

THE CONNECTION

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Celebrating The Lunar New Year

PAGE 10

Reston's Lauren Chen, of the Xuejuan Dance Ensemble, performs "Offering," a Mongolian folk dance, in the City of Fairfax.

President Biden Visits Springfield

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What's Up with The Buses?

PAGE 12

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OPINION, PAGE 8 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 16 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

JANUARY 25-31, 2023

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SOLD!

**1819 Deer Drive
McLean, 22101
\$1,072,500**

SOLD!

SOLD for...\$1,725,000

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SOLD!

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SOLD!

**19058 Cotton Farm Court
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\$1,035,000**

SOLD!

**281 Gundry Drive
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\$727,010**

SOLD!

**1930 Relda Court
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\$1,220,000**

SOLD!

**1639 Macon Street
McLean, 22101
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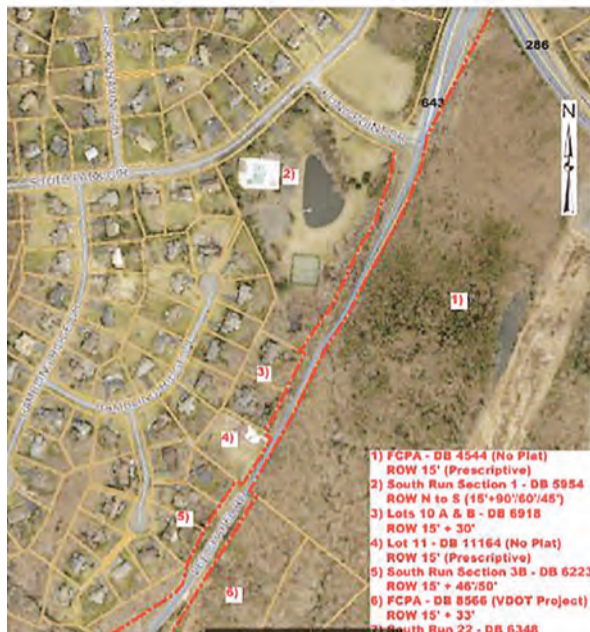
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Group Discussion Highlights Possible Remedies to Lee Chapel Road

RIGHT OF WAY VARIES Along Lee Chapel Road



Limited VDOT Right of Way along segments of Lee Chapel Road



This slide from the VDOT presentation shows the limited right-of-way that exists now along Lee Chapel Road in the crash area.

Conference call with county, state and school officials, father of an accident victim and other parents.

By MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Delegate Kathy Tran's (D-42) Zoom meeting on the recent fatal accident on Lee Chapel Road was full of ideas and enthusiasm, but left some questions unanswered when it came to a solid timeline to implement these strategies. On the call, there were several elected officials from the county and state, VDOT officials and Fairfax County DOT officials, along with the father

of one of the victims, school board members and others. All agreed as a team that something needs to be done.

"The road is so narrow, there is no room for errors, please help the future kids," said Bahman Haftsavar, the father of Ariana, who died in the crash. "I lost the biggest piece of my life."

The crash happened on Jan. 10 when three students from South County High School were on Lee Chapel Road when they hit a set of hills at high speed, causing the car

to leave the road and flip onto the roof, killing two and injuring one student who is still hospitalized.

The potential solutions discussed on the call this past Monday night included a complete roadway sign pattern that includes four warning signs, another "hill blocks view" sign and a lighted "feedback sign," that "will start flashing 'slow down' if the vehicle is going 40 miles per hour," VDOT engineer Claudia Llana said.

The sign plan is a short-term measure to address the hazardous issues at this spot on Lee Chapel Road immediately. There were also mid-term and long-term solutions discussed in a VDOT slide show called "Measures & Initiatives." A multi-level approach was part of the discussion too, and this includ-



Right before the hill, a resident's fence goes right up to the road.

ed a training initiative as part of the school-based driver's education that most teens go through. School board member Karen-Corbett Sanders suggested that include an appearance before a judge when getting a driver's license as was part of the process years ago.

Other steps VDOT mentioned included rumble strips, a "shoulder wedge treatment" to help cars return to the road, and targeted tree removal. Tom Biesiadny from FC-DOT added that they are working on a plan to flatten the rolling hills.

"Eliminating the hills will go a long way," he said. Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay (D) added that since there are property owners along that stretch, "the long term fixes will take a lot of community in-

put," he said.

Virginia Sen. George Barker (D-39) is the chairman of the Virginia transportation subcommittee and vowed to pursue funding.

Taking out the hills was on everyone's list but in discussing the time frame, there were no actual dates.

There was a discussion of working with the park authority, since some of the land is park land. Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) has meetings scheduled with the park authority this month.

School board member Laura Jane Cohen lives near the accident site and remembers hearing the helicopter after the wreck that night. "Many of us have worried about that stretch of road," she said.

Financing for Affordable Housing Is Approved

By BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

If all goes well, people in need of affordable housing will eventually be able to find it on the grounds of the Fairfax County Government Center in Fair Oaks. That's because, on Jan. 19, commissioners on the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA), approved up to \$14 million to make such homes a reality.

By taking that action, the FCRHA gave the green light to financing for Phase One of this project. Called Residences

at Government Center II, it will ultimately bring 279 units of affordable housing to the Braddock District on property the county already owns.

Planned are two, five-story buildings serving residents earning from 30 to 70 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). The development will also contain an approximately 15,000-square-foot community space that will be used to provide a daycare facility, as well as other resident and community-based services.

"Providing housing that's affordable to working families is key to our continued success as a county and a region," said Supervi-

sor James Walkinshaw (D-Braddock). "This proposal also presents an opportunity to improve water quality and provide enhanced pedestrian access for the surrounding community."

By giving a go-ahead to the funding, the FCRHA is taking a page from the playbook of a similar county project that opened in 2017 along nearby Monument Drive. That one yielded 270 workforce housing units with lower-than-average rents enabling people such as teachers, public-safety personnel and service-industry employees to live in the county in which they work.

And although the specifics of the new

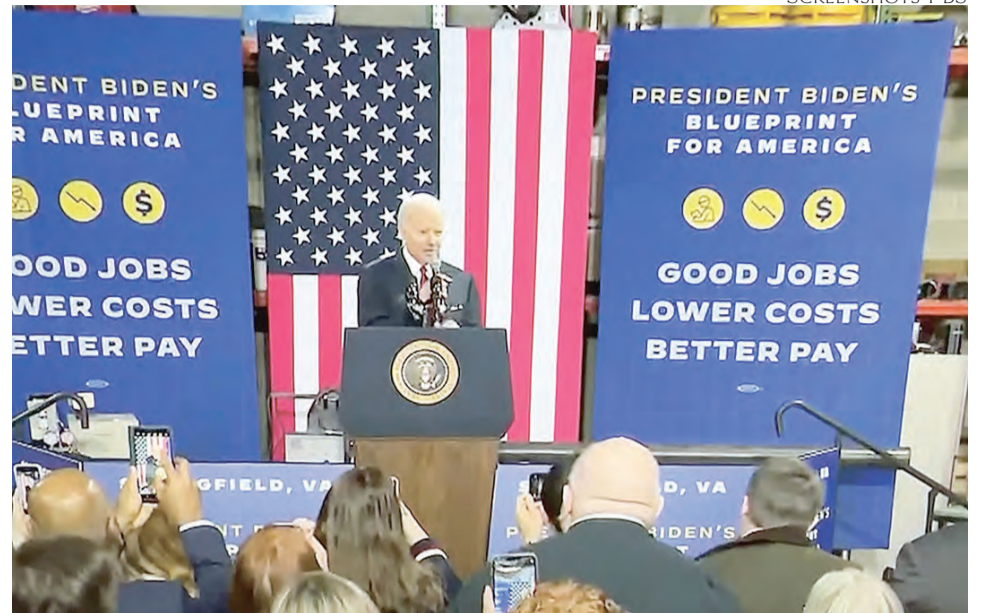
project's partnerships and funding arrangements are different than in the previous affordable-housing development, the basic principle is the same. It unites various entities, both public and private, in a common goal – to provide housing for people who otherwise couldn't afford to live in Fairfax County.

"The utilization of public-private partnerships has once again enabled the FCRHA and Fairfax County to get closer to meeting our goal of 10,000 new affordable homes by the year 2034," said FCRHA Chairman Melissa McKenna.

SEE FINANCING FOR, PAGE 7



President Joe Biden moves through a crowd of invited guests to address Steamfitters Union Local 602 in Springfield



President Joe Biden chose the Springfield union warehouse to delivery his speech on economic plan success indicators and plans going forward

Biden Delivers Speech on Economy in Springfield

Speaks to Springfield members of Steamfitters Union Local 602.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Springfield had a visit last Thursday from President Joe Biden. The visit was announced a few days prior at a White House Press briefing, for an undisclosed Springfield location. Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre shared that Biden chose our nearby suburb to deliver a major speech on the economy to steamfitter union workers who had benefited from his economic plan, following the good news of a 2.9 percent economic expansion in the last quarter.

