

Alexandria Gazette Packet



25 CENTS

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FEBRUARY 2, 2023

A Champion for Children CAC posthumously honors Kerry Donley, raises \$117k.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Kerry Donley was known for his commitment to service, both as a politician and as a member of the community he called home for most of his life. On Jan. 28, Donley was posthumously honored with the 2023 Champion for Children award by the Center for Alexandria's Children, an organization he supported for several years as board chair up until his sudden death last July at the age of 66.

"I am overwhelmed by the community's support for the event," said CAC board chair Melissa Poretz Riddy. "So many friends, neighbors, partners and community members showed up to celebrate Kerry Donley's impact on the City of Alexandria."

Held at the Torpedo Factory Art Center, more than 250 people attended the gala. It was the first in-person event for the organization in three years and raised \$117,000 for the CAC, which is Alexandria's primary resource for the prevention, investigation and treatment of child abuse.

"Kerry was a fierce advocate for our Learn & PlayGroup Programs," said CAC Executive Director Giselle Pelaez of the program that serves more than 1,000 children and families each year. "He knew that when we provide parents with the social support, knowledge of parenting and child development, and concrete resources they need to cope

with stress and nurture their children, we ensure a community of strong families and safe children where each Alexandria child is able to grow to their full potential."

Donley's widow Eva and their five daughters — Kaitlen, Kristin, Colleen, Cara and Kelsey — were on hand to accept the award recognizing Donley's contributions to the organization. Kristin Donley recently joined the CAC board to follow in her father's footsteps.

Presenting sponsors of the event included the Bruhn-Morris Family Foundation and Alexandria Toyota.

"Kerry was a friend and a fierce advocate for children in the community," said Andrew Mitchell, Director of Operations at Alexandria Toyota. "We hope to continue Kerry's legacy by supporting the organizations that he supported."

Eva Donley and the Donley family received one of two framed Champion for Children tributes. The second will hang

in the Center's new office within the Redella S. "Del" Pepper Community Center.

"The connection between Kerry and the work of the Center was a profound one," added Riddy. "Kerry was an amazing board chair, friend, mentor and human. He was a tremendous presence within our schools, city council, nonprofits and a champion for children in particular."

For more information or to make a donation in honor of Donley, visit www.centerforalexandriachildren.org.

"The connection between Kerry and the work of the Center was a profound one."
— CAC board chair Melissa Poretz Riddy



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Eva Donley, surrounded by her daughters, speaks about her late husband Kerry's support for the Center for Alexandria's Children at the CAC gala Jan. 28 at the Torpedo Factory Art Center.



Friends of the Donley sisters enjoy the Center for Alexandria's Children gala Jan. 28 at the Torpedo Factory Art Center.



Former Congressman Jim Moran, left, talks with Cara Donley at the CAC gala Jan. 28.



Eva Donley, third from right, with daughters Kaitlen, Kristin, Colleen, Cara and Kelsey, holds the Champion for Children award presented posthumously to her late husband Kerry Donley.



David Riddy, CAC board chair Melissa Riddy, Michael Manuel and Jonathan Price at the Center for Alexandria's Children gala Jan. 28 at the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

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George Pera

Prominent pastor, community leader dies at 93.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

George Pera had a calling. Raised by a Presbyterian father and Roman Catholic mother, Pera grew up believing that religion meant service, something he dedicated his life to as he traveled the world before settling in Alexandria as senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

“The God I worship calls people to make human life more human in whatever profession one chooses,” said Pera when he was selected as a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2008. “I believe the church is in the world to serve the world. That sense was what propelled me into becoming as involved as I have been.”

Pera, who was named Pastor-Emeritus following his retirement at Westminster Presbyterian in 1995, died Jan. 17 at his home at Goodwin House Alexandria. He was 93.

“Dad always had this huge interest in everything,” said Pera’s daughter Tracey. “He had a sharp mind and especially enjoyed being a father and grandfather in his retirement.”

George Andrew Pera was born Dec. 16, 1929, in Pittsburgh to A. George Pera and Mary Ely Pera. He graduated from Peabody High School and the University of Pittsburgh before continuing his studies at Princeton Theological Seminary where he was named the first ever Teaching Fellow while still a degree candidate.

Pera trained in clinical pastoral counseling at Bellevue Hospital in New York City and with famed Swiss physician and psychiatrist Dr. Paul Tournier in Geneva.

He served as chaplain at Ohio State University and New York University and as associate pastor at Central Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue.

It was during his time in New York City that he met his future bride, Nancy Umholtz, on a blind date. They wed in Manhattan on New Year’s Eve in 1959 and were married for 58 years until Nancy’s death on Jan. 20, 2017.

“Mom and Dad didn’t have much of a reception after their wedding ceremony,” said Tracey Pera. “It was basically milk and cookies so after that mom made up for it and always celebrated big.”

In 1964, Pera moved to Greenwich, Conn., where he served as



George Pera, a Living Legend of Alexandria, died Jan. 17 at the age of 93.



George and Nancy Pera at the wedding of their daughter Tracey.



George and Nancy Pera with children Tracey and David in an undated family photo.

Senior Pastor and Head of Staff of First Presbyterian Church until 1977.

From 1977 to 1980 he was the senior pastor of the The American

Church in London. He preached the first American Thanksgiving Day services ever held in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Cathedral.

Pera studied at Cambridge University and in London was a student of Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the world-wide hospice movement. He holds three honorary degrees: Doctor of Divinity, and Doctor of Humane Letters and Doctor of Literature.

Pera relocated to Alexandria in 1980, where for 15 years he was senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

“Ahead of the trend, George Pera had the foresight to create a staff position to advocate for and assist senior adults,” said Sandy Calhoun, who at the time was Westminster’s Director of Seniors’ Ministries. “George Pera inspired his congregation to worship, to care, to be informed, and to embrace life. His unique blend of faith, erudition, humor, enthusiasm and compassion benefited not only the members of Westminster but also the greater Alexandria community.”

Pera went on to serve as guest preacher at the American Church in Paris and as interim pastor at a Calvary Presbyterian of Alexandria.

Pera is a past-president of Senior Services of Alexandria, a co-founder and past chair of Agenda: Alexandria, and served on Alexandria’s 250th Anniversary Committee. He was board president of Elder Crafters of Alexandria and chair of the Inova Alexandria Hospital Pastoral Care Fund.

Pera was a board member of the Inova Alexandria Hospital Foundation and served on the develop-

ment committee of A.L.I.V.E!

