project.

In 2017, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation partnered with researchers at the University of Connecticut to deploy a comprehensive survey capturing the experiences of LGBTQ youth in their family settings, schools, social circles and communities. Over 12,000 youth aged 13-17 participated in the survey, with representation from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/2018-YouthReport-NoVid.pdf>

In Fairfax County Public Schools, Regulation 2603 establishes procedures and guidelines for schools to ensure that all students, including transgender students, experience a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment. All students have a right to privacy in Fairfax County Public School facilities or while participating in FCPS-sponsored events. No matter the reason, reasonable, non-stigmatizing accommodations must be made for any student who needs or wants more privacy.

Fairfax — As a Queer student in Fairfax with multiple closeted friends, I can't begin to even touch upon the harmful impact these comments could potentially have on my community at school. Protecting students is the most important responsibility of our legislators. Governor Youngkin, please do your job.

Alexandria — Unless content is illegal, immoral, or impacts a student's ability to access the curriculum, why would teachers feel the need to discuss it with parents? It goes beyond the call to teach. Teachers are meant to be a safe space for students, and requiring them to share sensitive, confidential information such as a student's identity is inherently dangerous.

Arlington — As a lesbian teenager who lives and goes to school in Arlington, I find it horrifying that students may one day be forced to disclose their identity when they aren't ready or are in homes that are unsafe for them. It is irrational and insane to want to deny kids the ability to safely speak with teachers at school without fear of being outed to potentially unsupportive parents.

Richmond — I live in an unsupportive household, and outing me to my parents would likely cut me off from housing and basic needs. I've shared with teachers and administration my identity as a Queer student in confidence, knowing that they were not allowed to share this information with my parents. Requiring teachers to tell my parents about my identity would put me in an unsafe position. The governor is supposed to protect students, and he's working to do the exact opposite.

MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT STATION

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY: 4287 Buckman Road (KinderCare), 8/8/22, 6:21 a.m. Someone forced entry into the business, damaged and took property.

STOLEN AUTO RECOVERY: Richmond Highway and Dawn Drive, 8/8/22, 8:22 a.m. Officers attempted to conduct a traffic stop on a BMW that was reported stolen from another jurisdiction. The driver of the BMW disregarded the signal to stop. He drove a short distance away then jumped out of the moving vehicle.

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cle. The car rolled into a tree in the 2400 block of Dawn Drive.

SHOOTING INTO AN OCCUPIED DWELLING: 2000 block of Blunt Lane, 8/9/22, 8:32 a.m. The victim was awoken to the sound of broken glass. Officers found a bullet fragment on the victim's floor which had likely caused the property damage. No injuries were reported.

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY: 8330A Richmond Highway (Tobacco Vape Palace), 8/10/22, 3:37 a.m. Someone forced entry into the business.

Nothing was reported to be taken.

COMMERCIAL ROBBERY: 6241 Richmond Highway (Citgo), 8/11/22, 1:15 a.m. Two men and a woman approached the kiosk. One man demanded money, threatened to harm the employee, then took merchandise. No injuries were reported.

ROBBERY: 7900 block of Richmond Highway, 8/11/22, 8:31 a.m. A man and the victim got into an argument. The man assaulted the victim, took his property and left. This does not appear to be a random act.

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PHOTO BY ROGER MILLER

The soft bodied swallowtail caterpillars are not totally defenseless. Here a Black Swallowtail caterpillar is extending its chemical defense organ the osmeterium. The chemicals are said to repel predators such as ants and wasps, but I find the smell pleasant, like juicy fruit gum. Research indicates that the chemicals contain terpenes and esters.



PHOTO BY ROGER MILLER

A plump Black Swallowtail caterpillar likely traveling to find a place to pupate in a chrysalis.



