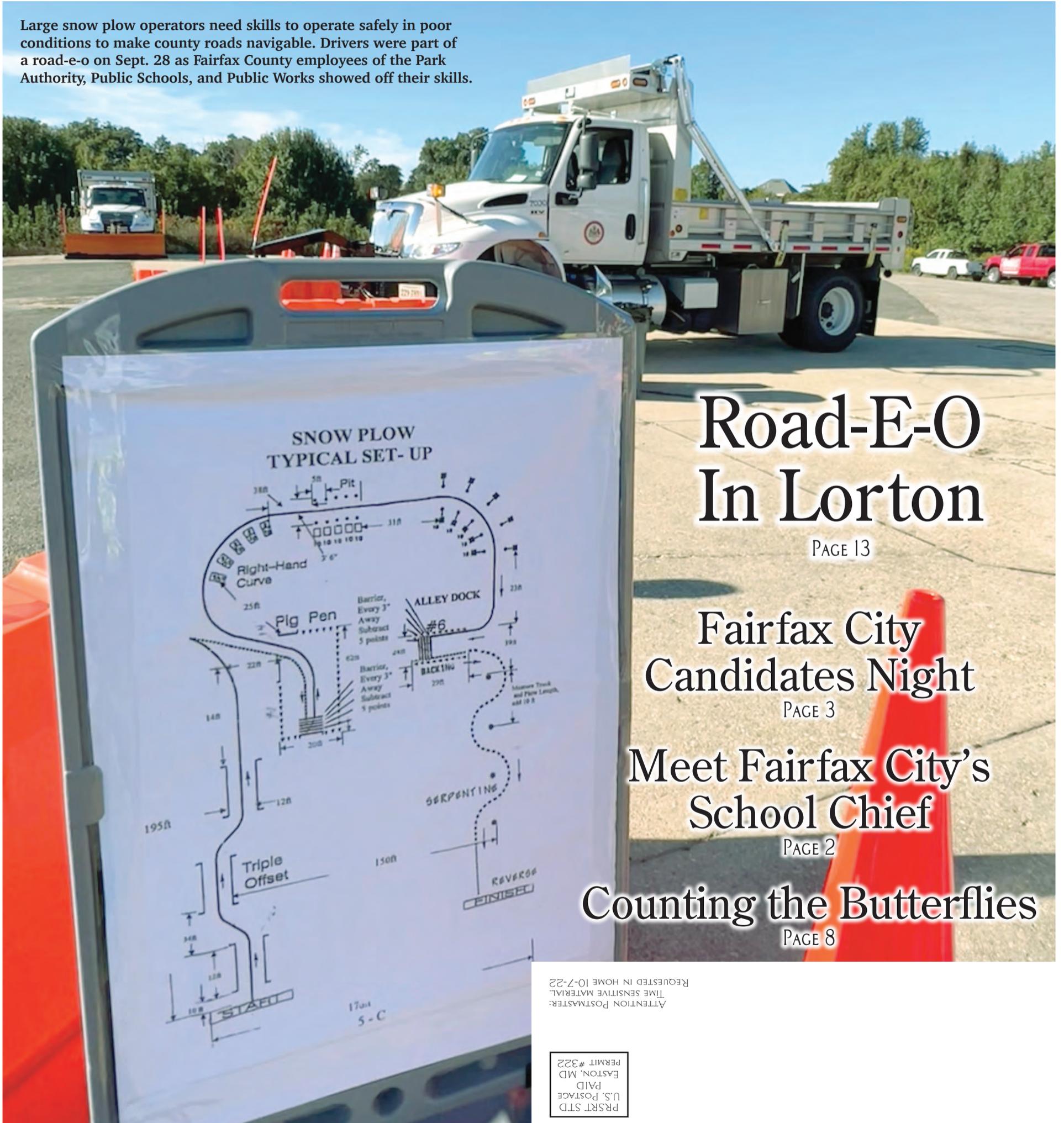


CONNECTION

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station

Large snow plow operators need skills to operate safely in poor conditions to make county roads navigable. Drivers were part of a road-e-o on Sept. 28 as Fairfax County employees of the Park Authority, Public Schools, and Public Works showed off their skills.

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION
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Road-E-O In Lorton

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Counting the Butterflies

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Meet Fairfax City Schools Superintendent Jeff Platenberg

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

In the mid-1980s, former Fairfax City Schools Superintendent Bob Russell told Jeff Platenberg, if he ever got a chance to serve the Fairfax City community, he should do it. And this summer, after working 32 years in public education – 20 of them with Fairfax County – Platenberg did just that.

He became superintendent of the City's schools, replacing Phyllis Pajardo, who retired June 30. And he's exactly where he wants to be.

"The people working here have a level of commitment and dedication to the residents of Fairfax City that's truly impressive," said Platenberg. "I've met with elected officials, citizens, school principals and their teams – and they all have an understanding of and appreciation for what a rich and special place this is. It's humbling and such an honor to be part of it in this role."

And he brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the job. He earned an academic certification in educational facility planning from San Diego State University, a master's in human resource development from Webster University, and a bachelor's in public administration from GMU.

Platenberg is also a licensed general contractor and a certified educational facility planner with a background in finance, information technology, student performance and budget analysis. He was assistant superintendent for facilities and transportation

services for Fairfax County Public Schools and was recently inducted into the FCPS Hall of Fame for his longtime service to the school district.

Born in California, but raised in Northern Virginia since the third grade, he said choosing a career in education came naturally for him. "When you're part of a school system where you've had so many good experiences, the opportunity to serve is innate," said Platenberg. "And when I've won awards, I believe it's about the team, not just me."

He noted how many people who've grown up in Fairfax City have gone away to college, and sometimes other jobs, and then returned to work here. "They bring back their experiences from elsewhere to contribute locally," he said. Platenberg also acknowledged others who were raised elsewhere but have been City leaders for decades.

"And that provides opportunities for us to acknowledge the past, recognize the good they've done and improve upon it for the generations here now and to come," continued Platenberg. "So talking with some people who've been here a long time – like [former Fairfax Mayor] John Mason and [former School Board Chairman] Janice Miller – brings another perspective to me and helps me serve."

And he's already hit the ground running. Since Fairfax's elementary schools

were last renovated in 2001, an assessment of their condition – plus those of the middle and high school – is one item on his agenda.

"We'll evaluate not only the physical plant – for example, the plumbing and air conditioning – but will be working with architectural and engineering firms who can determine whether the classroom spaces are adequate for today's teaching and learning," explained Platenberg. "And I want this plan codified in the CIP [Capital Improvement Program] so it's transparent to the community. That way, the taxpayers can see that we take care of our schools – which, in turn, makes our community more valuable."

"The facilities assessment was already funded, and we've got the population growth from new development," he added. "So we can make the right investments to be able to provide the best-in-class, teaching and learning spaces for our teachers to practice their craft and our students to continue to thrive."

In addition, said Platenberg, "I'll promote the great teachers we have, the opportunities they're providing for students and the amazing things they're doing. I

want people to understand we respect and support our teachers, and I want to make sure the community rallies around them and the administrators. And I believe

that having parents involved in the schools, and the schools involved in the community, builds good relationships, and I'll continue to expand those initiatives."

"When you provide an environment where children feel supported and can thrive – and when you have the City's support, with, for example, funds to recognize teacher and student innovation – it makes for an excellent, blue-ribbon school system," explained Platenberg. "And that's what makes this City a gem. Our School Board even paid for every school to be National Board Certified – investing in them even before FCPS did it."