In his speech, Biden shared recent evidence that his economic plan is working. He touted “a record of over 11 million jobs created, the two strongest years of job growth in history, 750,000 manufacturing jobs created, the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years, the best two years for small business applications on record, with annual inflation falling and wages rising over the last six months.”

He contrasted those successes and his plan to build the economy “from the bottom up and the middle out” with Congressional Republican plans. Biden described the GOP plans as “fiscally demented” to include, cutting Social Security and Medicare, which Republicans deny; and to establish a 30 percent national sales tax to replace income tax. Republicans filed that tax bill, dubbed the ‘Fair Tax Act’, earlier this month, which Biden predicted would increase taxes on working families, taxing everything, including homes, cars, food, rent, and clothes. Saying that even the House Speaker who brought the bill to the floor has said he’s not sure he’s for it now.



The President was upbeat about economic signs saying, “We have more work to do but we’re on the right track. Families can breathe a bit easier.”

Often referring to his middle class upbringing, Biden expressed the need to protect the economic gains evidenced in rising wages and declining inflation. He observed that for decades the middle class was hollowed out by jobs sent overseas. Trickle-down economics didn’t trickle down to those with backgrounds like his father, who struggled to find work and then sold used cars, he said. “The wealthy still do well when the middle class does,” he said. He decried efforts from ‘Maga Republicans’ in Congress to hold America’s economy hostage, particularly by “having us default on American debt.”

Biden highlighted efforts under his American Rescue Plan, under which 230 million Americans are fully vaccinated against



PHOTO COURTESY TIM SIMMONS

Invited guests include U.S. Rep. Don Beyer and several member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, including Chairman Jeff McKay, center, standing.

COVID-19 and its economic stimulus providing needed local funds. Under his Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, last year 700,000 major construction projects including highways, tunnels and broadband were undertaken in cities of all sizes. Biden added the projects will provide jobs both for those with and without college educations.

Noting the U.S. has the highest prescription drug prices in the world, the President pledged to capitalize on the federal research contributed to drug manufacturers with additional caps on drug prices. The Inflation Reduction Act caps monthly costs for insulin at \$35 for Medicare Part D beneficiaries. Biden said he will try again for a broader application of insulin cost caps for all insulin users this year.

Steamfitters UA Local #602 represents the Journeymen, Apprentices and Helpers,



PHOTO COURTESY TIM SIMMONS

Biden supporter Tim Simmons with Supervisor Rodney Lusk (Franconia) await entry into the building as invited guests of the President. Simmons found the President’s speech “enlightening and rousing.”

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Maestro Dingwall C. Fleary Jr. Remembered

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

During the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors public meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 24, Supervisor John W. Foust remembered Maestro Dingwall C. Fleary Jr., who died suddenly on New Year's Eve, 2022, at the age of 82.

"For 50 years, [Fleary] brought his passion for music to his role as Maestro of

the McLean Symphony," Foust said. He added that Fleary spent those years doing something he loved. "What an accomplishment," said Foust.

Fleary was a pianist, organist, conductor, teacher, lecturer, and orchestra builder. He was the founder and conductor of the McLean Symphony, as well as the Music Director of the Reston Community Or-



PHOTO VIA RESTON COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA
Maestro Dingwall C. Fleary Jr.

chestra. He was also the organist and music director of Bethesda's Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

"The McLean community is a much better community because of his many contributions. I am confident that his mark on McLean, especially the wonderful art community in McLean, will be felt for generations to come," Foust said.

According to the Reston Community Orchestra, the Virginia General Assembly and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recognized Fleary for his musical leadership. The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) honored Fleary twice for his innovative programming and support of American composers.

A celebration of life service was held at McLean High School Auditorium on Sunday, Jan. 8.

Bulldozers Roll for New Government Complex in Franconia

When completed, there will be several entities in one location.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Construction began this month on the Franconia Governmental Center and Kingstowne Regional Library Project at the corner of Beulah Street and Kingstowne Boulevard in southern Fairfax County.

When the project is completed in 2025, it will house the Franconia Police Station, the Franconia District Supervisor's Office and the Franconia Museum. These facilities are now in an outdated building on Franconia Road. According to Fairfax County, the facility is undersized, mechanical and structural systems are outdated, parking is insufficient and the fueling station is located within the secure perimeter thereby disallowing access to it by county vehicles other than those used by the police. The new combined facility will provide a safe, convenient environment for the residents of the Kingstowne area to gather and have access to county services in one central location, the county said.

Franconia District Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D) looks forward to the new facility. "The current Franconia Governmental Center no longer provides the adequate facilities needed for our police officers, Franconia Museum, my staff, and most importantly, our residents. I'm excited that our District will have a new facility with a library, which the community will be proud to visit. In addition, the updated facility will provide the modern amenities our officers, seniors, and other public servants deserve," Lusk said.

This new combined facility will be approximately 90,000 square feet with better parking and access. The 28,000-square-foot Police Station and the 4,200-square-foot Franconia District Supervisor's Office will



ARTIST RENDERING

The new complex will fit nicely into the surrounding community.



It's a location with several access points.

share a space with the Franconia Museum and a 7,200 square-foot Active Adult Center. It will also have a new Childcare Center for infants to pre-kindergarten children and the Kingstowne Community Library will be expanded to a Regional Library. The current Kingstowne Library is in a bottom level space in the shopping center where Beulah Street meets Telegraph Road.

The total project cost estimate for the consolidated facility including the two associated parking garages is \$79.5 million. Funding for the Franconia Police Station, to include



Looking south, the grounds of the new facility border apartments and Beulah Park.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION



The library sign has been there for years.

the Franconia District Supervisor Office and the Franconia Museum, was approved in the 2015 Public Safety Bond Referendum.

Funding for the library, to include the Active Adult Center, was approved in the 2020 Library Bond referendum.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NAVNEET K. SOHI

Artist's rendering of a view of the east courtyard of the Residences at Government Center II.

Financing for Affordable Housing Is Approved

FROM PAGE 3

“Through creative approaches, we have re-envisioned county land to that which includes affordable housing, access to transportation and employment, community resources, and green space.”

Subject to the Board of Supervisors’ OK, the financing plan will employ a mixture of funding sources, including the Affordable Housing Development and Investment Fund, the Tysons Housing Trust Fund, and American Rescue Plan Act funds. And certain steps have already been taken to pave the way for construction of the new units.

This past summer, the FCRHA entered into an interim agreement with subsidiaries of Lincoln Avenue Capital for the devel-

opment of the first phase of the Residences at Government Center II. In addition, the Supervisors have already conveyed ownership of the existing Parking Lots G and H at the Government Center to the FCRHA on which to build the affordable housing.

“For more than two years, the Board has been working to develop a proposal to bring affordable housing and childcare to what is now an underutilized parking lot in front of the Government Center,” said Walkinshaw. “The Board’s recent approval of a Comprehensive Plan amendment is an important step that will allow continued community engagement and dialogue before the consideration of a necessary rezoning.”

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

Interested in becoming a foster parent? There is always a need for caring foster parents looking to open their homes to foster youth. Get in touch to learn more. Visit fcsvanow@gmail.com or www.FCS-VA.org. Or call 703-817-9890.

LOOKING FOR SOFTBALL PLAYERS

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women’s softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play most Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna from May-July and September-October. For more information, visit the web site www.goldengirls.org.

ADULT AND YOUTH CANDIDATES SOUGHT FOR MCLEAN COMMUNITY CENTER’S 2023 GOVERNING BOARD ELECTION

Residents of Dranesville Small District 1A who are looking for ways to give back to their community are encouraged to consider running for a seat on the McLean

Community Center (MCC) Governing Board. The 11-member, volunteer board establishes goals and aligns strategies for MCC programs and facilities, including the Robert Ames Alden Theatre (“The Alden”) and The Old Firehouse Center (OFC). A special agency of Fairfax County Government, MCC is located at 1234 Ingleside Ave.

In 2023, three adult positions and two youth positions are open on the board. To run for election to the board, candidates must reside in Dranesville Small District 1A, a special tax district that supports the center. Candidates are required to obtain the signatures of 10 tax district residents in their respective categories (either adult or youth) to have their names placed on election ballots. Petition packets will be available at MCC starting at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 18.

Adult candidates must be at least 18 years of age as of Saturday, May 20, the date of the election, which is held at MCC’s annual community festival, McLean Day.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 17

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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.

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 com-

mittees 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 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 determined 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.scottsurovell.org/survey. As always, send me an email at scott@scottsurovell.org to share your views and suggestions or for constituent services.

A Standoff in Richmond

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

There is a standoff in the State Capitol in Richmond these days that may rival the standoffs on the battlefields around Richmond during the Civil War. While the battles between Union and Confederate forces in what some Southerners referred as the "War between the States" involved rifles, bayonets, and cannons, the current battles involve sharp words and digging heels into positions. Saving the Union was clearly the goal of the Northern forces while maintaining the Southern way of life and a slave economy was among the goals of Southern fighters. Opportunities to discuss differences and seek compromise were absent in the Civil War. In the current standoff there may be more discussion and debate but few will compromise on fundamental differences.