In 2003, Pera was the recipient of The Alexandria Commission on Aging’s Annie B. Rose Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2010 he received the Julia Johns Award of Distinction by the Inova Alexandria Hospital Foundation. He will be honored posthumously at the Senior Services of Alexandria 55th Anniversary Gala on March 25.

Pera is survived by his daughter Tracey (Pete) Sanders of Memphis, Tenn.; son, David Pera of Falls Church, and granddaughter Hope Sanders of Washington, DC. He is also survived by his sister, Mary Goodwin and nephew David (Pam) Goodwin, of Pittsburgh, and their daughters Rachel and Kate.

A memorial service will be held Feb. 15 at 2 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2701 Cameron Mills Road. The service may be viewed online at <http://bit.ly/3kKi0Sc>. A private interment at First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich will take place at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Senior Services of Alexandria or Pastoral Care Services at Inova Alexandria Hospital.

“As you write about George, you have to include Nancy,” said Pera’s son-in-law Pete Sanders. “They were both wonderful people in my life.

George especially was a great source of advice for me. He believed in the common good, the civic good, and got behind a lot of good causes. That is what made him so important for the communities he served.”

Putting the General in the General Laws and Technology Committee

BY SEN. ADAM P. EBBIN

As the General Assembly nears the midway point of the Legislative Session, committee dockets balloon with oft-amended bills on some of the more substantial and complicated issues of the session. Members and interest groups, searching for consensus, known as “peace in the valley” in General Assembly parlance, are coming to final agreements, or pushing forward against opposition in committee. As the Chairman of the Senate General Laws and Technology Committee, I have the opportunity to set committee dockets and work with stakeholders on varied issues before they come before the committee as a whole. This week has been especially interesting as we tackle the issues of Virginia’s gaming industry, affordable housing access, workforce development, and even the naming of an official Virginia State pony (the proposed icon is the Chincoteague pony).

Since Virginia made its first foray into expanded options for gaming several years ago, we have seen a drastic increase in the size and diversity of our gaming industry. While these forms of gaming have already generated a great deal of economic development and revenue for the state, there have been concerning trends in increased gambling addiction, and unclear effects on lower income and young Virginians. While there are benefits to the gaming industry, I do not believe that we should view it as a panacea. I was glad to see two proposals which would have dramatically expanded the industry – one to place a casino in northern Virginia, and one to permanently authorize and allow the expanded placement of slot machines in restaurants and convenience stores – struck from the committee docket.

Over the course of the session



Ebbin

the committee has taken up proposals to alter the state’s regulations on our building code inspectors, and removing licensing requirements for landscape architects, geologists, interior designers, and auctioneers, among others – part of a push by the Governor to arbitrarily reduce regulations by 25% over his term. We have tackled a number of proposals to further reduce the likelihood of Virginians being evicted or denied housing, a long time priority of mine. The committee has also reviewed a proposal to create television production grant funds to incentivize more production of streaming and cable shows like Dopesick. There has also been a significant focus on the treatment of our veterans, and creating pathways for novel treatments of PTSD such as hyperbaric oxygen therapy. During the first week of session, we passed legislation to require the Department of Emer-

gency Management to stand up a comprehensive emergency heat response plan in order to more adequately protect Virginians most vulnerable residents – the infirm, elderly, and homeless, from major heat events, and more recently, passed legislation expanding our local government advisory boards to meet virtually, improving citizen participation and diversity in membership by lowering the barriers to attend and be a member of these committees.

In the coming week we will complete our work on these diverse topics, as well as delving into state procurement, regulations for construction contracts, and even proposals from Governor Youngkin to ban the use of TikTok on state devices – truly putting the “general” in General Laws. I look forward to finishing the work of the Senate, and welcoming a new and equally diverse set of bills to my committee from my House colleagues in the coming weeks.

It is my continued honor to serve the 30th District.

Important Bills Are Moving in the State Legislature

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL (D-36)

After three weeks into this General Assembly session, many of my bills are moving through committees or have been approved by the Senate and sent to the House of Delegates.

Stronger Consumer Protections

The regulation of monopoly utilities is one of the most complex topics for crafting good policy. Virginia’s two investor-owned utilities, Dominion Power and Appalachian Power, have combined revenues of nearly \$20 billion from their customers. That is nearly half the state’s \$43.5 billion in General Fund revenues, but unfortunately, the legislature invests very little time

supervising this spending by Virginia’s residents and businesses.

Over the last decade, criticism of utility policy-making has risen, especially in compressed, 45 to 60-day sessions during which time there is limited public input. The Division of Legislative Services provides us an attorney who is prohibited from giving policy advice, leaving us to educate ourselves as best we can and largely dependent on stakeholder lobbyists and interest groups for policy analysis or other information. Working through the facts, noise and conflict is often very difficult. There has to be a better way.



Surovell

This is why I introduced legislation to reinvigorate the Utility Regulation Commission that was created in 2003 to oversee utility policy. It has only met a handful of times in the last ten years and has no staff. My legislation would require the commission to conduct regular meetings, conduct independent studies, review potential legislative options, receive annual reports from our utility regulators and have seven professional staffers. Conservation advocates argue this could become the most important energy policy measure introduced in this session. The Senate Commerce and Labor Committee

unanimously approved the bill this week. It will be reviewed in the Finance Committee this week before moving on to the full Senate.

The Virginia Comptroller recently reinterpreted an exemption in the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and began withholding the names of government employees using government credit cards. With the support of the Virginia Open Government Coalition, I have introduced a bill to require names to be disclosed. Two Senate committees passed the bill and the full Senate will consider it this week.

Accepting All of Us

Earlier this year, Gov. Glenn Youngkin issued guidance to schools SEE IMPORTANT BILLS, PAGE 5

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Offensive to Keep Street Names

To the Editor:

The two Letters to the Editor in your Jan. 26 edition which objected to the renaming of Alexandria streets are particularly objectionable. Both letters, which seem to be tone-deaf and insensitive to the larger community around them,

conveniently minimize the fact that the streets in question honor individuals who led the fight AGAINST the United States in a war – the country’s deadliest – whose main purpose was to perpetuate the assumption that it is legally or morally defensible to support the enslavement of other human beings. This should be offensive to everyone, regardless of color. And no, these names are not just “generic” family names, they SPECIFICALLY refer to the leaders

of that other country and its war against the United States. I wonder if the writers of those letters would feel that streets named Hitler, Mussolini, Tse Tung, Chi Minh, etc. would be okay with them.