He's proud, as well, of the many academic offerings the students have, such as foreign languages at elementary, middle and high-school level; advanced academic programs; alternative and team-learning programs, plus social and emotional supports. However, he said, "The School Board has done an excellent job of investing in innovation, but I still think there's more to be done – for example, expanding the sustainable programs and initiatives at all levels."

He said he's received a warm welcome from the community and school system, and he was pleased to learn that one of the Fairfax High math teachers was a student there. "He told me he had such a rich experience there that he wanted to give back and do the same for his students." And in that same vein, Platenberg said, "I believe this is the right time for me to be here and that I have a lot to offer the City in this time of transition and growth."



BONNIE HOBBS/
THE CONNECTION
Jeff Platenberg

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Fairfax City Council, Mayoral Candidates Speak

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

League of Women Voters holds informative event.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax City residents heard directly from their candidates for mayor and City Council last week when the League of Women Voters held a Candidates Night at American Legion Post 177. On Wednesday, Sept. 28, each person gave a brief statement, after which attendees got to mingle with them and ask them questions.

Running for mayor are Catherine Read and current City Councilman Sang Yi. The slate for Council includes incumbents Joe Harmon, So Lim, Tom Ross and Jon Stehle, plus challengers Billy Bates, Kate Doyle Feingold, Jeff Greenfield, Anahita “Ana” Renner and Craig Salewski.

Below are their statements, in the order in which they were given:

Mayoral Candidates

Sang Yi: “It’s been a privilege to serve all of you on City Council. If elected, I’ll focus on affordability issues for residents and businesses. I’ll also promote sensible development, while protecting the environment, and I’ll work with the School Board to make sure our students get a first-rate education.”

Catherine Read: “I want to be a good steward of what’s been built by the City governments before me. We need to do more with our relationship with GMU and build a better, thriving and more vibrant downtown. And we need to focus on the environment, and our parks should have bathrooms. Connecting our sidewalks and having safe bike lanes are also important.”

City Council Candidates

Tom Ross: “Forty-two years ago, my family and I moved to the City of Fairfax. We’re no longer that sleepy town, but part of a thriving, dynamic, competitive, growing area. How we deal with growth is critical; we need to maintain the services and events we offer,



Sang Yi



Catherine Read



Tom Ross



Jon Stehle



Billy Bates



Kate Doyle Feingold



Joe Harmon



So Lim



Jeff Greenfield



Anahita “Ana” Renner



Craig Salewski

while continuing to be the kind of place you’re proud to grow up in. We also need to maintain our relationship with GMU and keep our property tax low.”

Jon Stehle: “This past Council has done amazing things – it built Fire Station 33 and made an \$11 million investment in our parks. And I thank Mayor David Meyer, Councilmember Janice Miller and our four, retiring School Board members for their service to Fairfax. On City Council, we need a collaborative group who can work together, have a vision and can move it forward. I’m incredibly proud of this City.”

Billy Bates: “My family’s lived here since the 1950s; no other place is more special to me. We need to take action now so people can live here by building more affordable housing. And we should

prioritize walkability and a more efficient road network. Fairfax isn’t isolated from gun violence, and we have to step up our gun ban on City property, consistent with what other jurisdictions have adopted.”

Kate Doyle Feingold: “I got out of the Marine Corps in 2012 and came here. My priorities are preserving green spaces, helping downtown businesses thrive and making sure local government is responsive to its citizens. It should also let people know what’s going on and make the most efficient use of your tax dollars.”

Joe Harmon: “I work at the Treasury Department and also have my own business. I’m a Marine veteran and all three of my children were born and raised here. My slogan is ‘Celebrating our Neighborly Small-Town Charm.’ That means renewing our focus on

what makes this a special place to live – the people in our neighborhoods. When making decisions, I balance between what would help the citizens, what the developers want to build and the Comprehensive Plan.”

So Lim: “My family immigrated from Korea to Springfield when I was 12 and didn’t speak English – and that changed me forever. I listened more than talked. My parents purchased their first home through an affordable, homeowner program, so I understand how owning a house gives you pride and hope. I own an insurance agency and understand the ups and downs of running a small business. I’d continue listening to your concerns and issues; I want to earn your vote.”

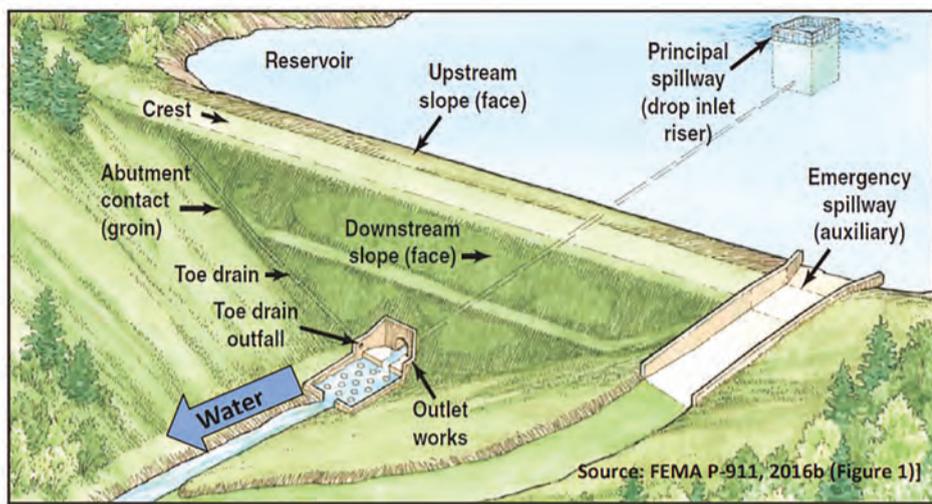
Jeff Greenfield: “We have a tradition in Fairfax City of nonparti-

san elections; it’s about what we’ll do to move the City forward. My issues are transportation, quality education and serious renovations to our elementary schools. And as a longtime, former City Council member, I’m the only candidate who’s been through the renovations of all four City schools, so I know what it entails.”

Anahita “Ana” Renner: “Fairfax has a family-friendly atmosphere; but I’m concerned that, with rapid development, we might lose our family-friendly ways. As the cost of everything continues to rise, we need to keep that in mind. I’ll work to ensure that every resident’s voice is heard and not place any excessive burdens on the City’s small businesses. And I’ll listen to you, the citizens, not outside-interest groups.”

Craig Salewski: “I applaud the current Council for its new housing and businesses that bring affordable housing, but I want reasonable growth and more affordability. My parents were teachers and my wife is a principal; I want our aging, school buildings modernized. And I want to address our homel-

essness issue that’s becoming more visible. Substance abuse and mental-health issues need to be addressed, and I’d bring in law enforcement to get rid of the encampments.”



DAM DRAWINGS CONTRIBUTED

A typical dam

Dam Awareness Rises in Hurricane Season

Dams in Fairfax County are under the regulator's magnifying glass.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

With the rainy season moving in, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation recently began to look at area dams, reviewing certification and the rules surrounding dams in an effort to thwart any mishaps that could result in fatalities.

According to the DCR, Virginia has more than 3,000 dams and 2,600 are regulated by the DCR. There are 79 dams in Fairfax County, and most are owned by the county or the park authority. Some privately owned dams include the Crosspointe Lake Dam, owned by Crosspointe Swim and Racquet; the Kingstowne Lake Dam owned by the Kingstowne Community Association and the Lake Audubon Dam owned by the Reston Association. The Daddy Long Lake dam is owned by Richard L. Beizer, according to the "List of Regulated Dams in Fairfax County as of 9/30/2022."