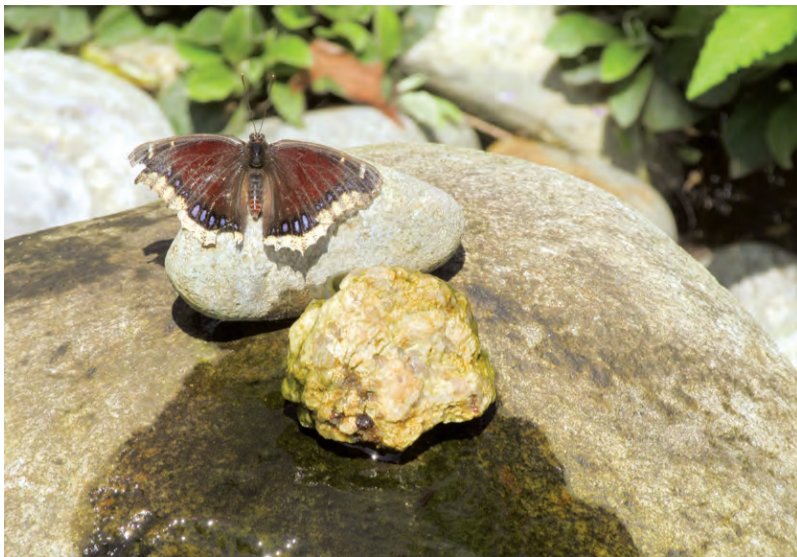
PHOTO BY ROGER MILLER

Black Swallowtail caterpillar, also known as a parsley worm, on parsley. Fingers shown for scale.



PHOTO BY ROGER MILLER

Black Swallowtail caterpillars are not usually communal. But here they are gathered on a parsley plant and eating themselves out of house and home.



A mourning cloak butterfly, one of the first to emerge in the spring.



A tiger swallowtail butterfly on a Joe Pye weed plant.

Mount Vernon's Caterpillar Rancher

Over their 18 days in the nest, young chickadees eat between 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars.

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

When shoppers race over and scoop up arm loads of parsley plants, "It's usually for butterfly caterpillars," says Iman Alsharkawi, who often sells out at the Wednesday morning Mount Vernon Farmers Market.

Mount Vernonite Roger Miller, an architect, is one of those regular, passionate, parsley purchasers.

"I'm a caterpillar rancher," he quips. Miller "raises" caterpillars in his Hollin Hills garden in the home he grew up in, built in 1952. He raises caterpillars by planting what botanists call "host plants," the plants that butterflies need for laying eggs and providing food for their caterpillars. "The caterpillars eat you out of house and home," he says, describing plants stripped of their leaves.

Remember The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle's classic children's book? The voracious caterpillar ate an apple, two pears, three plums, four strawberries, five oranges, a piece of chocolate cake, one ice cream cone, one pickle, one slice of Swiss cheese, one slice of salami, one lollipop, one piece of cherry pie, one sausage, one cupcake, one slice of watermelon and then "a nice green leaf."

Parsley especially attracts black swallowtail butterfly caterpillars. This butterfly's host plants are in the umbelliferae family, which includes parsley, carrot, dill and Queen Anne's lace. The black swallowtail's food or nectar plants include clover flowers and flowers of their host plants.

The black swallowtail caterpillar is also called a parsley caterpillar or parsley worm. It can eat toxins from its host plants and become distasteful which is thought to repel predators like birds. The black swallowtail is most often seen in the Washington region in July and August. They are common across the entire U.S. and their abundance varies from year to year.



Roger Miller in his garden with Queen Ann's lace plants, which attract butterflies.

Miller also grows Queen Anne's lace and Joe Pye weed, both host and nectar plants for tiger swallowtail butterflies, Virginia's state butterfly. Joe Pye weed can grow to eight feet tall and has large, showy clusters of pink flowers.

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Stages, Including "Bird Poop"



Iman Alsharkawi and her father, Sabry, sell parsley and other herbs and spices at the Wednesday Mount Vernon Farmers Market.

Caterpillars are the larvae of moths and butterflies, the second stage of four in the insect's life cycle, between the egg and pupa stages. Their primary goal in life is to eat, eat and eat some more and become large enough to pupate.

Caterpillars vary widely in appearance. "In cities and suburbs, in the northeast and southwest, caterpillars are found in astounding diversity," says the Caterpillar Lab's website.

Miller explains the black swallowtail's life cycle. "With ideal conditions, eggs mature in 10 days or so, the caterpillars in under two weeks, the pupa in the chrysalis for a bit over two weeks. The eggs are yellowish and smaller than a millet seed. The first caterpillars are tiny. The earliest versions look like bird poop, being dark brown with a white 'saddle' in the middle.