Stephen Leeds
Alexandria

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 5

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OPINION

Important Bills Are Moving in the State Legislature

FROM PAGE 4

addressing parental notification of books that contain potentially obscene material used in educational settings. However, his guidance used a definition from a state law that prohibits the sale or loan of obscene books to children that labels any depiction of homosexuality as "sexual conduct," even a book just depicts a gay couple eating dinner or playing golf. This statutory language reflects ancient prejudices that sought to dehumanize gay Virginians as deviants instead of normal human beings. The Senate passed my legislation to remove any depiction of homosexuality from the Code of Virginia on a bipartisan vote.

On a bipartisan vote, the Senate also passed my bill to expand the "Lemon Law" to Virginia's small

businesses so that manufacturers will be required to deal with defective work trucks or passenger vans.

More College Scholarships

In the early 1990s, Congress authorized states to create tax-deferred college savings plans which are now called "529 Plans." Virginia was one of the first states in America to create a plan. The state partnered with American Funds and now has the most assets under management in America today. Ninety-four percent of participants in the mutual fund-style component of the plan are residents of other states.

Last year, Virginia's independent auditor, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) studied Virginia's 529 Plan with independent actuaries and deter-

mined that the plan had a \$1.6 billion actuarial surplus that could be available for appropriation. Forty percent of these funds came largely from out-of-state investors and sixty percent derives from unspent revenues in Virginia's Prepaid Tuition Plan. I introduced legislation to create a new endowment to be funded by this surplus which would eventually generate about 2,500 full scholarships per year to Pell Grant-eligible Virginia college students. A Senate committee will hold a hearing, the first level of consideration, this week.

Please complete my constituent survey at www.scottsuovell.org/survey. As always, send me an email at scott@scottsuovell.org to share your views and suggestions or for constituent services.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM PAGE 4

History Weighs the Full Range on Street Renaming

In 2016 the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Confederate Memorials and Street Names recommended and city council concurred with renaming portions of Route 1 (which the city and later the Commonwealth renamed as Richmond Highway) and allowing the typical City renam-

ing process, requiring three-quarters of street residents to petition for a change, for all other streets potentially named for Confederates. In 2021, city hall temporarily reduced the signature requirement to only one-quarter for one year, implicitly requiring a kind of supermajority to keep these street names, but the time period elapsed without any such successful renaming petition being filed. Ignoring these precedents, which presumably he had supported, Mayor Wilson on Jan. 10 proposed a scheme

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 6



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season

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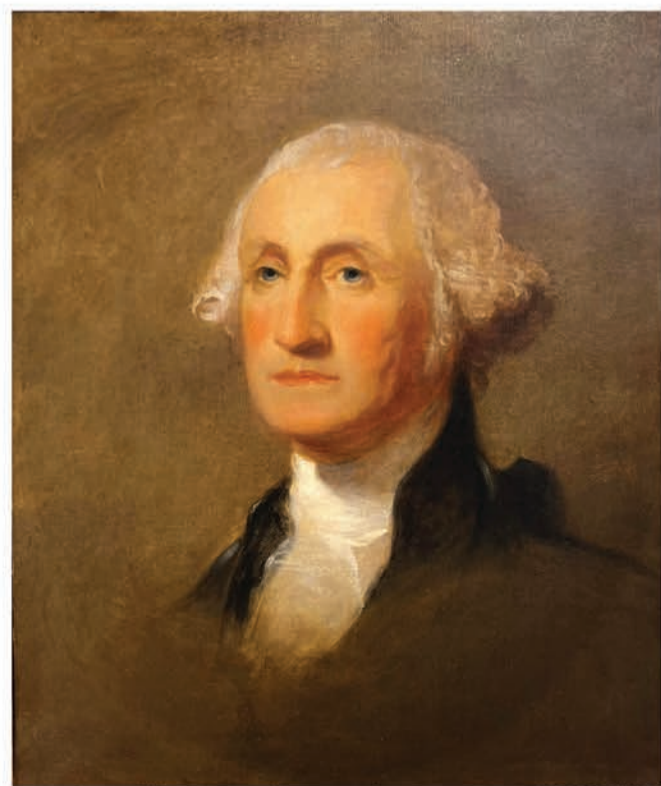
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PHOTO BY ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA)

A clever cat named Jazz learned several tricks while at the AWLA, but his excess weight may have slowed his adoption.



PHOTO BY DESILVA STUDIOS

Josie arrived at the AWLA barely able to walk because of arthritis and excess weight. Diligent work by staff and volunteers got her moving — and adopted.

Excess Weight Can Be Harmful to Pets

BY BARBARA S. MOFFET
ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

Are those jeans suddenly feeling a little snug? Just like with humans, weight gain can creep up on our pets and lead to many kinds of health problems, some of which can be very serious. But some simple changes can make a world of difference in a pet's health.

"Extra weight can strain joints, change body chemistry, cause the heart to work harder and even affect an animal's ability to receive treatment for health conditions, especially if surgery is needed," said Gina Hardter, Director of Marketing & Communications at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA). She said the AWLA team provides a healthy mix and amount of food for all animals in their care and consults the staff veterinarian about animals' weight issues.

Often it's overfeeding by well-meaning humans that causes a pet to put on extra pounds. Some pet owners don't take calories into consideration when rewarding a pet with treats. "Just a few full-size strips of bacon-style treats for a dog can be the caloric equivalent of four doughnuts to an average-sized dog," she said. Those same treats can represent nearly half of a dog's entire daily calories, even more for a smaller pup.

It can be easy for a pet to slip from a healthy range to overweight and even obesity, Hardter said. Some common signs of weight gain in a pet can be no visible waist, lack of energy, trouble climbing stairs, increased panting and changes in appearance such as a dry or oily coat.

For example, one young dog who came to the AWLA weighing 100 pounds was deemed about 20 pounds overweight, Hardter said. He needed surgery on both of his back knees but was not a candidate for the procedure because his weight would have made recuperation impossible in the shelter environment. A five-year-old cat named Jazz awed people online with his ability to learn tricks through clicker training, but that



PHOTO BY DESILVA STUDIOS

Cats can easily slip from having a normal weight to obesity, says the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. Some animals gain weight as a result of overfeeding by well-meaning humans.

didn't translate into adoption interest, perhaps in part because Jazz was considered overweight for his size. Potential adopters at the AWLA may be intimidated by bringing home and working with a pet who needs to lose weight, but helping an animal successfully lose weight and become healthier can be highly rewarding.