In the south county area, dams at Lake Accotink, Burke Lake and Lake Royal are part of this effort.

Wendy Howard-Cooper, DCR's director of dam safety and floodplain management, is aware of the dams in Northern Virginia but they are performing as they should. "At this time DCR is not aware of any elevated risks for dam failure due to the projected rainfall in the Northern Virginia area from hurricane Ian. DCR encourages all citizens to know their risk when living, working or recreating around dams," she said.

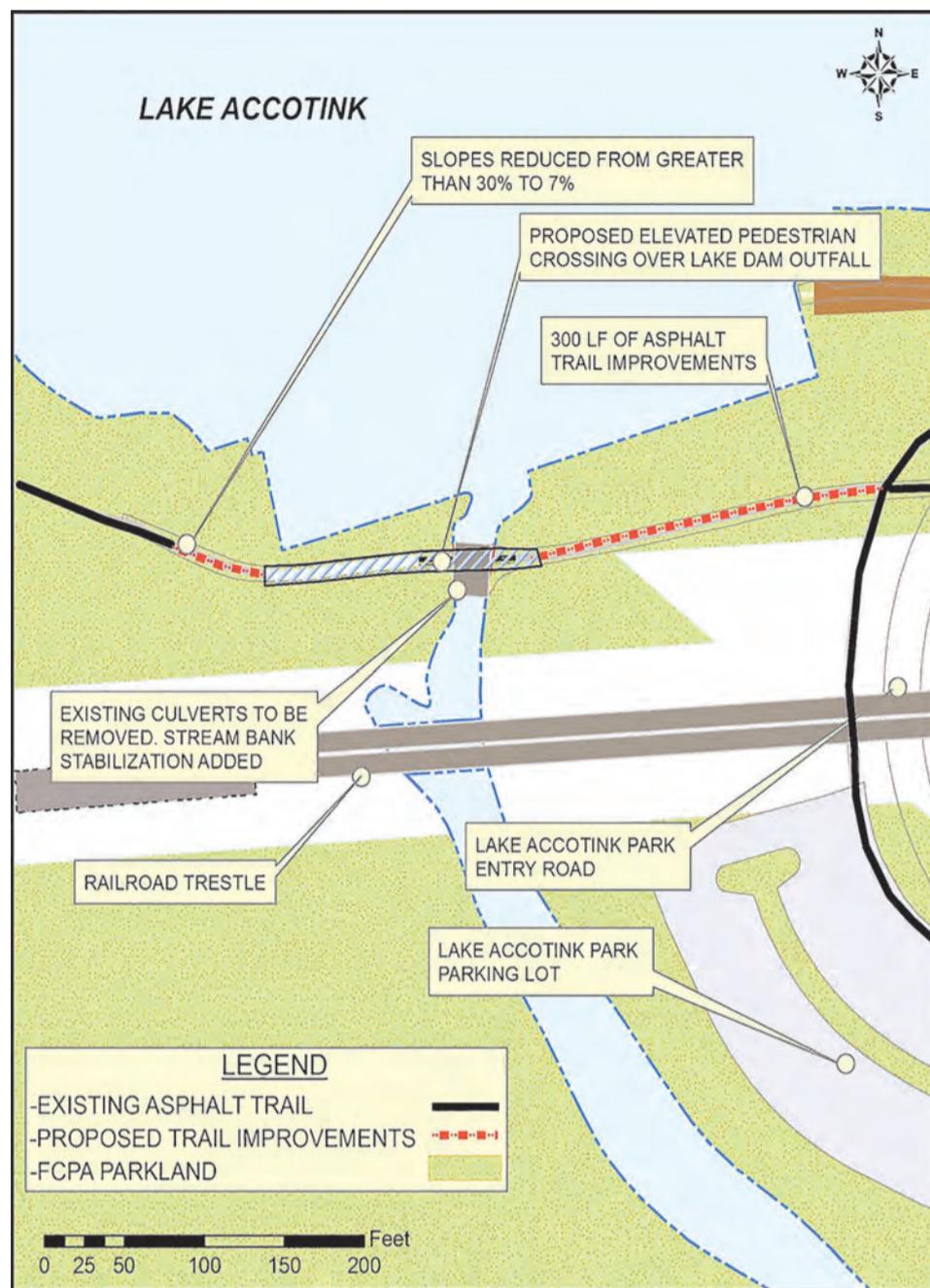
At Lake Accotink, a \$3 million project is underway just beyond the dam spillway called the "Lake Accotink Dam Stream Crossing Project," aimed at improving things for the trail users while also improving runoff due to excessive rainfall. The

project involves creating approximately 300 feet of asphalt trail improvements and 325 feet on an elevated concrete pedestrian crossing over the dam outfall. Past storms have damaged that area requiring a total reconstruction of the trail twice in the last five years. This project will resolve these issues, enhancing safety and accessibility for park users, the Fairfax County Park Authority said.

In September 2005, the dam at Lake Royal in Burke was showing signs of stress, so Fairfax County laid out a reconstruction project. The dam was 35 years old at that time, and due for an evaluation. The actual dam was structurally sound, but the spillway was in question. A plan to modify the spillway alignment and extend it further downstream, away from the townhouses and toward Rabbit Branch, a stream in the area, was successful. This was all done on park authority land and reinforced with a vegetation planting plan to shore up the land.

Burke Lake is a significantly larger body of water than Accotink or Lake Royal, and the dam is larger as well. In 2012, officials came up with a plan to increase Burke Lake Dam's spillway capacity, remediate seepage concerns, and repair the tower structure in order to obtain a Virginia DCR Dam Safety Regular Operation permit. The existing auxiliary spillway is less than required as specified in the January 2011 Froehling & Robertson (F&R) report entitled "Report of Inundation Study – Burke Lake Dam," the report said.

This dam was inspected in 1984, and since then, the height has decreased, the spillway decreased and the pool of water



The plan at Lake Accotink in Springfield.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Before the county dam project at Lake Accotink, the spillway presented a challenge to hikers and bikers on the trail around the lake.

decreased. According to the engineering report, dated 25 May, 2012, the upstream embankment had been eroded due to wave action. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries regraded the upstream embankment and placed riprap along it to pre-

vent further erosion. The auxiliary spillway was eroded by frequent flows and a small seep was present in the spillway. VDGIF formed a low flow channel to prevent further erosion and the seep was routed into the new channel, the report said.

NEWS

Police Seek Leads on ATM Burglaries

Detectives from our Major Crimes Bureau have been investigating several commercial ATM burglaries occurring in Fairfax County and surrounding jurisdictions. FCPD is asking community members to help identify these suspects.

The latest incident occurred between 4 and 4:10 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 1. In this incident, two men arrived in a white Ford truck at the NextMark Credit Union at 6506 Loisdale Road in Springfield. The men placed a tow strap around the ATM machine and attempted to steal it, but were unsuccessful.

The two men are of average build. They wore black hoodies, gloves, and reflective safety vests

On July 19 at 4:06 a.m., two men arrived in a white Ford van and forced entry into the Exxon gas station located at 5211 Ox Road in the West Springfield area. They used a dolly and loaded an ATM machine onto the van and left in an unknown direction. One man is identified as 6' tall, wearing a mask and light gray hoodie. A second man was wearing a black hoodie. Both were wearing masks and gloves.