Democrats and Republicans have always gone after each other in debates during General Assembly sessions. There are several reasons that I think this year may seem more serious. There is a narrow split in partisanship in the two houses of the General Assembly with Republicans narrowly controlling the House with 52 of 100

members. The Senate is split with the Democrats in control 21 to 19. The split between the legislative and executive branches has the House and Senate filled with experienced members and the executive branch being led by a novice in the operation of government who seems more concerned with his irresistible desire to be president than to learn about the Commonwealth. The Governor's actions seem to be calculated based on their impact on his presidential bid rather than supporting policies good for Virginia's residents.

Timing is also affecting the differences among the governmental leaders. Virginia just ended a cycle where both houses of the legislature and the governor's office were controlled by Democrats. This period was the most progressive in all my years serving in the legislature. Voting rights were expanded to be among the best in the country in making it easy to vote. Human rights protections were clearly defined to include all regardless of who they loved. Access to medical care was expanded. The minimum wage was raised. Women's reproductive rights were protected. Gun safety laws were enacted to move Virginia among the top states in gun safety.

With the takeover of the House of Delegates and the Governor's office, there is an effort to repeal all these advances. Bills have been introduced to end women's reproductive rights, to go back to restrictive voting laws, to loosen gun laws, and to return Virginia to an ultra-conservative Southern state. Fortunately they are not likely to be successful as the State Senate will be able to narrowly repel their efforts.

An unfortunate example of the differences in priorities in the State

Capitol is the Governor's attention to when letters of commendation should be mailed to students and undertaking with the Attorney General an investigation of the school systems involved. At the same time there are children being shot and killed, and the Governor has yet to utter a word about public safety. He only offers thoughts and prayers for the families involved.

Who will win this war of words and policies? The voters in November will decide.

Misleading Flyer on One-lane Bridge

To the Editor:

I am concerned as president of the Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) because recently a one-page document was hand delivered to some homes along Walker Road; it discussed some issues with regard the replacement of the current one-lane bridge. This broadside was written with liberal use of my name and email address, hence many Walker Road residents called me, assuming I, as GFCA president, had written and approved that document. I had never seen it and it was never discussed or approved

LETTER

by GFCA. It is deceitful when a resident or group of residents distorts public communications. I would like to let those Walker Road residents know that GFCA is engaged with the Virginia Department of Transportation on discussions about replacement of that bridge, and GFCA, of course, welcomes all Great Falls residents' views on that replacement. But GFCA will not seek to deceive residents as the author of this bogus broadside has done.

William Canis

President, Great Falls Citizens Association

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Stuff the Bus

Mount Vernon District

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Mount Vernon Shoppers,
7660 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22306
Benefiting United Community,
<https://unitedcommunity.org/>

Stuff the Bus Oakton

SATURDAY, FEB. 11, 9:30 A.M. TO 12:30 P.M.
Oakton Giant,
2932 Chain Bridge Road, Oakton, VA 22124
Benefiting Food for Others, <https://foodforothers.org/>

Stuff the Bus Chantilly (Sully District)

SATURDAY, FEB. 11, 9:30 A.M. TO 3 P.M.
Chantilly Walmart,
4368 Chantilly Shopping Center Drive,
Chantilly, VA 20151
Benefiting Western Fairfax Christian Ministries,
<https://www.wfcmva.org/>

Stuff the Bus Fairfax (Braddock District)

SATURDAY, FEB. 11, 10 A.M. TO 3 P.M.
Fairfax Walmart,
11181 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22003
Benefiting Britepaths, <https://britepaths.org/>

Stuff the Bus Springfield (Braddock District)

SATURDAY, FEB. 18, 10 A.M. TO 3 P.M.
Cardinal Forest Giant,
8320 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA 22152
Benefiting Ecumenical Community Helping Others ECHO,
<https://www.echo-inc.org/>

Stuff the Bus Kingstowne, Franconia District

SATURDAY, FEB. 18, 9:30 A.M. TO 3 P.M.
Kingstowne Walmart,
5885 Kingstowne Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22315
Benefiting Koinonia, <http://www.koinoniacares.org/>

Stuff the Bus McLean

SATURDAY, FEB. 18, 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.
McLean Giant,
1454 Chain Bridge Road, McLean, VA 22101
Benefiting Share of McLean,
<https://www.shareofmclean.org/>

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MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT

36th Annual Mount Vernon Town Meeting

Join us in person or virtually to learn why we are "The One"!

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7:45 a.m. - Exhibit Hall Open
9:30 a.m. - Speakers, Q&A's and Virtual Tour

Mount Vernon High School
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Live on Channel 16, Facebook
More details: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon

Join Supervisor Dan Storck for the 36th Annual Town Meeting! Meet your Supervisor and many County, state and federal leaders. Have your questions answered, learn about issues important to you, connect with County agencies and service providers and mingle with your neighbors. The highlight of the morning will be taking a "virtual tour" of the changing Mount Vernon District from Huntington to Lorton.

Speakers: Board of Supervisors Chairman **Jeff McKay**, County Executive **Bryan Hill**, County Police Chief **Kevin Davis**, Mount Vernon District School Board Member **Karen Corbett Sanders**, Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent **Dr. Michelle Reid**, Special Guest Congressmen **Gerry Connolly** and remarks by Congressman **Don Beyer**.

For more information, call the Mount Vernon District Office at 703-780-7518, TTY 711, visit the office at 2511 Parkers Lane, or send your questions/comments to mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov.

To request reasonable ADA accommodations or language translation services, call the Mount Vernon District Office, 703-780-7518 or TTY 711 on or before 2/4/23.

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Haydn, Mozart & Barber Adagio

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Barber: Adagio for Strings

Haydn: Symphony No. 104 in D major "London"

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LUNAR NEW YEAR



Sophie Huang, Sabrina Lu, Ricki Yu, Erica Zheng and Emay Liu, all of the Washington Dunhuang Guzheng Music School, play the guzheng (Chinese zither), accompanied by Callia Sun on piano.



Performers with Fairfax-based Rong's Kung Fu Academy.



Members of the Virginia QiPao Group strike a pose after their dance number.

Fairfax City Celebrates Lunar New Year

Organized by Worlddance, Fairfax City hosted a Lunar New Year event, Saturday, Jan. 28, at the Sherwood Community Center. Activities included dancing, singing, music and martial-arts performances, calligraphy lessons and Asian refreshments.



Performers with Fairfax-based Rong's Kung Fu Academy.



Children with the Xuejuan Dance Ensemble of Herndon doing a Lunar New Year dance.

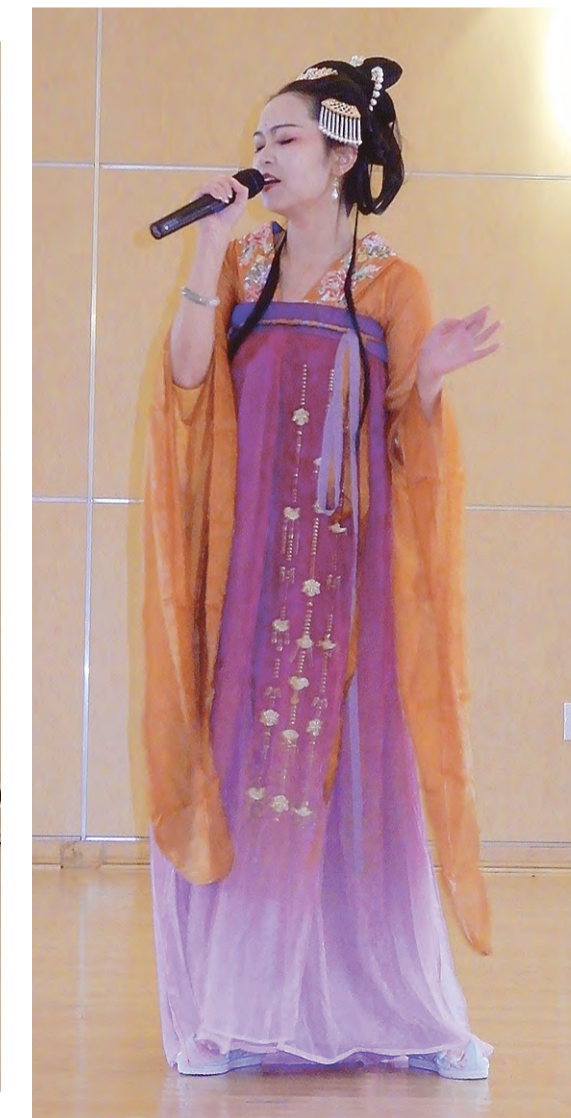


Virginia QiPao Group members wearing colorful, red dresses and holding feathered fans during their second dance.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Adorned in a gown from the Han Dynasty, Wenjie performs the graceful Lantern Festival dance.



Tiffany Zhan sings while garbed in an outfit representing the Jin Dynasty.

CALL FOR CANDIDATES

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What's Up With the Bus in NoVa?

Plans for more and improved connections, BRT, The One.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Coalition For Smarter Growth and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) hosted a webinar on regional bus and transit services called What's up with the bus in Northern Virginia?

"We're going to try to feature the service improvements that have already been happening in our region, what the results were," said moderator Stewart Schwartz, Coalition For Smarter Growth's executive director. Speakers discussed lessons learned, what they would continue to do, and what the agencies could do to improve service.