A pet's size can play into the amount of weight they can gain safely. While adding a pound or two may not be significant for a large-breed dog, it can be a huge shift for an animal weighing only 10 pounds. Another important factor in weight gain is the pet's age. Just like people, when pets age, their body chemistry changes in a variety of ways, as do their daily energy needs. They may also slow down and require fewer daily calories. A veterinarian may recommend a change in diet for a senior pet to adjust for these changes.

Before making any significant adjustments in a pet's diet to lose weight, owners should consult their veterinarian, as weight gain may not be related to diet at all. Vets may test an animal for conditions like hypothyroidism, which may cause a pet to gain weight. Additionally, some overweight pets may develop diabetes and require a specialized diet.

Besides changes to diet, many overweight pets can benefit from gradually stepping up their exercise routine, such as short walks for dogs and playing with wands and other toys for cats. A dog named Josie arrived at the AWLA barely able to walk as a result of arthritis and excess weight. The staff and volunteers looked for creative ways to get her moving, playing with toys and eventually taking short but frequent walks.

When Josie was adopted, her new owners were also provided with guidance on how to keep Josie moving on her healthy path.

With a little work and extra attention, pet owners can help their beloved friends achieve and maintain an appropriate weight, resulting in better health, greater mobility and a longer life. Even a small change in weight can greatly improve quality of life, and it's never too late to start.

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is a local 501(c)(3) organization that operates the Vola Lawson Animal Shelter, Alexandria's only open-access animal shelter. The AWLA impacts the lives of thousands of animals each year through adoptions and other programs. The AWLA also helps Alexandrians with questions about wildlife in the community. More than half of the AWLA's budget is composed of donations. More information can be found at AlexandriaAnimals.org.

whereby three such streets would be renamed each year, notwithstanding their residents' objections. The proposal would reverse the city council's earlier decision to leave street namings to the city's regular legal process.

The Mayor's proposal should be viewed as political rhetoric rather than history because history weighs the full range of facts and interpretations, whereas the mayor's proposal presents selectively skewed assertions about the historic figures for whom three streets are now named. He would task the Office of Historic Alexandria with renaming recommendations, but Office of Historic Alexandria staff pointing out the following countervailing factors would risk their jobs, given that the mayor has told them up front what the facts are. Among the facts the mayor omitted are:

- ❖ Quantrell Avenue: Far from "executing nearly 200 men and boys" (100,000 Union soldiers were age 15 or under) during William Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Kansas, typically they were Jayhawkers (a Union-allied guerrilla group which had committed similar actions in nearby Missouri).

- ❖ Forrest Street (whose name easily could be adjusted by dropping an "r"): Former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest, as the Ku Klux Klan's first "Grand Wizard," after only a year, faced with an ungovernable membership employing methods he disapproved, ordered the Klan dissolved and their costumes destroyed, and withdrew from participation, but few Klansmen complied.

- ❖ Taney Avenue: Unlike the much younger personages animating the years just before, during, and after the American Civil War, Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney was born during the American Revolution and became politically active while many of the Revolution generation were still circulating, so he had better insight into their intent. Thomas Jefferson, for example, did not even realize slavery would become controversial for almost a half century (cf. his "Fire Bell in the Night" letter). Taney's Dred Scott decision's reasoning persuaded Lincoln and other abolitionists that constitutional amendments were needed to expand civil rights to Blacks. Taney remained loyal to the Union until his death and, therefore, could not be considered a Confederate, even if his strict adherence to the Constitution frustrated Lincoln.

The Mayor's criticism of Chief Justice Roger Taney's reasoning implicitly indicts judicial integrity and independence, where courts are supposed to interpret law based on the framers' intent. Instead, Mayor Wilson would have a politicized court making decisions based presumably on a guess as to how reasoning might be viewed in the unforeseeable future, a task so untenable as to result in arbitrary and capricious jurisprudence.

City hall's handling of this topic is a case study in bad faith where decisions are made before the public hearing and where facts are not fairly weighed, but cherry picked to support a politically predetermined outcome.

Dino Drudi
Alexandria

OBITUARY

Gary Oelze

Legendary Birchmere owner dies at 80.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Gary Oelze, who helped transform the Birchmere Music Hall from an off-beat folk and bluegrass honky-tonk into a world-renowned performance venue, died Jan. 23 at his home in Alexandria. He was 80.

Oelze, who suffered two strokes in the last year, died of congestive heart failure.

Gary Hagan Oelze was born in Owensboro, Ky., on Aug. 24, 1942. He took up guitar in his teens and performed with local musicians at square dances. He relocated to the DC area in 1963 following his discharge from the U.S. Air Force.

While working at a People's Drug Store, Oelze was offered a job that included stock in a restaurant in Shirlington. Now located in the Arlandria area of Alexandria, the Birchmere first opened in 1966. It moved to Alexandria in 1981 and by 1982 was dubbed "the area's premier bluegrass club" by the New York Times.

Acts such as Jerry Jeff Walker, John Hiatt, Roseanne Cash, Emmylou Harris, Keiko Matsui, Maysa Leak and saxophonist Euge Groove performed regularly. Ray Charles gave his last performance at the Birchmere while Johnny Cash performed one of his only known club shows there.

Oelze also brought to the stage the bluegrass group The Seldom Scene, who played every Thursday night for 20 years drawing people from all over the country to Alexandria.