He continues: "Caterpillars shed their skin to grow. Each iteration is

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A monarch butterfly caterpillar.

called an instar. Later instars have transverse bands, bands wrapping around their bodies, of green and black. The black bands have yellow dots. Excellent camouflage."

Black swallowtail caterpillars have an orange osmeterium or forked gland on their heads resembling a snake's tongue which helps ward off predators. "When disturbed, this fleshy, Y-shaped organ protrudes from the forehead and emits a chemical deterrent," says Miller.

Why Caterpillars Matter

Caterpillars are a principal food for many birds. Since caterpillars move slowly, they are easy for birds to catch, experts speculate. University of Delaware entomologist Doug Tallamy explains that young chickadees need easily digestible protein which caterpillars can provide. His studies found that adult chickadees can bring to their four to seven nestlings one caterpillar every three minutes, on average, which adds up to between 390 to 570 caterpillars every day. Over their 18 days in the nest, the young eat between 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars.

Tallamy says that a native white oak tree on one afternoon provided 233 caterpillars from 15 species of insects for chickadees. A native black cherry tree provided 53 caterpillars from 10 insect species.

In his book, The Nature of Oaks, Tallamy wrote that on his southeastern Pennsylvania land, 511 species of moths and butterflies rely on oaks. And he stresses that

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Grackle with fall cankerworm caterpillars..

many caterpillars pupate in perennial native ground covers and leaf litter over the winter.

The "Herbalists"

Back to the parsley purveyors. The father-daughter team, Sabry and Iman Alsharkawi, bring fresh and dried herbs, teas and spices from their Fauquier County farm to the Mount Vernon market at the Sherwood Regional Library every Wednesday morning. Though their greenhouses brim with luscious green plants, "I'm small," says Sabry. "The big commercial guys produce huge quantities. They focus on quantity. I focus on quality," he stresses.

Miller concurs: "Sabry has such a green thumb that I have never seen plants as hearty, full and beautiful as the plants he sells."

The caterpillars no doubt agree.

PHOTO BY PAULA SULLIVAN

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ENTERTAINMENT

Eat, Drink and Be Merry: Your Guide to Summer Restaurant Week

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria's Summer Restaurant Week is back for another year, and while some stalwarts are making triumphant returns, there are some new faces – and menus – on the scene as well. From high-end to walk-in, at price points ranging from \$25 to \$45 per person, here are some of the area's best deals this go-round. <https://visitalexandria.com/restaurants/restaurant-week/>

Hummingbird, 220 S. Union St.

Hummingbird is offering a three-course menu for \$45 per guest. Begin with a choice of five appetizers, ranging from fried green tomatoes to summer corn dip, and then scoot over to the entrée with four choices ranging from a ratatouille bake to seafood linguini. Finish off with a choice of three desserts. Double chocolate chunk fudge brownie a

la mode, anyone?

Hops n Shine, 3410 Mount Vernon Ave.

For \$25 per person, diners will enjoy a three-course meal beginning with a choice of giant pretzel, fried pickles or jalapeno poppers, followed by a main course featuring any grilled cheese sandwich on the restaurant's menu (Hint: You can never go wrong with the Eeezy Capreezy).

Finish the meal off with a sweet treat ranging from a dessert pretzel to s'mores bread pudding and you can go home happy.

Market 2 Market, 116 E. Del Ray Ave.

Market 2 Market's deal allows diners to order a sandwich, a soup or salad, a bag of chips, a sweet treat and a drink for \$25. With nearly two dozen sandwich offerings to choose from and a half-dozen soup or salad choices besides, you won't run out of options. Cannoli, cookies or gummy bears await – to cleanse the palate,

of course.

Taqueria Picoso, 1472 N. Beauregard St.

Out on the West End, Taqueria Picoso is doing things a bit differently with a "choose your own adventure" style of menu. For \$25, guests can choose either tacos for one or tuna tostadas. Choose up to two proteins for the tacos – al pastor, chicken tinga, vegan chorizo and rajas poblano are all up for grabs, among other proteins – and then use the included four tortillas and vegetables to put it all together. Both the tacos and tostadas come with guacamole, rice, beans and chips.