These same suspects have struck in the Franconia and West Springfield District Stations below and are



believed to be involved in several similar events. Including:

May 3, 2022 at Serenity Nails and Spa at 5:26 a.m. 8092 Rolling Road

Sept. 19, 2022 at Sunoco Gas Station at 2:17 a.m. 5514 Franconia Road

Detectives are asking anyone with information regarding these incidents to call our Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 5.

Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

BULLETIN BOARD

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

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

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.

SEPT. 13 TO NOV. 17
ESL Class. 7-9 p.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twin-

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11

Starry Nights

Waterfront Cabin on 3 Acre Spring Fed Lake



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For the Love of a Tree

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK



It is hard to imagine living anywhere else as beautiful as here in Virginia. One of the reasons it is so gorgeous is that we have many and varied native trees, especially our big deciduous trees with all the leaves. Indeed, soon the tree leaves will turn bright reds, burnt orange, and mellow yellows, to name a few fun fall colors. Many of us will be drawn to the forests for hikes and nature walks, and possibly a visit to Skyline Drive for the fall foliage. We have 41 pristine state parks filled with birds, turtles, foxes, and all manner of interesting wildlife. Here in our region, we have Huntley Meadows, the biggest and best Fairfax County park, and many smaller parks throughout our community. To top it off we have the picturesque Potomac River and the federal George Washington Memorial Parkway and bike path that runs along it from Mount Vernon to Old Town. Yet, it is our trees that really capture our imagination and do so much to protect our environment. It is these majestic, slow-growing, oldest living organisms on Earth, that bring us untold benefits that we must protect. It really is up to us as individuals to do our part to save our trees. This is a good week to start as it is the best time to plant young saplings, especially after all the rain we have had recently. Last week was Native Trees Week here in the Commonwealth and there are

many ways to celebrate native trees and many online resources available to help us.

It is no coincidence that you may be viewing numerous advertisements for garden sales. This cool weather really makes it an ideal time for planting. The native ones are the best as they are easier to grow, require less water, and are a breeding habitat and food source for all manner of birds and animals. And, if you are looking for particular trees you can contact garden centers to order them and have them delivered to you. I use Campbell & Ferrara Nurseries, located locally on Richmond Highway across the street from the Gerry Hyland Government Center. They have a good selection of native plants and will do as much of the work as you need, from designing your garden to the plantings themselves.

There is also a native tree campaign happening here in our region to educate residents about the importance of native trees and how you can support this effort. There is no shortage of ways you can get involved and you can learn more at their website at plantnovatrees.org.

Planting trees is just one way in which to promote native trees. There are many of our neighbors who are tree rescuers volunteering in our parks to remove invasive plants – some that literally strangle our trees, like English ivy, which really should be banned. You can join groups like I have, including the Friends of

Dyke Marsh, during their weekly efforts to control the invasive weeds threatening our trees. You can help them on any of these upcoming dates: Oct. 8 and 22, Nov. 5 and 19, and Dec. 3 and 17 at 10 a.m. at the Haul Road Trail entrance bulletin board and bench. Wear long sleeves and sturdy shoes to avoid poison ivy and insects. They will provide the rest. You can sign up by sending an email to info@fodm.org and put “Invasive Plants” in the subject line. You will quickly become an expert at identifying the invasives. Arguably, it is even more important to do this than it is to plant young saplings, as a mature tree is far more beneficial to our health in its carbon sequestration, stormwater capture, and the shade it provides us.

Finally, nothing is more heartbreaking than to see perfectly healthy, mature trees being cut down for new construction or because a homeowner is worried about it falling on the house. It is far better to keep those trees as it adds value to the property and future owners will be glad for the shade they provide and the impact that has on reducing their air conditioning costs in the summer as it keeps the house cooler. An arborist can tell you if your tree is at risk of falling and options for mitigation.

Finally, look out for my upcoming town meeting to discuss saving our tree canopy and what may be happening to our oak trees, sometime in the near future with Sen. Scott Surovell. We hope to see you there and work together to care for our trees as they have been caring for us, the planet, and its inhabitants for millions of years.

JOINT STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION

Virginia DoE Proposal Harms Students, Families and Educators

The changes proposed by Governor Youngkin to Model Policies on Transgender students are damaging to students, families, teachers, businesses and public education.

Transgender and Gender-Expansive students, since the Sept. 16 release date, are already missing school for fear of mistreatment. Reports of suicidal thinking and active self-harm are proliferating. Families are wondering if Virginia will remain a safe place in which to raise their children. Many have expressed that Virginia is telling them that they and their children are suddenly unwelcome here.

Beyond transgender students, LGBTQIA+ people are impacted, and all marginalized folk know that there is a target on them too.

In the first few months of 2020, the Virginia General Assembly passed and the Governor signed a law, Senate Bill 161/House Bill 145 which created VA Code § 22.1-23.3. Treatment of transgender students to ensure that transgender students were supported “in accordance with evidence-based best practices.” In response, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) reached out to LGBTQIA+

supportive organizations and mental health care professionals to create the 2021 “Model Policies for the Treatment of Transgender Students in Virginia’s Public Schools” (2021 Model Policies). These model policies focused on the evidence-based practices required by the law.

On Sept. 16, 2022, the Virginia Department of Education released new guidelines, “2022 Model Policies on the Privacy, Dignity and Respect for all Students and Parents in Virginia’s Public Schools.” These policies are not evidence-based or based on best practices. In addition they seem to have had no input from transgender, gender-expansive, non-binary, or gender non-conforming individuals or support organizations. Exclusion of the people impacted by the policies ensures the policies will not meet the needs of those impacted.

In these 2022 Model Policies, “all” doesn’t really mean “all.”

These new policies do not meet the wording of the law, and certainly not the intent.

The Youngkin VDOE seems to be targeting trans and non-binary youth specifically to prevent them

from being comfortable in school. The 2022 policies:

- ❖ Specifically exclude sexual orientation and gender identity from the “discrimination, harassment, and bullying” policy
- ❖ Require parental permission for a student to speak to a school counselor in any way about their gender
- ❖ Require unreasonable documentation for changing a student’s name and gender in school records

❖ Require teachers to misgender students due to an inability to change school records

❖ Completely ignore nonbinary students, and that some states allow a nonbinary gender marker on birth certificates

❖ Prevent teachers and counselors from doing their jobs and being trustworthy adults for students

SEE OPPOSITION, PAGE 7

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NEWS BRIEFS

Free Women's Self-Defense Classes

Registration is open for the Fairfax County Police Department's free, self-defense classes for women only. Classes will be held Oct. 11, 13, 18 and 20, and participants must attend all four nights.

Crime-prevention and personal-safety information will be presented, followed by hands-on, self-defense practice. Register at <https://bit.ly/3E4yzj8>. If the registration is full, continue checking the link for cancellations. Space is limited and there's no wait list. (Participants ages 13-17 are welcome, but a registered parent/guardian must accompany them).

Police Department Hosts K9 Krawl

The Fairfax County Police Department's Victim Services Division is holding its 15th annual 5K K9 Krawl on Saturday, Oct. 15, from 8:30-11 a.m., outside 12099 Government Center Parkway (Public Safety Headquarters) in Fair Oaks. Register at <http://bit.ly/k9krawl22>.

Check-in is at 8:30 a.m.; the walk starts at 9 a.m. Activities include a police K9 unit demonstration, a raffle, deejay, facepainting, dog-costume contest, pet portraits and resource tables. Animal shelter dogs will also be available for adoption. The goal of this free event is to increase awareness of the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty.