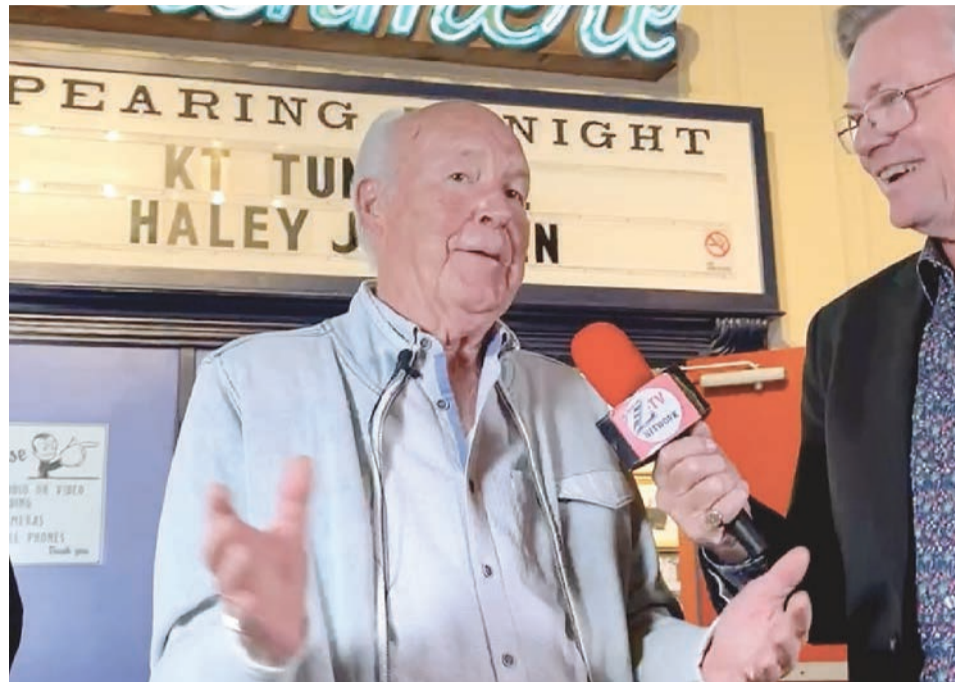


PHOTO BY LUCELLE O'FLAHERTY/THE ZEBRA PRESS

The Birchmere owner and operator Gary Oelze, left, is interviewed by Living on Music's Steve Houk upon the release of their book, "All Roads Lead to the Birchmere" in November 2021. Oelze died Jan. 23 at the age of 80.

The Birchmere became a place for up-and-comers like Mary Chapin Carpenter and Grammy Award-winner Vince Gill, who got his start at the Birchmere, performing there when he was just 17. Regular returning celebrity entertainers include Ricky Skaggs, Country Gentlemen, and Charles Esten.

In November 2021, Oelze and music writer Stephen Moore released their book, "All

Roads Lead to The Birchmere," which shares the history of the popular venue. In March of 2022, the Virginia State Senate recognized Oelze with a proclamation commending The Birchmere for its contributions to cultural life in Northern Virginia.

Despite live entertainment venues being one of the hardest hit industries during the pandemic, Oelze continued

paying all of his employees despite the economic challenges.

"I was lucky to know Gary," said Mary Wadland, publisher of The Zebra Press. "I talked to him during the pandemic and asked how he was doing. He never laid off anyone he said, and he was having to sell off personal assets to keep afloat, but he told me 'The Birchmere is bigger than just me. It's about the employees – we are a family – and the fans – and the artists themselves. Birchmere is a home for many. It has to keep going.'"

"The Birchmere is bigger than just me. It is a home for many. It has to keep going."
— Birchmere owner Gary Oelze

Survivors included his wife of 10 years, the former Susan Pilchard; three children from his first marriage, Carrie Oelze of Boca Raton, Fla., Cheryl Oelze of Centreville, Va., and Vick Oelze of Sanford, N.C.; a step-daughter, Kelly Pilchard of New York City; three brothers; four grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

A funeral service will be held Feb. 6 at 11 a.m. at Christ Church, 118 N. Washington St. A Celebration of Life will be held that evening, Feb. 6, from 5-8 p.m. at the Birchmere, 3701 Mount Vernon Ave.

ALEXANDRIA CITY NEWS BRIEFS

'Secure the Building' Morphs to Evacuation at ACHS

Peter Balas, executive principal of Alexandria City High School, sent messages to school families more than once on Wednesday, Feb 1 to let them know about security threats at the school. At 2:25 p.m., Balas wrote, students and staff at the Alexandria City High School (ACHS) King Street campus were evacuated in response to a bomb threat received by Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). This occurred while the ACHS King Street and Minnie Howard campuses were already under the "secure the building" status.

The Alexandria Police Department and Alexandria Fire Department were on site and working with ACHS administration, ACPS leadership and the ACPS Office of Safety and Security Services.

Students were evacuated from the King Street Campus to designated areas outside, and ACPS staff sent buses early to both campuses for an accelerated afternoon dismissal. At 2:45 p.m., the "secure the building" status was lifted at the Minnie Howard Campus. As a result, students were able to leave both campuses early, depending on the arrival of the buses.

Families were asked not to come to these ACHS campuses unless it was their

normal pick-up process to come to campus and pick-up students. Alexandria Police were directing departures.

All after school and evening activities scheduled for the day at the ACHS King Street and Minnie Howard campuses were canceled, including athletics, clubs, theatrical or musical or other activities plus any scheduled community activities.

This update follows an earlier message to advise families that both of these ACHS campuses were placed on "secure the building" status due to a phone threat, which means that the school day continues on a normal schedule inside the school but no one is allowed to enter or leave the school while the building remains secured.

Fatal Shooting of Teen Results in Arrest

The Alexandria Police Department is investigating a deadly shooting incident that occurred Friday, Jan. 27, 2023, in the 4600 block of Kenmore Avenue.

At approximately 11:29 p.m. APD Officers were dispatched to a shots fired call for service in the 4600 block of Kenmore Avenue. Upon arrival, police discovered one victim, a 17-year-old juvenile male, non-city resident, with upper body trauma from an apparent gunshot wound. The victim was then transported to the hospital and later was pronounced dead.

APD has made one arrest in connection with this incident of a 17-year-old juvenile male, an Arlington County resident. The male was charged with possession of a firearm by a person under 18.

This incident remains under investigation and APD is asking anyone who may have information related to this case to contact Detective Matthew Kramarik via phone at 703.746.6650, email at Matthew.Kramarik@Alexandriava.gov, or call our non-emergency line at 703.746.4444. Tips can be anonymous.

2-Alarm Highrise Fire Causes \$400K in Damages

On Saturday, Jan. 28, at approximately 9:53 a.m., fire and rescue units were dispatched to the 5300 block of Holmes Run Parkway for a highrise building fire. Units arrived on scene and reported a fire in a unit on the fourth floor, upgrading the incident to a second alarm. Firefighters worked quickly to extinguish the fire. The residence was unoccupied at the time of the fire. First responders from Arlington and Fairfax counties also responded to the incident.

AFD's Fire Marshal's Office conducted an origin and cause investigation and determined that the fire was accidental in nature with the probable cause determined to be spontaneous ignition from discarded rags

and painting materials. The area of origin was in a closet where several paint cans and other painting supplies were found in the fire debris. The fire alarm system did not function at the time of the incident, despite multiple pull stations being activated. Upon further investigation, fire marshals determined that the system had been shut off by the main power switch. The switch was turned back on, and the alarm system reset and restored to service. Fire marshals instructed building management to have the alarm system checked to ensure there are no faults or malfunctions.