Mount Vernon Inn, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway

Head a few miles south of town to George Washington's place for a three-course Restaurant Week meal priced at \$35 per person. (Were George and Martha ever Restaurant Week patrons? The world may never know.) Start off with a choice



Taqueria Picoso is doing things a bit differently with a "choose your own adventure" style of menu.

of appetizers, ranging from sweet potato hush puppies to jerk chicken flatbread, then choose an entrée from a list of four including pork tenderloin and creamy mushroom marsala pasta. Finally, take your pick of flourless chocolate cake and New York-style cheesecake.

Piece Out, 2419 Mount Vernon Ave.

Piece Out: It's not just for pizza anymore! The restaurant's \$35 meal deal centers on pasta, with

an entrée of cannelloni di carne, baked spinach manicotti or squid ink fettuccine fra diavolo at the heart of the menu. Your order also promises a choice of salad and dessert – and a glass of wine, as well, to wash it all down.

Award-winning columnist Hope Nelson is author of "Classic Restaurants of Alexandria" and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

CALENDAR

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.

PHOTO CONTEST

Green Spring Gardens Photo Contest, sponsored by the Friends of Green Spring (FROGS). Photographs will be on public display from Aug. 23 through Oct. 15, 2022. A reception and awards ceremony will be held Sunday, Aug. 28, 2022. Green Spring Gardens is located at 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria, Virginia. For more information, visit Green Spring Gardens or call 703-642-5173.

NOW THRU AUG. 31

Creative Summer Programs. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery in Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Learn techniques in drawing, mixed media, mosaic, jewelry, watercolor, and more from local artists. Delve into creative exploration solo or with friends. Sign up for the programs that inspire you and make your own "stay-cation" art experience. Visit the website: <https://DelRayArtisans.org/programs/creative-summer/>

NOW THRU OCT. 17

Hummingbird Photo Exhibition. At the Historic House at Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. For those who can't get enough of the beauty of hummingbirds, a group of local photographers are mounting an exhibition this summer. The title of the show is "A Bouquet of Hummingbirds," and it will feature works from more than 20 area artists and include hummingbirds from all over the Western Hemisphere. All profits from the sale of photos will be donated to the Friends of Green Spring, a non-profit organization devoted to maintaining the gardens and furthering public education and outreach.

NOW THRU SEPT. 10

Yoga Sessions. 12-2:15 p.m. Yoga at the National



Alexandria Restaurant Week will take place Aug. 19-28 in Old Town Alexandria.

Museum of the United States Army hosted by Honest Soul Yoga, 1775 Liberty Drive, Fort Belvoir. Honest Soul Yoga and The Army Historical Foundation invites you to take a moment to de-stress by enjoying an afternoon of yoga at the Museum. Join trained instructors for an afternoon of flow and sound meditation. After class, grab a coffee and some healthy snacks in the Museum Café or take some time to explore the exhibits.

THURSDAY/AUG. 18

Music at the Market at Old Town North. 6-7 p.m. At Montgomery Park, 901 N Royal St., Alexandria. The Old Town North Community Partnership, with support from NOTICe, The Old Town North Alliance and local businesses and residents, present Music at the Market on the third Thursday of the month throughout the summer. Head to the Old Town North Farmer's and Artisans Market to browse, pick up a bite and picnic in the park while soaking in great live music. Rain dates are July 28 and September 8.



"A Bouquet of Hummingbirds," features works from more than 20 area artists and includes hummingbirds from all over the Western Hemisphere. Through Oct. 17, 2022, free to the public, at the Historic House at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria.

THURSDAY/AUG. 18

Old Town Art Walk. At various locations in Old Town Alexandria. Enjoy a self-guided tour of Old Town Alexandria and explore the fine art and studio crafts found in art galleries and boutique shops on the third Thursday of each month, May to October. The stroll is a great activity after an early dinner, or before enjoying a meal at one of Old Town Alexandria's restaurants. The Old Town Art Walk is presented by the Old Town Business Association.

FRIDAY/AUG. 19

1990s Trivia. At Lee-Fendall House & Gardens, Alexandria. Staff members at Carlyle House Historic Park and the Lee-Fendall House Museum combine their knowledge to create bi-weekly trivia nights throughout the summer in the beautiful gardens of the Lee-Fendall House. Test your knowledge on everything from pop culture to history. Registration must be done in advance. Limited capacity so register early! Tickets are \$8 per person and include snacks and one complimentary drink. Additional drinks can be purchased at our bar. Teams are limited to 6 people, ages 21+ only.