Fire Stations to Hold Open Houses

In celebration of Fire Prevention Week, all Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Stations will host open houses on Saturday, Oct. 15, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. In Fairfax City, stop by Station 3 on University Drive and Station 33 on Fairfax Boulevard to meet local firefighters and paramedics, join in children's activities, learn about fire safety, and see the fire trucks and ambulances.

JOINT STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION

Virginia DoE Proposal Harms Students, Families and Educators

FROM PAGE 6

❖ Address athletics, which the law specifically excludes and which the current (2021) Model Policies, in accordance with the law, do not address. The law has not changed, so the inclusion of athletics in the 2022 proposal is puzzling.

The new policies exclude transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students and ensure an unsafe environment for transgender, gender-expansive, non-binary, and gender non-conforming teachers, administrators, staff, and parents. With all of the discussion in these policies of parental rights, the rights of the parents of students most affected are ignored entirely.

The 2022 Model Policies are inconsistent with section 1.A and section 2 of Senate Bill 161 and the identical House Bill 145 passed by the General Assembly and signed

by the Governor of Virginia on March 4, 2020. No new legislation has been passed, and the VDOE is not empowered to rewrite state law.

We the undersigned organizations insist that the VDOE withdraw the 2022 Model Policies. We enjoin school boards to retain or enact policies that are consistent with the 2021 Model Policies.

FCPS Pride, Inc.
Fairfax County Federation of Teachers
FCPS Asian Educators
Hispanic Educators Association of Fairfax
GLSEN NoVA
4 Public Education
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
Anti-Defamation League, Washington DC
Transgender Education Association of Greater Washington
Fairfax Education Association

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Documenting Butterflies

Volunteers fanned out across Northern Virginia to survey butterflies, part of the North American Butterfly Association's nationwide count.



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

One team started in Belle Haven Park along the Potomac River shoreline.



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Some surveyors gathered for pizza at The Haven to tally their numbers.

BY GLENDA BOOTH
THE CONNECTION

The silvery checkerspot butterfly has a row of black and white spots on the edges of its hind wings. The eastern comma butterfly has a small silvery-white comma-like mark on the underside of its hind wings. Such are the fine distinctions or unique field marks that help citizen scientists identify individual butterfly species.

On Sept. 17, 28 volunteers fanned out across Northern Virginia to survey butterflies, part of the North American Butterfly Association's nationwide count and sponsored by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. Teams identified 35 species and 798 individual butterflies. Last year, surveyors saw more than 100 species in Northern Virginia, according to the survey's leader, Larry Meade. Their presence and numbers vary by season.

There are around 120 species in the U.S. mid-Atlantic.

The teams surveyed at the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, Mount Vernon Estate, River Farm, the Jackson M. Abbott Wetland Refuge at Fort Belvoir, Huntley Meadows Park, Green Spring Gardens, the Winkler Preserve, Mason District Park, Glencarlyn Park, Bluemont Park, Four Mile Run and Fort C.F. Smith.

"It was optimal butterfly weather," said Meade. "It was sunny and

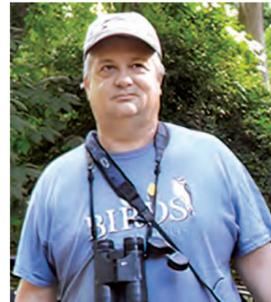


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Larry Meade organized and led the butterfly survey.

and be active. If it gets into the 90s, it's too hot. They like sun." Butterflies spread their wings and absorb the sun's heat, say experts.

September is a good month to observe butterflies, not just because of usually temperate weather and because some butterfly species are migrating through. The best-known migrant is probably the monarch, a four-inch butterfly that has orange wings with black veins and white edges. Through several generations, they make a two-way migration. In the fall, they fly from the central and eastern U.S. to central Mexico to overwinter. In the spring, they mate, leave Mexico for the U.S. and the next generation continues north. Their yellow-, white- and black-striped caterpillar feeds exclusively on milkweed

warm with a light breeze, but not really hot," he explained. "The low 80s are perfect. It's warm enough for them to get energy from the sun

leaves.

Meade was heartened to see the ocola skipper at River Farm, a butterfly with dull yellowish-brown wings, a 1 1/4-to-1 3/4-inch wingspan and a forewing much longer than its hindwing. Ocolas migrate to and through Northern Virginia from the south in the fall.

At Mount Vernon Estate, Meade's team spotted an American lady and a painted lady.

Swallowtails, striking two- to four-inch butterflies with forked hindwings, are always show-stoppers. The zebra swallowtail has black and white striped wings, hence the name. The eastern tiger swallowtail has bold yellow wings with black stripes. Males are yellow,

but females can be yellow or black.

Meade sees surveying not just as data collection, but a gateway to becoming engaged in nature.

Jessie Strother, retired Fairfax County urban forester, spent her Saturday counting butterflies because she said, "Identifying butterfly species and their numbers is one measure of the diversity and health of our increasingly compromised environment in Northern Virginia. Environmental protection and con-

servation need to be front and center of much of what we do today."

Master naturalist Judy Gallagher from Woodbridge also sees butterflies as indicators of the health of the environment. She co-authored "Butterflies of the Mid-Atlantic" with Bob Blakney.

Butterflies and moths are in the order Lepidoptera, a Greek word that means "scaly wings." Butterflies are active during the day

and have a knob or club on their antennae. Most moths fly at night and have thicker antennae that are sometimes feathery. Butterflies tend to be colorful and moths more drab brown or beige.

Meade is a dedicated conservationist and naturalist who lives in Merrifield and is president of the Northern Virginia Bird Club. Some gardeners are creating butterfly gardens, which can be from a window box to a multi-acre field.

The key is planting plants appropriate for butterflies, host plants for laying eggs and plants for caterpillars to feed on.

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail



Helpful Resources

- ❖ Butterfly Basics and Gardening, <https://www.naba.org/>
- ❖ Pollinator Gardening, www.xerces.org/bringbackthepollinators; www.audubonva.org/audubon-at-home
- ❖ Virginia Native Plant Finder, <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/native-plants-finder>
- ❖ Guide to Native Plants for Northern Virginia, <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/>



Ocola Skipper



Monarch Butterfly



American Lady Butterfly



Silvery Checkerspot



Peck's Skipper



Zebra Swallowtail

BUTTERFLIES PHOTOS BY LARRY MEADE

CALENDAR

NOW THRU NOV 15

Fruit Sale Signup. 7-11 p.m. Signup now for Fairfax Lions notices and discounts for Lions Club Fruit Sales in November and December. They sell fresh Florida oranges, mandarins, grapefruit; maple syrup, peanuts to raise funds for charity. Website: <https://www.fairfaxlions.org/citrus-sale-notification/>

NOW THRU NOV 17

ESL Class. 7-9 p.m. Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced level English classes. Classes will be in-person or online. Classes will meet twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Books are included in class cost.

NOW THRU OCT. 9

12th Annual Clay International, Vulcan Gallery, Aug. 6 - Oct. 9 2022, Workhouse Arts Center, 12th Annual Clay International exhibition. The juried exhibition represents the depth and breadth of contemporary functional and sculptural ceramic artworks being created throughout the country. Visit <https://www.workhousearts.org/clay-international-2022>

OCT. 1 TO NOV. 5

Workhouse Haunt: Nightmare Harvest. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. This year's Haunt, titled "Nightmare Harvest," will run on weekends from Saturday, Oct. 1 through Saturday, Nov. 5. Friday and Saturday hours are 7-11 p.m. and Sunday hours are 7-10 p.m. The Haunt will also perform on Halloween night, Monday, Oct. 31, from 7-9 p.m. Each Friday and Saturday night from Oct. 7 through Oct. 29, live bands will perform in the Rizer Pavilion near the Haunt Bar, where guests can purchase snacks and beverages. Tickets are now available for purchase and prices start at \$30 per person. Visit www.workhousearts.org for schedule and event details.