Coalition For Smarter Growth has advocated for walkable, bike-friendly, inclusive, transit-oriented DC communities for 25 years. In 2018, the Washinton Area Bus Transportation Project (BTP) found that bus service must be frequent and reliable to attract more riders. WMATA riders wanted free transfers. Buses should be affordable; bus tracking apps would allow payment and real-time tracking.

What About Buses Along the Newly Opened Silver Line?

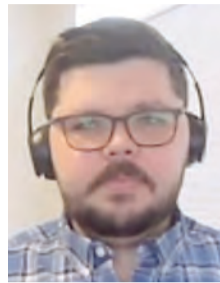
With the Silver Line, the Fairfax Connector made sure transit-reliant people with few transportation options were served according to Speaker Michael Felschow, planning section chief, transit services division, Fairfax Connector



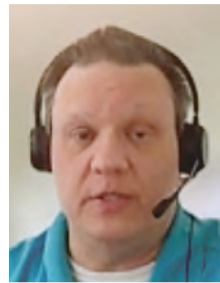
Stewart Schwartz, the executive director and founder of Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG)



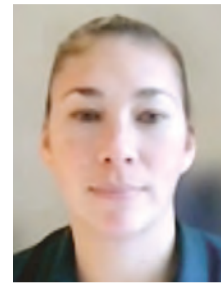
Martin Barna, director of planning and marketing for Driving Alexandria Safely Home (DASH)



Xavier Harmony, a senior program manager for the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission.



Michael Felschow, planning section chief of the Fairfax County Department of Transportation transit services division



Melissa Kim, deputy project manager for Metro's bus network redesign project.

PHOTOS: SCREENSHOTS

Many 30-minute routes became 20-minute routes. Midday and all-day services sped travel. Ridership rose by 20 percent.

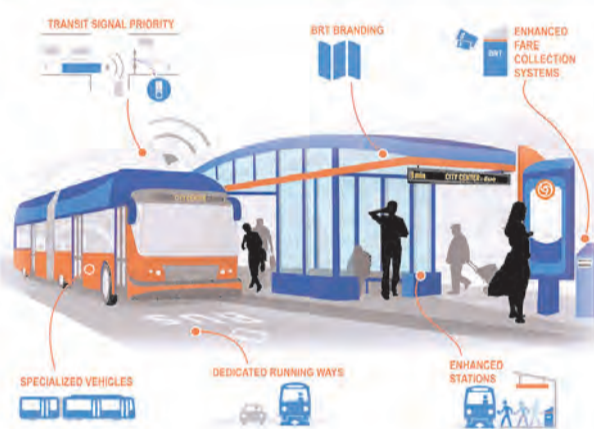
The Fairfax County Department of Transportation received \$4.5 million in TRIP program funding over three years. Low-income households can get 50 percent off Fairfax Connector fares starting February 2023.

What insights can the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission share about the Bus Rapid Transit study? And what about Richmond Highway, The One! and Envision Rt. 7, in Fairfax County?

"You can consider it (the study) a toolbox for features. You don't have to have all these features. But the more you have together, the more efficient the service will be," said Xavier Harmony, senior program manager for the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission.

Harmony recommends toolbox items like larger buses, off-board fare payments, and branding. The One! is set to open in 2030. "It will run from Huntington Metro-rail Station to Fort Belvoir ... It is a bit of a smaller corridor than what NVTC is planning for Envision Rt. 7," Harmony said.

What is BRT?



Source: Madison Corridor Bus Rapid Transit, SIDOT 2015

- Specialized high-quality bus transit
- Increased bus capacity and reliability
- Toolbox of BRT features
 - Service planning (higher frequency)
 - Infrastructure (bus only lanes)
 - Vehicles (articulated buses)
 - Policy (off-board fare payment)
 - Communications (branding)

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

What is the BRT?

Felschow discussed the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) and Silver Line Phase 2 bus service. He focused on plans and the Connector's fare reduction efforts.

Their onboard survey found only 30 percent of pre-pandemic riders wanted to use Metrorail. Felschow said the rest wanted to get in and around Reston-Herndon.

Realigning routes, increasing frequency, and adding connections could help the Connector reinvest

in the network. "We didn't leave out Metrorail," Felschow said. The Connector linked each route to one or two Metrorail stations. They can get there faster than meandering through the community and then on the toll road to Wiehle Metro Station.

Public input improved the plan. New routes prioritized frequency and service span. Responders requested midday, weekend, early, and late service. Schools, hospitals, and major employers needed better connectivity. "They wanted

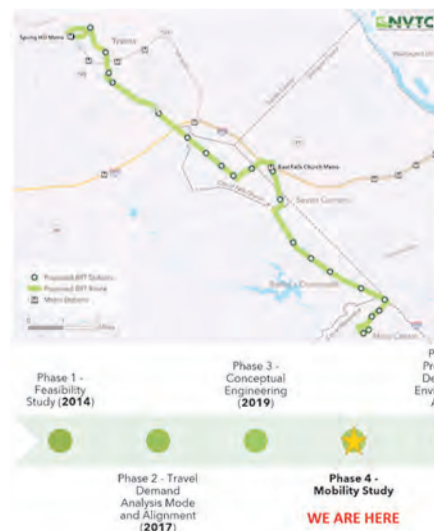
all this information done in a user-friendly fashion," said Felschow. The routes opened on Nov. 16, a day after the Silver Line opened.

The Connector's new Dulles corridor routes, 901 Chantilly and 954 Centreville, provide links to Loudoun Community College and Herndon to Sterling. The Fairfax Connector improved middle and high school access. "That's important because about 7 percent of our ridership is, in fact, middle school and high schoolers," Felschow said.

What Is WMATA's Better Bus Initiative?

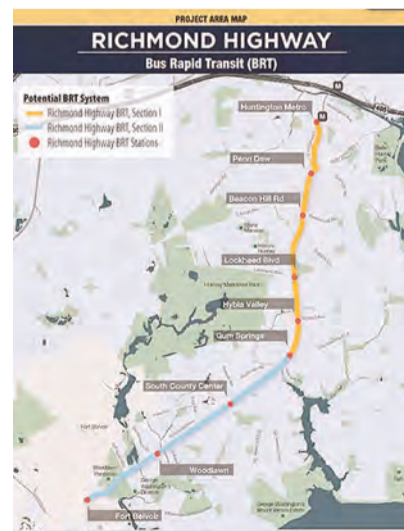
"[The Better Bus Initiative and network redesign] is an exciting opportunity for us at Metro because we haven't looked at our network holistically since it was developed. We're connecting to where people need to go when they want to go, and we're building a network that promotes equity," said Speaker Melissa Kim, deputy project manager for Metro's bus network redesign project.

Metro completed the first phase of the Better Bus Initiative in 2022



What is NVTC working on?

- Envision Route 7 BRT
 - From Mark Center to Tysons Corner
 - 22 stations over 14 miles
- Existing service
 - WMATA 28A
 - Second busiest bus ridership corridor in Northern Virginia
 - ~4,000 boardings per day (now at 95% of pre-pandemic ridership)



Richmond Highway, the One!

There is more than just NVTC working on BRT

- The One planned in Fairfax County
 - Huntington Metro to Fort Belvoir
 - Expected to begin operating in 2030
- Key Facts
 - 9 stations over 7.4 miles
 - 6-to-20-minute headways



Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

What is NVTC working on?

Plans for More and Improved Connections, BRT, The One

FROM PAGE 12

and is about one-third through it. “We’re aiming to have finalized networks by the end of this calendar year, and that means we’re going to be going out to the public again in April and May with actual networks,” Kim said.

Metro held 18 pop-ups and ten bus stop chats in the project’s first phase.

Metro spoke to over 10,000 people. It heard from public officials in listening sessions and visited bus operators. “Because they know the service really well,” Kim said. Metro held more workshops with its jurisdictional partners as it developed network options to ensure bus design alignment.

Forty-five percent said Metro service was really good or excellent. “We don’t need to throw everything out,” Kim said. WMATA wanted to be thoughtful about proposing significant changes and noting opportunities for improvement.

Reliability, shorter wait times and on-time arrivals were high priority. That matched what WMATA heard in the bus transformation project. According to Kim, outreach helped WMATA develop its vision for a great bus network. “Metro heard that the bus needed to go where and when people were traveling — the regional

connectivity piece,” Kim said.

Frequent, reliable service is essential. The bus must give historically disenfranchised communities and residents more opportunities. “It’s got to do these basic things really well first. Our goal is to develop the visionary network that the region needs,” Kim said.

What Are Exciting Projects with Buses in Alexandria?

“Building up accessibility not just to transit but to useful transit,” said Speaker Martin Barna, director of planning and marketing for Driving Alexandria Safely Home (DASH), the public bus system for the City of Alexandria, operated by the Alexandria Transit Company.

Alexandria’s hop-on-and-ride, fare-free DASH bus service targets ridership. Barna suggested placing more useful services where more people could use them to increase ridership. In 2021, DASH launched daily 15-minute routes.

Next, DASH provided frequent service in densely populated areas, high-density corridors, and major activity centers near metro rail stations.