Assistance from American Red Cross was not requested, and residents affected by the incident made arrangements for relocation. One civilian experienced non-life-threatening injuries as a result of a physical hazard at the scene and was transported to an area hospital. No first responders were injured as a result of the incident.

The residence where the fire originated was condemned, and additional units in the building experienced water damage. The Fire Marshal's Office notified the Office of Code Administration. The fire caused approximately \$300,000 in damages to the unit and an additional estimated \$100,000 in water damage.

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APPETITE

5 Dates to Circle in February

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

February may be short on days, but it's packed with things to do. From brewery birthdays to Valentine's (and Galentine's) events to drag brunch, here are some of the month's best bets.

Port City Brewing's Twelfth Anniversary Celebration, Feb. 3

Has it been a dozen years already since Port City opened its doors? To celebrate, the brewery is bringing back its beloved Colossal Two, an imperial smoked porter. The Two first debuted to celebrate the brewery's second anniversary – a decade later, its popularity hasn't waned. Along with the Colossal Two release, Port City is celebrating with a weekend of music and food trucks beginning Friday night and proceeding through Saturday. 3950 Wheeler Ave.

The Lost Girls Drag Brunch at Lost Boy Cider, Feb. 5

Join the Lost Girls and Millie Meringue for a drag brunch at Lost Boy Cider and kick off the day with some festive flair. Enjoy the morning sans unlimited brunch for \$15 (your ticket gets you one complimentary cider), or go for the gusto with a \$25 unlimited brunch from Whiskey and Oyster, featuring scrambled eggs, potatoes, bacon, sausage, grits and more. 317 Hooffs Run Drive. 10 a.m.-noon.

Valentine's Day Celebration With Wine and Chocolate Pairing at Mount Purrnon, Feb. 12

Before the Super Bowl kicks off later in the evening, why not take your beloved out for some chocolate, wine – and cat time? Mount Purrnon knows just how to get to the heart of the matter with its pairing event. Enjoy some specially curated treats and then cuddle with your new favorite felines. 109 S. Alfred St. Noon-6 p.m. \$20 for wine and chocolate; \$40 for wine, chocolate and an hour with the cats.

Taylor Swift Night at Hen Quarter, Feb. 13

Where are our Swifties at? Hen Quarter is kicking off a week celebrating love with its "Galentine's"-inspired evening devoted to T-Swift herself. Sip on Taylor-themed cocktails like London Boy and The Archer, settle down to a three-course meal and then groove all night to all of Taylor Swift's hits. 801 King St. 5-10 p.m. \$45.

Beer-Themed Trivia Night at Del Ray Pizzeria, Feb. 26

Think you know a thing or two about frosty brews? Try your skill at Del Ray Pizzeria's beer-themed trivia night and put your knowledge to the test. Order up some piping-hot pies – and maybe a beer or two, for homework, of course – and may the best team win. 2218 Mount Vernon Ave. 5-8 p.m.

Hope Nelson is the 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.

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CALENDAR



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JAN. 12-FEB. 5

"In and Between." At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Reception: Sunday, January 15, 4 - 6 p.m. Artist Talk: Sunday, February 5, 2 p.m. In and Between is an all-sculpture show, featuring floor and wall-mounted art as well as site-specific installations that take advantage of the gallery's unique light-filled space. Eight artists were invited to explore the concept of a threshold. In architecture, thresholds can connect spaces in deliberate and inventive ways, but they are often mere afterthoughts resolved by things like a simple door. Featuring: Lynda Andrews-Barry, Jacqui Crocetta, Pierre Davis, Zofie King, Kirsty Little, Sarah Stefana Smith, Ira Tattelman, and Gloria Chapa Vasquez.

JAN. 22 TO APRIL 3

NOVA Plein Air Art Exhibit. At River Farm, 7931 East Blvd. Drive, Alexandria. Nova Plein Air Artists (NPPA) will be presenting "Celebrations of the Land, Inspired by River Farm," an art exhibit of over 50 paintings inspired by nature. Opening reception on Sunday, Jan. 22 at 1 - 3 p.m. Additional receptions will be held from 1 - 3 p.m. on February 12 and March 12. Many of the paintings were created onsite at River Farm, and all are available to purchase. Receptions are free and open to the public.

FEB. 1 TO MARCH 15

"Mount Vernon" At Nepenthe Gallery, Hollin Hall Shopping Center, 7918 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Nepenthe Gallery, in partnership with Mount Vernon estate and Woodlawn mansion, presents a special "Mount Vernon" exhibit from February 1st through March 15th. This exhibit has been organized in conjunction with Mount Vernon's national birthday celebration of George Washington and Woodlawn's 60th Annual Needlepoint Show. Woodlawn was once part of George Washington's original extensive Mount Vernon estate. This "Mount Vernon" exhibit will showcase an important work by Thomas Sully - his 19th century "Athenaeum Portrait of George Washington." Other original works by Pamela Patrick White, Bryant White, Gwen Bragg, Debbie Dartez and Renée C. Gage will be included and for sale, as well as several original works by Pamela and Bryant White that will be on loan by local collectors for display in the exhibit. There will also be giclée prints available for sale of important works from the Mount Vernon estate collection.

Nepenthe will host six Thursday night "ART + WINE + CHEESE" events related to this exhibit:

February 2nd: Thomas Sully's "Athenaeum Portrait of George Washington." Patty Owens, Curator of Nepenthe Gallery and former docent at the National Gallery of Art, will lead a discussion of the artist, the portrait and its significance.

February 9th: Important Paintings from Mount Vernon. Adam Erby, Curator at Mount Vernon, and Patty Owens, Nepenthe Curator, will present a lecture on selected significant paintings from Mount Vernon.

February 16th: White Historic Art. Painters and Historians, Pamela Patrick White and Bryant White, of

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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Legals



Mt. Vernon Trail at East Abingdon Drive Project
VDOT UPC #100422
DPI PROJECT #1503003
Willingness to Host a Public Hearing

The City of Alexandria seeks input from community stakeholders regarding the Mount Vernon Trail at East Abingdon Drive Project.

The City plans to widen the existing trail adjacent to East Abingdon Drive north of Slaters Lane to create more space for people walking and biking along East Abingdon Drive and reduce potential conflicts between trail users.