NOW THRU OCT. 17

Hummingbird Photo Exhibition. At Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria. For those who can't get enough of the beauty of hummingbirds, a group of local photographers are mounting an exhibition this summer at Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria. 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. At the Historic House at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria.

OCT. 6-10

Disney on Ice Presents Frozen and Encanto. At Eagle Bank Arena, 4500



John Bullard will appear at Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton on Saturday, Oct. 15.

Patriot Circle, Fairfax. Audiences will see Anna, Elsa, Mirabel, and the Madrigal family live, as well as fan favorites Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald, Goofy, and many more. Tickets: www.DisneyOnce.com.

FRIDAY/OCT. 7

A Taste of the Vine. 6:30-9:30 p.m. At Blenheim Civil War Interpretive Center, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Wine tastings provided by Slater Run Winery. An Historic Fairfax Fundraising Event.

SATURDAY/OCT. 8

Second Saturday Art Walk October 2022. 6 - 9 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Visit the Workhouse Monthly Featured Artists. All campus studio buildings will be open from and the artists there will be thrilled to chat about their works and processes. <https://www.workhousearts.org/>

SATURDAY/OCT. 8

Hearth Cooking Workshop. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At George Mason's Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck. Give the gift of cooking in a fireplace! Gunston Hall is excited welcome kid and adult duos for a two-and-a-half hour workshop in our hearth kitchen. Teams will make gingerbread, strawberry jam, and whipped cream. There are two workshops on October 8, one from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and one from 1:30-4 p.m. Visit the website: <https://gunstonhall.tix.com>

OCT. 8-9

Virginia Opera The Valkyrie. Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Mortals are caught up amidst struggles between capricious gods in Richard Wagner's iconic dramatic opera The Valkyrie, from his legendary "Ring" cycle. Virginia Opera boldly opens its 2022-2023 season with the classic, adapted from Norse mythology, following the story of the Volsung twins, who were separated at birth but later meet and fall in love.

SUNDAY/OCT. 9

Model Trains Running. 1-4 p.m. At The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. T-TRAK model trains (tabletop N gauge) will be on display and running at the Fairfax Station

Railroad Museum. Admission: Museum members and children 4 and under, free; children 5-12, \$3; adults 13 and older, \$5; special events, \$6. Seniors and military, active and retired, \$4. Information on the Museum and events, www.fairfax-station.org.

SUNDAY/OCT. 9

Clifton Day Festival. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. In the Town of Clifton, 7144 Main Street, Clifton. This year's festival will feature an outdoor marketplace with around 150 vendors. Live music, children's activities, train rides, and a beer & wine garden will add to the fun. Website: cliftonday.com

OCT. 11-15

Fall for the Book. At GMU's Fairfax Campus and around Fairfax County After two years of offering the festival virtually, Fall for the Book is thrilled to be back with both in-person and online events for the 24th year. The festival will be headlined by bestselling novelist Emily St. John Mandel, graphic novelist Gene Luen Yang, comic book heavy-weight Alan Moore, and champion goalkeeper Briana Scurry. Other featured authors include actress Sarah Edmondson, novelist Melissa Scholes Young, Planet Money host Mary Childs, meteorologist Matthew Cappucci, short story writer Morgan Talty, memoirist Rhajika Bhandari, and more. A special day of Children's Events will also take place on Saturday, October 8 in Old Town Hall as part of the City of Fairfax's Fall Festival. Visit www.FallfortheBook.org/schedule.

THURSDAY/OCT. 13

Visiting Filmmakers Series. 6 p.m. At Johnson Center Cinema at George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. Free screening of "Unapologetic", followed by a live Q&A with the filmmaker, Ashley O'Shay. Told through the lens of Janae and Bella, two fierce abolitionist leaders, Unapologetic is a deep look into the Movement for Black Lives, from the police murder of Rekia Boyd to the election of Mayor Lori Lightfoot. The film illuminates the love underpinning the anger and frustration that comes with being Black, queer women in the U.S., and elevates those who are most often leading the way while being denied the spotlight.



Levi Peterson coming out of the depths to scare at The Haunt at Workhouse Arts Center.

FRIDAY/OCT. 14

New Orchestra of Washington, Dia de Los Muertos. 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton, W16, McGuireWoods Gallery. A one-of-a-kind ensemble, performing as a small chamber orchestra, with flexible instrumentation, so that each program is attractive, inspirational and memorable. This time they will be performing a memorable "Day of the Dead" concert!

SATURDAY/OCT. 15

Children's Consignment Sale. Grace Weekday Preschool at 7434 Bath Street, Springfield is holding a children's consignment sale on Saturday, October 15, 2022 from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Cash only and all sales final.

SATURDAY/OCT. 15

John Bullard. 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton, W16, McGuireWoods Gallery. Inviting audiences to share in a transformative revelation and to experience the artistic marriage of banjo and classical music. "Absolutely enchanting," writes critic Graham Rickson of the UK-based The Arts Desk

SATURDAY/OCT. 22

Tour de Mount Vernon 2022 Meet Up at the Workhouse for a Community Bike Ride. The 7th Annual Community Bike Ride will be on Saturday, Oct. 22, 2022, at 8:30 a.m., starting and ending at the Workhouse Arts Center. The Tour de Mount Vernon brings cyclists on a fun ride through the southern

and central portions of the Mount Vernon District including a scenic route through Fort Belvoir. The route consists of paved roads, paved trails and has several challenging sections. Ride monitors and Fairfax County Police help with directions and keep everyone safe. Details and registration www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/tour-de-mount-vernon-2022

SATURDAY, OCT. 22

Adult Hearth Cooking. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at George Mason's Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck. Join the chefs at Gunston Hall for the ultimate slow cooking experience where they employ 18th-century cooking techniques to create period dishes over an open flame. \$125/person, \$100/member

SATURDAY, NOV. 5

Revolutionary War Day. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at George Mason's Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Mason Neck. Join Colonel Mason and his fellow Virginians as they support the war effort. This family-oriented program has activities for all ages that may be explored in whatever order desired. \$10/adult, \$8/child, 50% off for members

TUESDAY, NOV 15-17

Citrus Fruit Sale. 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. at the American Legion Parking Lot, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax. Fairfax Lions sell fresh Florida oranges, mandarins, grapefruit, maple syrup, peanuts; we raise funds for charity. Sign up now for notices and discounts on the web page.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VIRGINIAN

Seniors at the Virginian, a retirement community in Fairfax, will have an opportunity to participate in a new program designed to promote an intellectually, socially and physically active lifestyle.

Seniors Return to School

New program offers an opportunity for academic achievement and social connections.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

When Edna Godwin retired after 43 years as an English teacher she began to look for opportunities that would keep her connected to education. Now that she is no longer in front of the classroom, the 73-year-old Arlington resident is reversing her role and becoming a student.

“I’ve always been active. I’m a type A personality and I love learning as much as I love helping others learn,” said Godwin who lives in Arlington. “When I retired, I knew that I had to keep a schedule each day that included some sort of education and I needed to see friends or be around people.”