“Among all residents, 73 percent now have access to that level of service,” Barna said.

Among low-income Alexandrians, 81 percent can walk to frequent all-day bus service. “They are now able to access via transit 20 percent more jobs than the typical residents,” Barna said, making 25,000 more jobs available. DASH improved accessibility and transit affordability.

Free fares were a major commitment from City Council wanting to help pandemic-recovering households, particularly low-income households. To offset lost revenues, council increased DASH subsidies by \$1.5 million that first year.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Transit Riderhip Incentive Program (TRIP) awarded DASH \$7 million over four years. It funds transit agencies to implement zero-and subsidized-fare pilot programs to improve urbanized area connectivity and statewide ridership. “We are fare-free for a four-year period,” said Barna.

Dash pioneered fleet electrification, becoming Virginia’s first electric bus agency. By 2037, DASH hopes to have 101 electric buses.

Barna noted that the Blue and Yellow lines’ infill station, Potomac Yard Metro, is anticipated to open in May 2023, more than a year later than scheduled.



Phases One and Two of Richmond Hwy. the One! and station locations.

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Park Authority Chairman Steps Down

Fairfax County Park Authority Board Chairman Bill Bouie has announced his intention to step down as chairman of the Park Authority Board after 14 years of leading that body. Bouie will continue his service on the Park Authority Board representing the Hunter Mill District, a post he has held since 2005.



PHOTO BY FCPA
Fairfax County Park Authority Board Chairman Bill Bouie

“These last 14 years have been full of fun and excitement for the Fairfax County Park Authority, and it’s been a privilege to have occupied this chair through such a unique period of our history,” said Bouie in making his announcement. “But it’s time for a new voice and that is something I’ve always advocated for. So I’m happy to take the lead in stepping aside as chair, but still continue – with as much energy as ever – to work alongside my colleagues on the board and our exceptional staff in delivering the best park system in all the land.”

Under Bouie’s leadership, the FCPA has earned two National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence; achieved Commission on Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation three times with perfect scores; acquired more than 10,000 acres of parkland and open space; and achieved the passage of four park bonds worth nearly half a billion dollars in capital financing. Bouie led through the pandemic and has been a champion for social and racial equity in park programs, services, policies and

workforce.

“On behalf of all the staff at the Park Authority, I extend our sincerest thanks and appreciation for the unfailing support and vision Chairman Bouie has demonstrated through his leadership,” said Executive Director, Jai Cole. “He is a strong advocate for our roles as stewards of the environment, a seeker of opportunity, a champion for equity and a molder of consensus.”

Bouie has also been an advocate for the Hunter Mill District. He has championed synthetic turf projects; presided over park openings including the Lake Fairfax Skate Park and the Watermine; and continued his work to preserve the historic, natural and cultural treasures of that community.

“When I first heard that Bill Bouie was not seeking re-election as chairman in 2023 I was not happy,” said Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn. “But then I thought about how the residents of Fairfax County, the FCPA staff, the hundreds of thousands of people that use our parks, and how the environment have all benefited from his 14 years of service as chairman of FCPA. I served on the FCPA board from 2016-2018 and have a first-hand appreciation of the steady hand that Bill provided the Park Authority as chairman. I am heartened that he will remain as the Hunter Mill representative and continue his distinguished service to our community.”

It’s Not Too Late: Vaccinate Your Child Against the Flu

Each year, millions of children get sick, thousands of children are hospitalized, and some children die from the flu.

Flu vaccines offer the best defense against flu and its potentially serious complications.

FLU UPDATE FOR 2023

Among children up to 17 years, influenza-like illness activity in Fairfax County remains higher than usual. While visits to emergency departments and urgent care centers for flu-like illnesses are lower than they were in the late fall, pediatric flu activity is still above average and respiratory illnesses continue to circulate in the community.

Influenza-like illnesses include fever with cough and/or sore throat. Flu symptoms can also include runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue. Children may also have vomiting or diarrhea when sick with flu.

The Virginia Department of Health has reported four influenza-associated pediatric deaths during the 2022-23 flu season, so far, all among children ages 5 – 12 years.

As of Jan. 7, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates about 57% of children ages 6 months – 17 years in Virginia are vaccinated for influenza for this flu season. These estimates are similar to the vaccination rates in children in Virginia during the same time frame last year.

CHILDREN WHO ARE AT HIGHER RISK

Complications from flu among children can include pneumonia, dehydration, worsening of long-term medical problems like asthma or heart disease, brain dysfunction, sinus issues, and ear infections.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), children with certain health con-

SEE AGAINST THE FLU, PAGE 19



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY

The Board of Supervisors recognized Coach Al Berg and the Langley High School Saxons’ golf team for winning the Virginia High School Leagues’ Class 6 COVID Championship in October 2022. This was the Saxons’ seventh consecutive victory. Berg commutes from Richmond multiple times a week to coach. “As long as the kids show a level of commitment that equals mine, driving up 95 a couple of times every week, I’ll keep doing it. They’ve exceeded my expectations,” Berg said.

Highlights of Board of Supervisors Meeting

Lower real estate tax rate for the surviving spouses of military service members who died in the line of duty.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Michelle Krocker and Shelley Murphy were honored at the Jan. 24 meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Krocker, the founder and executive director of the Northern Virginia Housing Alliance, was recognized for her 17 years of advocacy and service. Shelley Murphy, president/CEO of Wesley Housing, for her 15 years of pioneering the provision of supportive services and affordable housing in the area.

“Because of your tenacity, we’ve moved the needle significantly on affordable housing, particularly in the last couple years,” said Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay. “What I’m most proud of is we’re finally starting to see affordable housing being built throughout this county, near transit in areas where traditionally there’s been no affordable housing, giving people opportunities not just to have a roof over their head, but to utilize that roof into something else, maybe a better job, perhaps a better situation for them and their family.”

During a Public Hearing on Jan. 24, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved a lower real estate tax rate for surviving spouses of military service members who died in the line of duty, significantly lowering their tax bills. Fairfax County is the only jurisdiction in Virginia to provide these surviving spouses with tax relief. The lower tax rate is retroactive to January 1, 2022.

The board’s action establishes a tax rate of \$0.01 per \$100 assessed value for these spouses. It is the lowest permitted rate under a state law passed last year. Local governments can offer a lower tax rate by creating a separate classification for real property owned by surviving spouses.

The board also approved the following administrative items:

In the Sully District, “Watch for Children” sign as part of the Residential Traffic Administration Program. Funding for \$300 is available in Fund 300-C30050, Project 2G25-076-000, Traffic Calming Program.

In the Springfield District, “\$200 Additional Fine for Speeding” signs as part of the Residential Traffic Administration Program For the “\$200 Additional Fine for Speeding” signs, \$500 is to be paid out of the VDOT secondary road construction budget.

In the Dranesville District, Discontinuance of a Portion of Route 1049 (Mackall Avenue) from the Secondary System of State Highways

In the Hunter Mill District, authorization to advertise a public hearing to consider adopting an ordinance to establish the Covington Community Parking District

Supplemental Appropriation Resolution for the Department of Family Services to accept Workforce Innovation Grant funding from Virginia Community College System to support the Northern Virginia Career Pathways for Refugees Initiative of \$168,201. According to Fairfax County, funding will be used for a career pathways workforce development initiative to serve refugees over 17 months. It will provide targeted professional job development, work-based learning opportunities, training, and the acquisition of industry-recognized credentials to assist them in successfully integrating into the local economy.

Authorization for the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination to apply for and accept \$830,000 in grant funding if received from the U.S. Department of Energy to support the Charge Up Fairfax Program. No new positions will be created, and no Local Cash Match is required.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Surovell Recognized

Northern Virginia senator is Humane Society Senate Legislator of the Year 2022.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

While 2022 may have been Virginia's year for the "beagle bills," drawing considerable attention across the Commonwealth and the nation, other animal bills were considered and passed last year with less fanfare. One such animal bill was not assigned as usual to the General Assembly's agricultural committees. Instead SB 249, "Sexual abuse of animals; definitions, penalty" made its way from the State Senate Judiciary Committee and House Committee for Courts of Justice to unanimous approval in both legislative houses.

Sponsored by Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36), the bill was signed by the governor in April and effective on July 1, 2022. The enactment prohibits sexual contact with an animal by a person, or coercing another into sexual contact with an animal, offering or possessing an animal with intent to subject the animal to sexual contact, and permitting such contact. The law prohibits the production, sale, transmission, or possession of an

obscene item depicting a person engaged in sexual contact with an animal. The penalty for guilt is a Class 6 felony. The bill also provides that any person convicted of sexual abuse of an animal is prohibited from owning or exercising control over an animal, and may be ordered to attend an appropriate treatment program or obtain psychiatric or psychological counseling.