The trail widening begins at the intersection of Slaters Lane and East Abingdon Drive and runs north along East Abingdon Drive for about 200 feet, which is adjacent to 615 and 625 Slaters Lane. The trail will be widened from approximately 4.5 feet to 10 feet, which is consistent with the rest of the City's trail network and will allow trail users to pass side-by-side more comfortably. The width of the trail at the bus stop will be approximately 13 feet.

The draft design plans are available for review on the project website: <https://alexandriava.gov/go/4189>. This information is also available for review in-person at City Hall, 301 King Street, Suite 3600, Alexandria, VA. In response to COVID-19, all visitors must have an appointment scheduled with a City staff member to access to City Hall offices. To arrange for a time to review the project documents and plans, please call 703.746.4408 or email alexandria.carroll@alexandriava.gov.

Comments and questions may be submitted by email to alexandria.carroll@alexandriava.gov or over the phone by calling 703.746.4408, no later than February 17.

This project is funded by a grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Pursuant to the grant requirements, the City is willing to hold a public hearing if requested. To request a public hearing, send a written request postmarked by February 17, 2023, to:

Alexandria Carroll
City of Alexandria
Department of Project Implementation
301 King Street, Suite 3200
Alexandria, VA 22314

If a request for a public hearing is received, the City will post an announcement (including the date, time and location of the hearing) at a later date. Please note, a public hearing is not required to submit comments or questions.

The City of Alexandria ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. To request more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact the City of Alexandria Office of Human Rights at 703.746.3140, 311 or TTY/TDD 311.

Legals

Announcements

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Fast Casual III LLC trading as Hot Lola's, 6544 Little River Turnpike, Unit 100, Alexandria Fairfax County, VA 22312-1419. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Beer & Wine and Mixed Beverage Restaurant license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Kevin Tien, Member. Date notice posted at establishment: 1 31 2023. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

Employment

Employment

Truckload Carriers Association (TCA) is looking for a full-time professional, organized and customer service focused sales person to help us take our membership numbers to the next level. Individual will manage membership sales, renewals & outreach, customer service, database administration, reporting and other functions. TCA's membership consists of for-hire carriers, service providers and CDL schools.

A four-year degree and at least two years of experience in a sales and/or customer service role is preferred. This is an on-site work from office full time position. If interested, please send cover letter, resume and salary requirements to ZGambill@Truckload.org. We are conveniently located in Old Town Alexandria (steps from the Metro). Visit our website at www.truckload.org.

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Announcements

Announcements

National Spine & Pain Centers - Alexandria (Mt. Vernon)

8101 Hinson Farm Road
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Alexandria, VA 22306

Please be advised that our affiliated office at 8101 Hinson Farm Road, Suite #308, Alexandria, VA 22306 will be permanently closing on March 3, 2023.

It is very important that patients maintain continuity of care, and their ongoing pain management needs remains the highest priority. Therefore, the goal is to make this a smooth transition, while continuing to offer the quality care that patients have come to expect. Patients can continue their care at our affiliated offices listed to the below.

Alexandria (Franconia), VA
6355 Walker Lane, #507
Alexandria, VA 22310

Arlington (Ballston), VA
3803 North Fairfax Drive, #400
Arlington, VA 22203

Arlington (Shirlington), VA
2800 Shirlington Road, #102
Arlington, VA 22206

National Harbor, MD
6710 Oxon Hill Road, #550
Oxon Hill, MD 20745

Those with a future appointment will be contacted by staff to reschedule at these other locations. If you do not have an existing appointment, simply call the number below for your scheduling convenience.

If you choose to seek care elsewhere, please visit requestmanager.healthmark-group.com as soon as possible, in order to request and transfer a copy of your medical records. There is no charge for providing you with your records.

The entire Alexandria (Mt. Vernon) team is sincerely grateful for its time in this community, as it has been filled with many rewarding experiences and memorable patients. Our other affiliated offices look forward to continuing your care soon. If you have any additional questions or would like more information, please feel free to call (855) 836-7246.

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Obituary



ELIZABETH LINA PUSCHECK
(July 23, 1937-January 20, 2023)

Elizabeth "Betty" Puscheck, 85, of Alexandria, VA, passed away on Friday, January 20, 2023, in Alexandria, VA. Betty is survived by her husband, Herb, children, Elizabeth (Daniel Rappolee) Puscheck, and Lisa Puscheck, grandchildren, Eleanor, Thomas, and Benjamin Rappolee, and Isabel and Jackson Zamer, and sisters, Francis (Dick) Novak and Joan Mrozinski and a number of nieces, nephews and other relatives. Betty was preceded in death by her parents, sister Rose Lietz, and brothers, Alfred and Richard.


A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, February 4, 2023 at Epiphany Lutheran Church 5521 Old Mill Road, Alexandria, VA 22309, service at 1 pm with fellowship to follow. Betty will be laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery at a future date.

Legals

PUBLIC NOTICE

Annie B. Rose House Waiting List

The waiting list for Annie B. Rose House will close for new applications on Wednesday, February 28, 2023. Applications will not be accepted after the posted closing date. If you have previously applied and your name has been added to the waitlist, no further action is required at this time. An announcement will be posted on our website and in the local newspaper when the waiting list reopens.



CALENDAR

			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31		

Let us know about an upcoming event

connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

CALENDAR



The Alexandria Boutique Warehouse Sale will take place Feb. 4-5, 2023 in Old Town Alexandria.

FROM PAGE 9

White Historic Art will discuss several of their original, historical American 18th century-based paintings and the stories and context behind them. Their presentation will include several of their original works on loan for this exhibit by private collectors Janice and Dick Crosby, and Neysa and Dan Chandler.

February 23rd: Interesting facts about Mt. Vernon and Whiskey Tasting. Steve Bashore, Distiller, Miller and Historian, will lead guests through a Whiskey Tasting and describe the process that still takes place today at Mt. Vernon. Jim Woods, historical interpreter at Mount Vernon, will share stories and information about George Washington's home and property.

March 2nd: Scenes from Mount Vernon. Alexandria based watercolorist and juried artist, Gwendolyn ("Gwen") Bragg, is an art instructor at both the Art League School in Alexandria and the Workhouse Art Center in Lorton. Gwen will display and discuss many of her watercolor paintings from Mount Vernon.