A group of local seniors will have an opportunity to return to school this Fall thanks to Virginian

Scholars, a new program that offers lifelong learning experiences for seniors who live in The Virginian, a retirement community in Fairfax. It was designed by Andrew Carle, a lecturer at Georgetown University and Founding Director of the Senior Housing Administration program at George Mason University. He called it “a perfect fit for an area that values learning.” The Census Bureau includes Arlington and Alexandria among the ten best educated areas in the United States.

Carle’s hope is that Virginian Scholars will offer seniors an intellectually, socially and physically active lifestyle. “[Thes] are important tools in the brain’s arsenal to help prevent cognitive decline,” said Linda Goldman, LCSW. “Lifelong learning, especially of totally new things, makes full use of this brain’s ability. This invigorates it and keeps it healthy in the process.”

In an effort to replicate a traditional college experience, seniors earn credit hours through classes, lectures, workshop, fitness and other activities not only at The Virginian, but from outside educational organizations such as the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at George Mason University, The Lifetime Learning Institute of Northern Virginia Community College and MasterClass, an online education platform.

For more information, call 703-385-9229.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

brook Road, Fairfax. Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced level English classes. Classes will be in-person or online. Classes will meet twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m. Books are included in class cost. Email: Heather@andberg.org.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and

are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

The Shepherd’s Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers’ Support Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with

dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact Jack Tarr at jtarr5@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

Haven of Northern Virginia provides support, compassion, information and resources to the bereaved and seriously ill. To become a Haven volunteer, please call 703-941-7000 to request an orientation. Volunteers must complete a 30-hour training and commit to one year of service answering Haven phones (2.5 hours weekly). Next training is scheduled for fall 2017.



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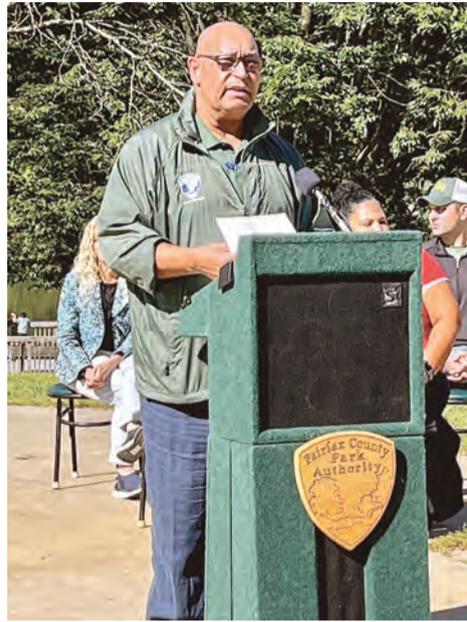
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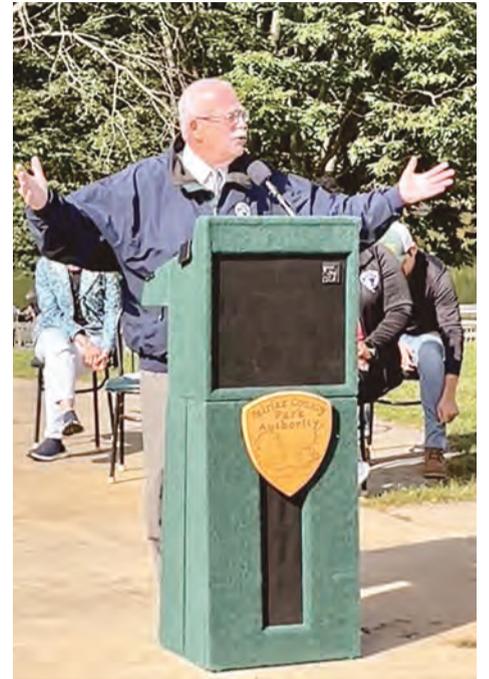
Jai Cole, executive director of Fairfax County Park Authority



William G. (Bill) Bouie, Chairman of the Fairfax County Park Authority Board and Hunter Mill representative



Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay



U.S. Rep Gerry Connolly (D-Va)

Director Completes Visits to 420 County Parks

Volunteers 'give back together' during National Public Land Day 2022.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

To know a park, you must visit it. On Sept. 24, Jai Cole met her goal of visiting all 420 county parks in her first year after being appointed executive director of the Fairfax County Park Authority in the fall of 2021. Cole completed her list and checked off the final park, number 420, Lake Fairfax in Reston, coinciding with National Public Lands Day. It is the nation's largest single-day volunteer event for public lands.



Jai Cole's children, Hannah Lalik, 6, and Joseph Lalik, 9, check out their mom's Park Tour poster depicting selfies and photos of others at some of the 420 parks she visited during her first year as Executive Director of Fairfax County Park Authority. Hannah and Joseph especially liked the cartoon of Mom, saying it looked just like her.

Standing at the park, her back to the lake and families fishing from the dock, Cole said that she spent her childhood in Reston. Its green and blue spaces, as well as those of Lake Fairfax, served as her playground. Part of her job for the past year had been to revert to her childhood self. From the fall of 2021 to the fall of 2022, Cole traipsed through the Park Authority's forests, lakes, wetlands, ponds, meadows, and streams. She gained first-hand knowledge of their assets, characteristics, and needs.

"I am a finisher, so if I start something, I finish it." She had asked herself how she could fight for something important to so many people if she didn't know about it. Cole described how she gained knowledge from staff, volunteers, and visitors.

"I think the main thing [of visiting all the parks] was seeing the reactions of people when they talk about a need for their park. I know my head is nodding because I have seen it, or we are already working on fixing that thing," Cole said.

Sitting in an office differs from visiting and seeing people using facilities, Cole said. She described parkgoers having fun getting healthy, children having fun with athletics, and others having fun being contemplative while walking through the forest.

"Sometimes in this business, we forget that we are in the business of fun. That is what we do," Cole said.

William G. "Bill" Bouie, Chairman of the Fairfax County Park Authority Board and Hunter Mill District representative, welcomed everyone to Lake Fairfax Park. "One of the crown jewels of the Park Authority where you can fish, walk, play, do all sorts



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

From left, U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, Franconia District Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk, and Bill Bouie, chairman of the Fairfax County Park Authority Board and Hunter Mill representative

Surprise announcement- full-size, in-line skating facility to open in Reston, the Caps and Washington Nationals

of things. The bottom line is it provides a multi-day experience of camping, skate park, classes, camps, everything."

Bouie paused before making an announcement. "We will be opening a full-size, in-line skating facility up on the upper field in partnership with the Washington Capitals and the National Hockey League," he said.

Bouie explained that since its inception in 1994, National Public Lands Day has traditionally been the single most significant day

of volunteerism in the nation. It promotes environmental stewardship and encourages the use of open space for education, recreation, and other benefits.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly said that Fairfax County has the right proportion of open and recreational space for people to live, work, and play. "We are creating an environmentally sensitive and vibrant community for all,"

SEE 420 COUNTY PARKS, PAGE 15
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Terrance Green, Park Authority, competes in Zero Turn Skill Test



Jordan Hernandez, Wastewater Management, attempts to pluck a tennis ball into the Bobcat bucket

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Jordan Simpson, Wastewater Management, makes a basket with the ball he picked from atop the hazard cone

Operator Skills Shine at Road-e-o

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Crounds of the former Nike missile site turned into a road-e-o arena on Sept. 28 as Fairfax County employees of the Park Authority, Public Schools, and Public Works competed in a maintenance equipment operation challenge.

The annual event, recognized by national associations, provided an op-

portunity for operators to gather and demonstrate their operating skills on several varieties of equipment. From large to small snow plows; from giant Knuckleboom cranes to Mini Excavators; and from Bobcats to Zero Turn mowers, employees moved the equipment through prescribed courses against the clock in tests of skill. Their demonstrated expertise can make all feel confident that professionals are at work in Fairfax County.