Prior to Surovell's bill Virginia's only statute against "bestiality" was found in §18.2-361, Crimes Against Nature, making it a crime for anyone to "carnally know a brute animal." That statute used archaic language with no clear definitions, leaving large loopholes. It did not penalize individuals who were not themselves the abusers; such as those who solicit or allow others to sexually abuse their animals in the pornography industry. Nor was such use in pornography explicitly prohibited under prior law.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) recently recognized Surovell as its 2022 Senate Legislator of the Year for his effort in this protection of animals. Virginia State director for HSUS, Molly

Armus, said "Senator Surovell showed a strong commitment to animal protection by patroning SB 249, which modernized and closed loopholes in Virginia's law against animal sexual abuse. Animal sexual abuse, also called bestiality, is a serious crime, often perpetrated by offenders who extend their sexual abuse to humans. Research shows strong ties to pedophilia, child pornography, rape and other human sex crimes. This law will result in meaningful protections for both animals and people, so we're grateful for his leadership."

Surovell said, "I'm honored to receive the Humane Legislator Award. The law we passed last year updated the Virginia code to ensure that videos of animal sexual abuse can be prosecuted as criminal offenses. Studies show that there is a correlation between child sexual abuse offenders and animal abuse offenders and it is crucial that animal sexual abuse crimes be prosecuted appropriately in Virginia."

The Humane Society of the United States received acclaim in 2022 for its role in managing the unprecedented rescue of more than 4,000 beagle dogs from the



PHOTO COURTESY HSUS

State Senator Scott Surovell receives Humane Legislator of the Year Award presented by Humane Society of the United States, State Director Molly Armus.

troubled Envigo research breeding facility in a settlement agreement overseen by the U.S. District Court. Between July 21 and Sept. 7, the organization's disaster relief unit moved the dogs of various ages from puppies to adults, to more than 120 rescues in 29 states.

HSUS also honored Delegate Rob Bell (R-58) as House of Delegates Legislator of the Year for his work that enacted research beagle

protection in 2022 without a delaying reenactment clause.

Past winners for 2021 work include joint Senate recipients Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-33) for her Humane Cosmetics Act and Sen. Bill Stanley (R-20) for his Animal Testing Facilities, adoption of dogs and cats bill. The prior House of Delegates legislator of the year was Del. Kaye Kory (D-38) for her House Humane Cosmetics Act.

Williams Trophy Presented to Silver Line

Washington Airports Task Force honors Fairfax and Loudoun counties, Town of Herndon, MWAA, and WMATA.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Washington Airports Task Force (WATF) presented the Silver Line with the 2022 Williams Trophy during its annual general meeting on Friday, Jan. 20. According to the event program, "The Williams Trophy is awarded to recognize those whose leadership, vision and dedication in the application of aviation or space has enriched the quality of life on earth."

The award recognizes how people in the region collaborated and took the initiative to make rail service to Dulles a reality. It commemorates the work of Carrington Williams (1919-2002), who, among his many accomplishments, was responsible for creating the Virginia Port Authority and transforming Washington Dulles into a major international gateway.

John Milliken, chairman of the Wil-

liams Trophy Selection Committee, presented the 2022 award to Fairfax and Loudoun counties, Herndon, MWAA, and WMATA. Metrorail service was extended to Dulles International Airport and ten other stations in Fairfax and Loudoun counties by the Silver Line.

"I am especially pleased to be here on behalf of Chairman Jeff McKay and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors — past, present, and future," Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Penelope Gross said. "With a fully connected transit infrastructure to Dulles, the economic engine that is Fairfax County and Northern Virginia will be even more robust as we move together into the future — a future that once was a dream of planners and previous Boards of Supervisors," Gross said.

Sheila Olem, mayor of the Town of Herndon, said the Silver Line is transformative, affecting and expanding employment opportunities for residents. "This is going to



PHOTO BY DANIEL SONE

From left, Charles V. Stipancic Jr., Chair, Washington Airports Task Force; Penelope Gross, Vice Chair, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; Phyllis Randall, Chair, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors; Sheila Olem, Mayor, Town of Herndon; William Sudow, Chair, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Board of Directors; Keith Meurlin, President and CEO, Washington Airports Task Force; Shiva Pant, Chief, Special Projects Management & Oversight, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; and John Milliken, Chair, Williams Trophy Selection Committee.

be the engine that drives our economy here to keep the downtown as our heart and in Herndon," Olem said. "But we're going soul."

CALENDAR

NOW THRU FEB. 5

"Women Playing Hamlet." 8 p.m.
At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. A non-traditional look at one of Shakespeare's most revered works, presented in modern English, Women Playing Hamlet follows a young actress tackling the role of Hamlet in a comedic romp that examines gender norms, actors' egos, and Shakespeare. Women Playing Hamlet, by William Missouri Downs. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/women-playing-hamlet>

NOW THRU FEB. 12

Winter Lantern Festival will debut a spectacular holiday light adventure at the Lerner Town Square, 8025 Galleria Drive in Tysons starting Dec. 16 through Feb. 12. Winter Lantern Festival will feature over 10,000-LED Chinese-inspired artisan lanterns, along with live performances and on-site food vendors. Guests will wander through a wonderland of light that includes Chinese myths, legends, and zodiacs. In addition, they will view handmade lanterns encompassing a world of ice, including displays of mammoths, polar bears, and penguins. There will also be interactive light swings, see-saws, and tunnels. Be prepared to indulge your friends, family, and yourself in photo opportunities. Hours are Fridays to Sundays from 5-10 p.m. Visit www.winterlanternfestival.com.

NOW THRU APRIL 30

Score: Mixed Media Art. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Score explores 20 years of the work of Virginia-based mixed media artist, Joan Dreyer. While developing her MFA thesis at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, PA, Joan began taking tools, techniques and imagery that have been historically considered "women's work" and transforming them into innovative, contemporary art that is responsive to the tone and tensions of our times. Created by combining fiber techniques with unexpected materials like X-rays, her work is a subtle art that asks questions about life, loss, symbolism, and the impact of war instead of providing one size fits all answers. The artist's work provides a space for the contemplation of life stages that we all encounter. The result is a body of work that allows for meaningful but also multiple interpretations by the viewer. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/score-mixed-media>

JAN. 20-FEB. 5

Monty Python's Edukational Show. At Vienna Community Center 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. Vienna Theatre Company and Vienna Dept. of Parks and Recreation present Monty Python's Edukational Show, a collection of sketches, songs and animation from "Monty Python's Flying Circus." 8 p.m. on Jan. 20, 21, 27, 28, Feb. 3, 4; 2 p.m. on Jan. 29 and Feb. 5. Visit www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

MONTH OF FEBRUARY

Black History Month Lecture Series. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Black History Month is more than just a month-long observance at the Sully Historic Site. It's woven into the very

history of the house and the people who lived there. In addition to the ongoing tours of the home and outbuildings, Sully Historic Site will welcome three guest speakers to the site during the month of February to share insightful and incredible stories honoring Black History Month.

(Virtual Lecture) Dr. Charles R. Drew: African American Pioneer in Blood Plasma

Saturday, Feb. 4, 2023, 3 p.m.

Presenter: Cathleen Drew

Dr. Charles R. Drew was born and raised in Washington D.C. and Arlington; he became a pioneer in developing long-term storage for plasma. Learn about his incredible life that would help thousands from his grandniece, special guest speaker Cathleen Drew, a senior prevention program manager in the Drug Enforcement Administration's Community Outreach and Prevention Support Section. This online program is funded by the Sully Foundation Ltd. and will be a free virtual lecture.

(Virtual Lecture) Enslaved Resistance and Resilience in Fairfax County

Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023, 3 p.m.

Presenter: Dr. Sheri Huerta

Across Northern Virginia, enslaved men, women and children challenged their enslavers and the bonds of enslavement through many forms of resistance. This presentation explores some of their stories and the impact of their resistance and resilience on anti-slavery activism. Presented by special guest speaker Dr. Sheri Huerta, an adjunct professor at George Mason University in the department of history and art history. This online program is funded by the Sully Foundation Ltd. and will be a free virtual lecture.

Lunch and Learn: 18th Century Health Care from Two Perspectives

Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Presenter: Tory Cabrera

If you prefer a more hands-on experience and conversation, bring your lunch and join Tory Cabrera for an informal talk that includes displays and a Q&A, as we compare the health care methods, medicines and healing traditions employed by both the enslaved and free communities in the Federal period. Enrollment in this activity is \$8 per person.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 1

Tax Preparation and Filing Tips.

10-11:30 a.m. At Mason District Government Center, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale. CPA George Kresslein will offer advice for preparing and filing your 2022 income taxes. He will highlight any changes from previous year filings and answer your questions. Sponsored by NARFE Chapter 11159. Refreshments. You can also use ZOOM; contact doujones@verizon.net for link & password. Website: <http://narfe.org/chapter11159>

THURSDAY/FEB. 2

Hatha Yoga, All Levels. 10 a.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Hatha yoga includes asanas (poses), pranayama (breathwork) and meditation. The practice enhances flexibility of the muscles and spine while stimulating circulation, increasing sense of balance, and building strength. As with all yoga, this class will aid in relieving tension and stress and help increase



SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK®

Sweet Honey in the Rock will perform on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023 at The Alden at McLean Community Center in McLean.

focus as well as inducing calm in body and mind. All levels welcome. Modifications will be offered for different skill levels. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/aom-reservations>

FEB. 2-23

Glow Art classes. 9:30-10:15 a.m. Thursdays (4-week sessions). At Brown's Chapel, Reston. Kidcreate Studio is excited to partner with Reston Association to bring a FUN art class for your children. These projects will light up your child's world long after the lights go out at night. We will work with a variety of art supplies including clay, paint and many luminescent materials to create masterpieces that will glow in the dark. Come and create right along with your child.