AUG. 19-28

Alexandria Restaurant Week. Throughout neighborhoods in Alexandria including Old Town, Del Ray, Carlyle, Eisenhower and the West End. For 10 days and two weekends, dozens of restaurants in Alexandria will offer a \$25, \$35 or \$45 in-person dinner for one during Alexandria Restaurant Week. This new pricing structure reflects a spectrum of Alexandria's offerings from fast casual to fine dining. Alexandria Restaurant Week showcases the inventiveness of local chefs in neighborhoods throughout the city, including Old Town, Del Ray, Carlyle and Eisenhower, and the West End. From neighborhood favorites to restaurants specializing in international cuisine, Alexandria's distinctive collection of eateries offers a variety of flavors for guests to savor. Visit AlexandriaRestaurantWeek.com.

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OPINION

Call to Engage

FROM PAGE 4

wasn't completely ignorant before my daughter started her activist work. I had become more politicized after the election of Donald Trump, and saw that the problems of systemic racism, environmental justice, and economic inequality are all intertwined. It had been clear that we are not going in the right direction. But what can I do now? What would my daughter do?

I know what she wouldn't do. She wouldn't sit around "seeing" problems and talking about them. She would get out there, learn more, and get her hands dirty. So I did too. And I haven't stopped.

My primary co-climate protectors are a group called Third Act, composed of people like me: Older folks who are mostly retired, have some extra time, and want to do more than write postcards or show up at big marches. The organization, started by Bill McKibben, focuses on trying to stop banks from investing in new fossil fuel projects, as well as increasing voter turnout. My gray-haired allies and I in the Virginia chapter have organized protests in front of bank branches, hosted non-violent direct action training, and collaborated with other environmental organizations to share how older folks can contribute their time, energy, and money to creating a better world.

The Third Act Virginia chapter (which also includes Maryland and DC) has doctors, teachers, government workers, and artists. Some of us were protesters from the Vietnam war days, and some have never held up a protest sign in their life. However, we all know we need to do everything we can to make sure that our planet is livable and everyone can participate in our democracy. And we all know that we can make a difference.

Some of even my most liberal friends think that my and my daughter's work is futile. They think that we're all doomed, or that maybe things will eventually get better on their own. My daughter, our activist allies, and I don't want to wait, and we certainly don't think things will improve without pressure. We know there is power in movements, and we know that there is still hope if we act now. Erica Chenoweth, a political scientist at Harvard University, has confirmed that civil disobedience is the most powerful way of shaping world politics. John Lewis calls it "good trouble," and if I can learn to make good trouble, even in my 50s, then you can too.

Go to thirdact.org to learn how you can get involved.

Elizabeth Finn

Alexandria, 22309

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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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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.

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Culinary Instruction Without Borders

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

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

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 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



PHOTO BY AIKO AUSTIN

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

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 family, 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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**NEW 2022 TOYOTA
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LEASES STARTING FROM...

\$209
/MO



MODEL# 1852. MSRP \$22,149. LEASE OFFER FOR QUALIFIED LESSEES. BASED ON 36 MONTHS, 10K MILES/YR & \$2999 DUE AT SIGNING. SECURITY DEPOSIT WAIVED. PLUS TAX, TAGS, FREIGHT AND \$789 PROCESSING FEE. FACTORY PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

**NEW 2022 TOYOTA
PRIUS**

LEASES STARTING FROM...

\$279
/MO



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**NEW 2022 TOYOTA
CAMRY LE SDN**

LEASES STARTING FROM...

\$309
/MO



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**NEW 2022 TOYOTA
HIGHLANDER**

LEASES STARTING FROM...

\$319
/MO



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SPECIAL**

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FILTER SPECIAL**

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**ALIGNMENT
SPECIAL**

\$89.95

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INCLUDES: 4-WHEEL ALIGNMENT, INSPECT SUSPENSION, BALL JOINTS, STRUTS & SHOCKS, TIRE CONDITION AND SET TIRE PRESSURE.

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SPECIAL**

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BRAKE PAD REPLACEMENT

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\$50 OFF... WHEN YOU SPEND \$500+

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