Storm Flooding Is Not Only a Risk for Coastal Areas

Homeowners everywhere eye flood insurance; measures to protect inland boats also recommended.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

As Hurricane Ian pushed up the coast after dumping massive rainfall everywhere in Florida, concerns remained about the aftermath, inland flooding and with it, flood insurance. Fairfax County has recommended flood insurance for some time now, and even has a push on the website.

Courtney Arroyo from the county emergency management program hosted a webinar on the county website to highlight concerns about flooding. She was joined by Bill Bradfield of FEMA. One point they both highlighted is that most home insurance policies do not cover flooding. "Everyone lives

in a flood zone," Bradfield said.

The webinar also explained the National Flood Insurance Program has a new Risk Rating 2.0 system, which impacts the insurance rates. Flood risk is looked at as well as each individual property's geographic location and building characteristics. The new Risk Rating 2.0 took effect for new policy holders on Oct. 1, 2021, and impacted existing policy holders on April 1, 2022.

FEMA said it's a new pricing methodology, Risk Rating 2.0, leverages industry best practices and cutting-edge technology to enable FEMA to deliver rates that are actuarially sound, equitable, easier to understand and better reflect a property's flood risk.

This was never more apparent than a

Cameron Run. Leo Funes lives between Huntington Avenue and the creek, and he's had water in the basement before so he bought flood insurance. "In 2006 there was a lot of flooding, 2011 too but now that there is a retaining wall, it doesn't seem that bad," he said.

Boats Impacted

Houses aren't the only worries. According to Boat US, a flood storm like Ian can damage boats on inland waters too. If a boat is moored to a stationary dock and the water level suddenly rises, the boat can get swamped and sink.

"Hurricane preparation is no longer an

flood in 2011 where homeowners in the Huntington area of Alexandria suffered damage from the rising waters on

issue just for coastal boaters," said BoatUS vice president of Public Affairs Scott Croft. "2011's Hurricane Irene showed us that storms can damage boats on freshwater lakes and rivers, or when stored in backyards, far from the coast."

The coastal boats are still in harm's way though, and this was seen in Fort Myers right after Ian went through, destroying docks and pushing boats right up to the boathouse and beyond, some landing on top of houses.

Scott Croft, Vice President Public Affairs at the Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS) noted that most recreational boat insurance policies are purchased on or shortly after purchase of the boat but waiting for a weather crisis is not a good move. He noted that many boat insurance companies temporarily stop sales of new policies in areas along the storm's predicted storm path.

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PHOTOS BY DON SWEENEY FCPA



Jana Joshi and Rashida Joshi of McLean

420 County Parks

FROM PAGE 12

he said. Connolly reminded everyone that the county would soon celebrate 10 percent of its landmass being Park Authority land.

“That reflects the values of a community that cares about creating open space opportunities and recreational opportunities for all of its residents.” “That is very consistent with the One Fairfax that the Board of Supervisors has adopted,” Connolly said.

Jeffrey C. McKay said, like many families in the county, he would benefit from visiting at least four county parks before the end of the day. That would be for his children’s soccer games and his usual mental health break on Saturday afternoons, a quiet walk through Huntley Meadows Park.

McKay said that the Park Authority was founded in 1950 with 15 acres, two employees, and a contribution of \$250 to support the park. “Today, we invested over \$80 million directly into the Fairfax County Park Authority. And when you add some of the other fees and other funds that come into the parks, you are talking about a \$100 million enterprise to run Fairfax County Public Parks,” McKay said. The Board of Supervisors is constantly expanding park space, improving facilities, and ensuring that all residents have affordable and, in most cases, free access to the parks, he said.

McKay addressed the urgent climate crisis, saying it requires the board to act. “We have put in place with our Board of Supervisors a goal of being carbon neutral by 2050.” Public open space, green space, preserving and protect-



Molly Norris of Vienna



Sayouba Nikiema of West Africa, currently living in Reston, volunteers with Sayyida Rahym of Reston.

ing elements of the environment are critical in that effort. “Parks play an essential role in achieving that in Fairfax County.”

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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 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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Cancer, Then and Now



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

When my brother was emergency-admitted to the hospital on July 16th, it was just a few days removed from my most recent every-three-months cancer scans. For the following two months or so, until his status was no longer day to day but rather marginally less urgent, I hadn't really focused/ thought too much about my own cancer-affected mortality. It was sort of on the back burner, for a change. And given my brother's tenuous grip on life for a while, it seemed bad form/ totally inappropriate to expend any mental energy on myself considering that he was in such distress (not breathing on his own, connected to a ventilator, 24-7 dialysis, just to name a few of the many life-sustaining medical marvels he was dependent on while in SICU). It was a sort of "all hands to the pump" kind of effort, to quote the Brits. And as the doctors and staff provided my brother round-the-clock care, the least I could do was harness whatever positive vibe I could muster in his direction.

Slowly, but surely, my brother began to rally. Over the course of the last month, he was disconnected from all life-sustaining machinery, taken off all medication and eventually transferred out of SICU into a regular hospital room. There his care was much less intense and where he began to really recuperate, enough so that a few weeks after his initial transfer there he received the penultimate transfer: to the adjacent rehab hospital with an eye toward the ultimate goal: release and back home. He was getting better every day and as he improved, we improved; in our mood and in our expectations for him. His semi-return to normal enabled me, subconsciously almost, to reconsider my own mortality once again. Not that that's anything new. It's quite old in fact, over 13 and half years old, ever since I was originally diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer in Feb. 2009. But for the last two months, it's been hardly a blip on my internal radar. My attention had been elsewhere.

And I must admit, in a weird kind of way, it was almost a relief to have something else to worry about for a change other than my own mortality. To clarify, it's not as if I forgot that I had cancer, but I was able to not think about all the time, if you know what I mean? I was thinking of my brother, not me. It felt unselfish which for a cancer patient is sometimes a challenging emotion to control. I remember the first bit of unsolicited advice I received from a friend (and fellow cancer patient) after she learned about my diagnosis: "Kenny" she said, "it's all about you now." Words to live by, for sure. Because a cancer diagnosis changes you in every way imaginable and in that aren't so imaginable. It's your life now – full time. As such, it's easy to lose oneself in all the demands and anxiety that characterize a cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment/aftercare. Sometimes, it's helpful to have a diversion of sorts; to get your mind off your own troubles and try to help another cope. In that way, my brother's hospitalization and subsequent months' long recovery has been instructive. It turns out that even though I have cancer, it doesn't prevent me from doing the right thing on someone else's behalf. For almost six weeks, along with my sister-in-law, Vanessa, we visited my brother in the hospital every day, splitting shifts, so to speak. It wasn't about me. It was about my brother. It felt good to be there.

This week, if all goes according to plan, my brother will finally be home, after almost 10 weeks in the hospital. And with his return home (which itself will present any number of challenges for both Richard and his wife, Vanessa), my own health once again becomes top of mind. He has been in the hospital so long that low and behold, it's time for my quarterly scans already. The party, such as it was, is officially over. With my scans return all the usual mortality fears and questions. One of these days, I'm going to receive the wrong result. After all, when my diagnosis was changed to thyroid cancer three years ago, the medication I was prescribed (the best available at the time) had an effective time of three years or so. We're past that. Now that my brother is out of the hospital – or about to be, I'm back to thinking about me and my cancer and wondering if trouble is lurking.

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

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