FEB. 2-23

Open Life Drawing. 6-9 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Life drawing and painting group, on the first four Thursdays of every month. Bring your own drawing and/or painting supplies- easel, stools, and tables are provided. The first four Thursdays of every month- on the fourth Thursday of the month the model will be clothed/costumed in long poses. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/visual-arts-classes>

FEB. 3-4

Mason Cabaret. Feb. 3-4 at 8 p.m.; Feb. 4 at 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Harris Theater, Fairfax. Conceived by Erin Gardiner and James Gardiner; Directed by Erin Gardiner and James Gardiner; and Musical Direction by Joe Walsh

FEB. 3 TO MARCH 10

Mindfulness with Shilpi. 12-1 p.m. At Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. Easily drop down and settle into a deep state of relaxation without resistance. Begin the upward spiral of your own healing journey by coming into resonance and connecting with that innermost sanctuary within, that has the keys to issues you

may be dealing with. Get in touch with your internal GPS that can help you navigate your life without getting distracted or deviated from your Path. Sponsored by the Friends of Burke Centre Library. Adults. Website: <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10035131>

FRIDAY/FEB. 3

18th Century Game Night. 6-9 p.m. At Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Hall Road, Mason Neck. Are you ready for a night of games? Many people in the 18th century played a variety of card, dice, and board games. Letters, journals, and even existing game pieces can tell us a lot about the games they played in George Mason's lifetime. A number of them are predecessors to games we still play today. Learn how to play games like the Game of the Goose and Whist over a glass of wine or an 18th-century treat during this exciting night out at Gunston Hall. Game masters will be on hand to offer game recommendations, teach you how to play, and help you have a great time. For more information and to buy tickets: <https://gunstonhall.org/events/18th-century-game-night/>

FEB. 3-5

Chocolate Lovers Festival. Friday, Feb. 3 from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 4 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., and Sunday, Feb. 5 from 12-4 p.m. In the Old Town Fairfax Business Association, 10414 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Fairfax. Discover the extravagant designed chocolate displays by selected chocolate artists and chocolatiers of all levels. Judges and visitors both have the opportunity to vote in various categories. The Chocolate Lovers Festival was developed in 1992 as a joint effort of the City of Fairfax, Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Fairfax Coalition, Downtown Fairfax Merchants Association and George Mason University. The purpose of the festival was to draw visitors to Old Town Fairfax, to encourage community participation and to foster cooperation among the city government, the business

community and local residents.

SATURDAY/FEB. 4

Something Different. 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. At Vienna Community Theatre, Vienna. Something Different is an exhilarating romp through fairytales and folklore from around the world. Fasten your seatbelts for an hour of high-energy children's theater with a crazy ensemble of actors dedicated to introducing youngsters to the theater. Whether you're 3 or 93, you're sure to enjoy the always entertaining and mostly fractured fairytales that will leave you laughing. This performance is suitable for ages 3 and older.

SATURDAY/FEB. 4

OnStage: Stephanie Nakasian. 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Stephanie Nakasian known as one of the world's leading jazz singers, will take you on a fantasy swing voyage, fresh and authentic that transcends the Great Ladies of Song in both tribute and originality. Joining Stephanie for this amazing experience will be a top flight trio of musicians: Robert Redd on piano, Paul Langosch on bass and Chuck Redd on drums and vibes. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/stephanie-nakasian>

FEB. 4-5

Virginia Opera - Fellow Travelers. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Composed by Gregory Spears; Libretto by Greg Pierce. Fellow Travelers follows the story of a love affair between two men caught in the turbulent moment of Sen. Joe McCarthy's "Lavender Scare" - an overt policy to drive homosexuality out of government service. The very real struggles resulting from this witch-hunt end in a stunning act of betrayal.

SATURDAY/FEB. 4

Strategic Planning Community Forum. 9 - 10:30a.m. At Spring Hill Elementary School Cafeteria, 8201

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 17

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 16

Lewinsville Road, McLean. These Community Forums provide families, students, staff, and community members with an opportunity to participate in and influence the direction of FCPS' new Strategic Plan. The goal is to have the final strategic plan by June 2023. Learn more about our strategic planning process here. If you can't join the Dranesville Forum, please check out the schedule of Community Forums, including several virtual options, and register for one that is most convenient for you.

FEB. 4-5

Virginia Opera, *Fellow Travelers*. 8 p.m. Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday. In a commitment to share contemporary opera experiences with its audiences, Virginia Opera presents *Fellow Travelers* by New York-based composer Gregory Spears and librettist Greg Pierce. Set at the dawn of the Cold War, *Fellow Travelers* follows the blazingly idealistic Timothy Laughlin as he navigates through the intrigues of Washington, D.C. during the "Red Scare" of the 1950s.

SUNDAY/FEB. 5

Model Trains Running. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Potomac Module Crew will have HO gauge model trains running at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5 (\$6 for special events). Seniors and military, active and retired, \$4. www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/FEB. 5

Lunar New Year Celebration. 1-4 p.m. At Springfield Town Center, Springfield. Springfield Town Center is ringing in the year of the Rabbit through a new partnership with the Asian American Chamber of Commerce. The Center will be hosting a Lunar New Year Celebration on Sunday, February 5th from 1 - 4 p.m. in Grand Court on the Lower Level. Guests can enjoy traditional music and dance performances, festive displays, cultural activities, giveaways and more. Visit SpringfieldTownCenter.com.

THURSDAY/FEB. 9

Trip to 1964: The Tribute to the Beatles. 6:15-11 p.m. Bus pick up at RA Headquarters, Reston. Join them for a trip to the Barns at Wolf Trap for this fun outing! Beatlemania is back at The Barns with the "best Beatles tribute on Earth" (Rolling Stone). Choosing songs from the pre-Sgt. Pepper era, 1964: The Tribute astonishingly recreates an early '60s live Beatles concert with period instruments, clothing, hairstyles, and onstage banter.

FRIDAY/FEB. 10

"Danny Carmo's Mathematical Mysteries." 6 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden in McLean presents Northern Ireland's award-winning children theater company Cahoots NI's production of "Danny Carmo's Mathematical Mysteries," an inspirational and educational show for the whole family. Tickets



Charlie Zahm will perform Traditional Celtic Music on Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023 at the Old Brogue Irish Pub in Great Falls.

are \$17 for the general public; \$12 for tax district residents and \$15 for seniors and students. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit: aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

Sweet Honey in the Rock. 7 p.m. At The Alden at McLean Community Center, McLean. This concert is the first stop on the group's three-year, 50th anniversary celebration tour. Tickets are \$45 for the general public, \$30 for MCC tax district residents and \$35 for students and seniors. The Alden is located at 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean, Va. 22101. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit: aldentheatre.org or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

Second Saturday Art Walk. 6-9 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Come on out to this free event to view beautiful works of art including glass, ceramics, paintings, photography, textiles, jewelry and more. Talented artists will be

there to chat about their works and processes. Galleries, gift shop, and the Lucy Burns Museum will be open extended hours. While you're on campus, learn more about the Workhouse programs - swing by the Art of Movement, Building 11, to chat with instructors about classes in Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, Qigong, RowFit and Belly Dancing. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/second-saturday-art-walk-feb-2023>

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

Origami Swans WMAI. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Create Origami swans, hearts and butterflies with a variety of colorful and patterned origami paper! This workshop is designed to be fun-filled, art-making, experiences for the whole family.

All children must be accompanied by an adult. Join the talented Art Instructors as they guide you through mixed media exercises where you'll create a unique work-of-art by the completion of the workshop. Visit the website:

<https://www.workhousearts.org/military-in-the-arts-initiative>

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. In celebration of Black History Month, violinist Rachel Barton Pine makes her FSO debut to perform the recently rediscovered Florence Price Violin Concerto No. 2.

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

2023 CBA Ping Pong Tournament. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. Come join your neighbors for some midwinter fun and exercise. No fee to enter. To register, visit <https://C25K.redpodium.com/clifton-annual-ping-pong-tournament>

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

Virginia Polar Dip. 12 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. 1609 Washington Plaza, Lake Anne Dock, Reston. Everyone is invited to join in the fun of a Lake Anne winter tradition in its final year. The 15th Freezin' for a Reason Virginia Polar Dip at Lake Anne Plaza begins at 12 PM with DJ music and family friendly activities.

Registered participants can take a chilly full plunge or dunk their toes for a "Chicken Dip" to raise funds for Camp Sunshine and receive a commemorative "I DID IT" event shirt. Spectating is free. Check-in and on-site registration will start at noon and the Polar Dip begins at 2 PM. Online registration is open at freezinforareason.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 11

Violinist Rachel Barton Pine. 8 p.m. Fairfax Symphony Orchestra at GMU Center for the Arts. Florence Price: Violin Concerto No. 2; Sarasate: Fantasy on Bizet's "Carmen"; Rachel Barton Pine, violin; Dvořák: Symphony No. 7; Pre-concert discussion - 7 p.m. Enhance your FSO experience by joining Maestro Chris Zimmerman and violinist Rachel Barton Pine for fascinating insights behind the music you will hear.