March 9th: Nelly's Needlers Needlework Group. Established in 1975 to help preserve Woodlawn, the group was named after Martha Washington's granddaughter, Eleanor ("Nelly") Parke Custis, who was raised at Mount Vernon, later lived at Woodlawn, and learned her needlework skills from her cherished grandmother. Nelly's Needlers will be at Nephthe Gallery to display works from their 60th Annual Needlepoint Show and discuss their organization and needlepointing as an art form.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 1

World of Extreme Diving. 7-8 p.m. Online. "The Unseen World of Extreme Diving" (Free Zoom Talk). Join technical diving enthusiast Matt Hanson as he describes typically unseen environments in scuba, including diving under ice or deeper than 130 feet. The talk will be online through the Zoom platform. Registered participants will be sent the connection information via email one day in advance and approximately one hour before the talk. You may attend on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Register by 6pm on February 1 to receive the connection info. Visit <https://delrayartisans.org/programs/#event=unseen-extreme-diving>

FRIDAY/FEB. 3

The Hot Lanes. 8 p.m. At Sherwood Community Center (City of Fairfax Town Hall Series, Chocolate Lovers Festival) featuring "A Taste of Swing", Fairfax. (Free, Indoors). The Hot Lanes is delighted to return to the City of Fairfax's Old Town Hall Concert Series for the 2022-23 season after a pandemic-inducing cancellation. Features popular, romantic stan-

dards and originals that all will appreciate.

FEB. 3-25

"The Unseen" Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans gallery in the Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. "The Unseen" exhibit reveals what we typically cannot see: what is hidden, microscopic, imagined, or dreamed. Join the artists for the opening reception: Friday, Feb 3, 2023 from 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. The gallery is closed the last Sunday of the month (February 26, 2023). Visit <https://delrayartisans.org/exhibits/#event=unseen>

SATURDAY/FEB. 4

Washington Gardener Seed Exchange. 12:30-4:30 p.m. (Adults) Washington Gardener Magazine is co-hosting the annual seed exchange at Green Spring Gardens with lectures and a face-to-face seed swap. Bring your extra seeds to swap and leave with a bag full of seeds, new garden friends, and expert planting advice. \$15 for verified Friends of Green Spring members and Washington Gardener subscribers (use code C1E.0IPQ); \$20 for guests (use code C1E.8Z4K). Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

SATURDAY/FEB. 4

Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

OUR FACES IN FILM SERIES

All month long for Black History Month, Charles Beatley Central Library will show films featuring African American lead characters. Join for great films and snacks. At the Charles E. Beatley, Jr., Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria.

February 3, 2023, from 2 to 4:30 p.m.: "Brown Sugar"

February 10, 2023, from 2 to 4:30 p.m.: "The Wiz"

February 14, 2023, from 6 to 7:45 p.m.: "Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella"

February 17, 2023, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.: "Soul"

February 24, 2023, from 2 to 4:30 p.m.: "Harriet" Admission: Free. Call 703-746-1702. Visit alexliblibraryva.org

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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County, Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

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

Please, help save these historical papers. All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

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

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

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

Visit connectionnewspapers.com or <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-keep-your-newspaper-printing>

Connection Newspapers... Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette, Centre View, Potomac Almanac
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Been There Done That, Unfortunately



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Over the course of these many cancer years (diagnosed late Feb. 09), a recurring theme has been that various friends are regularly surprised that I'm still alive. These are friends who are either outside my local loop or who are geographically out of sight but not out of mind. Typically, what happens is I'll receive a random-type check-in call from these friends who, understanding the seriousness of my condition are often hesitant to even make this call for fear of the inevitable: yours truly not picking up because yours truly is no longer truly yours; and when I answer the phone, they are happily surprised and generally say so.

Then there's another group of friends, some of whom are out of town, who are regularly in touch. So much so that they're up to date on my health status and may even know my scan schedule. Understanding as they do, 'the seriousness of my condition,' two things happen: when they call and I don't pick up, they get nervous that I've more than fallen and can't get up (that I've slipped off my slope and have been admitted to a hospital)/are too sick to even pick up the phone, as happened when I called my brother during what turned out to be his final week, or if they receive a call from me at an uncharacteristic/atypical time, they also get nervous when they see my name on their phone.

A parallel occurrence is that when this same category of friends calls, and I don't pick up, they usually leave a message requesting an immediate call back - to confirm that I'm still alive or leave a message with normal urgency likewise requesting a call back, but in an unassuming-type tone anticipating that Kenny is still alive. Their tone is without too much fear that I've passed. What often happens with these callers, who aren't particularly anxious in their message, is that they become increasingly anxious in the minutes, hours and sometimes days during which I neglect to call them back. Nevertheless, with these callers I know I need to call them back, if even for just a second (almost literally) and assure them I'm perfectly fine, just busy with life. It's not exactly pressure on me, but I do appreciate and feel the weight of their concern/fear.

I know firsthand what these non-required are feeling since I've gone through the identical experience. A few years ago, I reconnected with a lifelong friend (dating back to elementary school) who googled me and stumbled upon some of my cancer columns. It quickly became apparent to her that she and I had both been diagnosed with similar sounding stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer. Soon thereafter, she tracked me down over the phone and we began to share our stories. Unfortunately for Suzanne, she was having far more difficulty that I was (and we had at times been on the identical chemotherapy). Since she lived in Barnstable (on "the Cape of Cod," to quote Radar O'Reilly from the television program M*A*S*H) our only method of communication was the phone (computers certainly were available but, given the seriousness of our respective situations, a computer exchange felt wholly inadequate). I would call at a time she had suggested would be convenient (she was in pain/major discomfort), she would pick up - until she didn't. I would leave a message asking for a call-back/status. This went on for a week or so and naturally, I grew increasingly anxious, and it was reflected in the content of my voice mail: hope you're okay, empathizing with her challenges, no need to call back/call anytime/just thinking of you, et cetera. After receiving no reply for 10 days or so (I didn't know her address or land line), I decided to google her. That's when I saw and read her obituary. Given her date of death as listed in the agit type, Suzanne had indeed died during the time when I had been calling. As they say: that left a mark.

Knowing full well then what my friends might be experiencing/thinking when they call and I don't answer, or I don't call back in a timely manner, or call at odd times, I am now the call-back king. Not that I can really prevent this situation from arising one day when I am unable to call them back - for all the predictable reasons. Therefore, I am committed as I can be to answer all calls from the Kenny-verse. Moreover, I hope to fulfill this commitment for many years yet to come.

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

McEneaney Associates has always had one motto in mind... not to be the biggest, but the best. For more than 40 years, our Associates have lived in and supported Alexandria, helping to build our town into the thriving community it is today. To learn more about our Associates and our firm, visit www.WeAreAlexandria.com

#WeAreAlexandria



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