SUNDAY/FEB. 12

T-TRAK Model Trains Running. 1-4 p.m. At the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5, \$6 for special events. Seniors and military, active and retired, \$4. www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/FEB. 12

Czech National Symphony Orchestra. 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The acclaimed Czech National Symphony Orchestra (CNSO) returns to the Center with an uplifting program of masterworks and embraces the sheer joy and optimism of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. This good-for-your-spirit concert also showcases Grammy-nominated violinist Robert McDuffie, performing Brahms's electrifying Violin Concerto in D major (Brahms's only violin concerto).

SUNDAY/FEB. 12

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring Charlie Zahm and Tad Marks. Tickets must be purchased in advance at www.oldbrogue.com - \$21 general admission. A season ticket for all 6 concerts is available for \$114. Visit www.oldbrogue.com or call the Old Brogue at 703-759-3309.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

Youth candidates must be 15-17 years of age on that date. One youth member will be elected from the McLean High School boundary area and one will be elected from the Langley High School boundary area. Youth candidates are not required to attend either school, but they must reside in the boundary areas served by those schools respectively, as defined by Fairfax County Public Schools. The three adult candidates who receive the highest vote counts will serve three-year terms. Youth members who receive the highest vote count will serve one-year terms.

Key Election Dates:

Friday, March 3: Completed Petition Packets must be returned by candidates in person to MCC by 5 p.m.

Saturday, March 11: Candidates' Orientation will be held at MCC.

Wednesday, March 15: Absentee Voting begins at MCC.

Wednesday, May 17: Absentee Voting ends at 5 p.m.

Saturday, May 20: In-Person Voting held at McLean Day at Lewinsville Park from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ALMOND MILK-BASED VEGAN CHEESE BRAND TO EXPAND HEADQUARTERS IN MCLEAN

Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced that Armored Fresh, the U.S. vegan food brand of Yangyoo, a South Korean leading food tech company, will invest \$125,000 to expand its headquarters in McLean. The company will bolster marketing

and sales staff support to scale up its presence in the United States. Fairfax County and Virginia successfully competed with several other states for the project, which will create 27 new jobs.

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/healthyminds-fairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

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Announcements

Giant Annual Book Sale

Beth El Hebrew Congregation
3830 Seminary Road, Alexandria

Presidents' Day Weekend
Sunday, Feb 19 9-5, Monday Feb- 20 9-3

Thousands of books, all sorted by categories
Also CDs, DVDs, audio books, LPs, games, and puzzles
\$1.00 and up, BIG bargains after noon on Monday!
Special room of collectible/antique books and LPs
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Employment

Senior Software Developer for SICPA Product Security LLC in Springfield, VA to conduct development and operational support for SICPA's North American Track & Trace product, SICPATrace. Bachelor or foreign equivalent in Comp Sci, Info Sys, or closely related field with 5 years experience in software development. Must be fluent in written and spoken Portuguese. Send CV to: Michele.Rabak@sicpa.com & incl. ref. code SSDLBM

Employment

Software Engineer II (Master's w/ 3 yrs exp or Bachelor w/ 5 yrs exp; Majors: CS, Comp Engg, Electronic Engg, or equiv; other suitable qualifications acceptable) - Herndon, VA. Job entails working w/ & reqs exp incl: ServiceNow ITSM, Project Portfolio Mgmt, JIRA, SCCM, BMC Remedy, AWS, GCP, SolarWinds, AppDynamics, Oracle ERP, Event & Demand Management, Domo, SnowMirror, JAVA, C, C++, HTML, JavaScript, SQL, CSS, & REST Web API. Relocation & travel to unanticipated locations within USA possible. Send resumes to Softility, Inc., Attn: HR, 607 Herndon Pkwy, Suite 304, Herndon, VA 20170.

CALENDAR

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Petersen, Bulova Town Hall Meeting, Feb. 4

Del. David Bulova (D-37th) and Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34th) will hold a town hall meeting Saturday, Feb. 4, from 9-11 a.m., at Fairfax City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St. in Fairfax. It'll begin with an overview of the General Assembly session to date; then the floor will be open for questions and answers.

Stuff the Bus to Help Britepaths

A Stuff the Bus food drive for Britepaths will be held Saturday, Feb. 11, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at the Fairfax Walmart, 11181 Lee Hwy. It's part of Fairfax County's annual initiative to stock local food pantries in the winter.

Volunteers will greet Walmart customers and distribute fliers asking for donations of food or money so nonprofit Britepaths can

continue providing food for local families in need. What's collected will then be stuffed into a Fastran bus and brought to the organization's pantry.

Bulova Holding Town Hall Meeting, Feb. 12

Town Hall Meeting: Del. David Bulova (D-37th) will hold a town hall meeting Sunday, Feb. 12, from 9-11 a.m., at Katherine Johnson Middle School, 3801 Jermantown Road in Fairfax. It'll begin with an overview of the General Assembly session to date; then the floor will be open for questions and answers. Coffee will be served.

This meeting is both in-person and virtual. To join via computer, tablet or smartphone, this link: <https://meet.goto.com/357422253>. Access Code is 357-422-253. Type questions in the chat area; staff will monitor and relay questions. Or dial in by phone by calling 224-501-3412.

It's Not Too Late: Vaccinate Your Child Against the Flu

FROM PAGE 14

ditions may be at higher risk of infection or complications from flu. Examples of chronic conditions include chronic lung or heart problems, diabetes, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, COPD and asthma, anemia, cancer, weakened immune systems, and seizure disorder.

Children younger than 5 years old are also at higher risk of flu-related hospitalizations. And while healthy children 5 years and older are not at a higher risk, they can spread flu to family members who are at higher risk.

FLU PREVENTION

In children, annual flu vaccinations reduce flu illnesses, doctor's visits, missed school days, and flu-related hospitalization. It is important for children ages 6 months and older to be vaccinated to protect against infection and severe illness.

Babies under 6 months are too young to be vaccinated, so the best ways to protect these children are for family members and caregivers to get vaccinated and for mothers to get vaccinated while pregnant. Vaccination during pregnancy has been shown to protect babies from flu infection for several months after birth.

The flu virus is constantly changing so getting an annual flu vaccine is recommended. Flu vaccines change each year to try to match the strains that are circulating.

While the best time to get the vaccine is in the early fall, it's not too late if your child has not yet been vaccinated. It's not too late for the adults in your household either. Getting the vaccine any time the flu virus is spreading provides some protection against serious illness. Visit the Fairfax County Health Department website to find locations that offer the flu vaccine.

In addition to vaccination, other everyday prevention actions you can take to prevent the spread of flu (and other respiratory

viruses) include:

- ❖ Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when you cough and sneeze
- ❖ Washing your hands often with soap and water
- ❖ Avoiding touching your face to stop from exposing yourself to germs on your hands
- ❖ Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces
- ❖ Avoiding contact with others who are sick or if you get flu symptoms.

"We also encourage you to wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said. "CDC continues to recommend masking for anyone choosing to travel by plane, train, bus or other form of public transportation, or for anyone who may be immunocompromised or increased risk of severe disease," Walensky said during a call with reporters in December.

IF YOUR CHILD GETS THE FLU

For most children with mild illness, treatment for influenza includes rest, fluids, and over-the-counter medicines for fever. Children with fever-causing illnesses like influenza should not be given aspirin, as this may cause a rare but serious complication called Reye's syndrome.

Prescription antiviral drugs are available and can reduce the severity of illness. Talk with your child's healthcare provider about whether your child should take antiviral drugs if they become sick with flu. Antibiotics do not treat influenza.

Familiarize yourself with emergency warning signs. If your child experiences any emergency warning signs, go to the emergency room. You should also consult your medical provider for any other symptom that is severe or concerning. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/children.htm#warning-signs>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.



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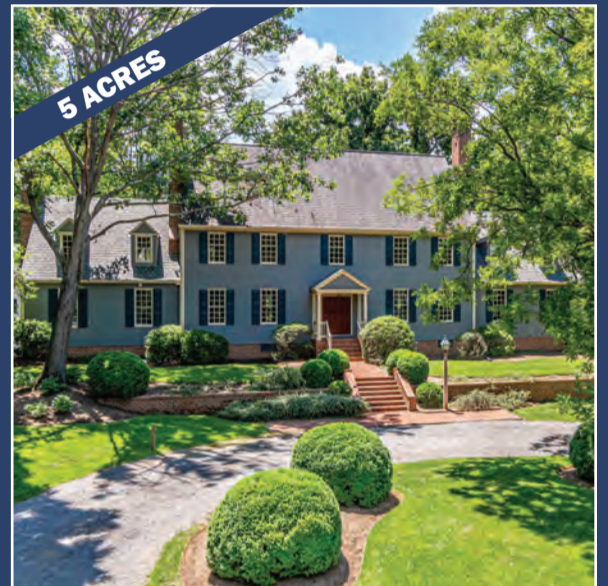
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