

# THE CONNECTION

McLean ♦ Vienna ♦ Oakton ♦ Great Falls ♦ Reston ♦ Herndon ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW ♦ Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station

## Pet Connection

PAGES 18, 20

### 75th Anniversary For Fairfax League Of Women Voters

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Homeless dog at  
AWLA returns the  
warmth of a caring  
volunteer during  
enjoyment of a break  
from the kennel for  
an outside walk in  
the sunshine

### Will Lake Accotink Become a Wetland?

PAGE 4

### Hackathon for Low Vision Solutions

PAGE 15

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## 130 S Virginia Avenue, Falls Church

Fabulous 3BR/1.5 BA end-unit in sought after Winter Hill. The main level features an open living room brimming w/ natural light, a powder room, and gourmet kitchen w/ granite countertops & SS appliances. The upper-level has three bedrooms & full bath. Gleaming hardwood floors on all levels w/ recessed light throughout the condo. Walk-out from kitchen to large fenced in backyard with a beautiful flagstone patio. This desirable community is close to shopping, restaurants, and farmer's market. **Falls Church City Schools!**

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1930 Relda Court  
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2204 Beacon Lane  
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**Curious what your home is worth? Call to chat with JD and Ed today!**



# NEWS

## Proposed Budget Has a Long Way To Go

**Average homeowner would pay about \$120 more a year in property taxes.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**F**airfax County Executive Bryan Hill presented his FY 2024 Advertised Budget Tuesday morning, Feb. 21. Hill said that revenue projections in the budget are based on the existing real estate tax of \$1.11, resulting in an increase to an average homeowner of “just under \$120,” because of the rise in property values. Approximately 67 percent of the general fund revenue is derived from real estate taxes which are projected to increase to 6.6 percent over FY23 levels.

According to Hill, the FY2024 Advertised Budget focuses on stabilizing what he called the county’s “core,” meaning its employees and existing programs in place to serve the county’s residents.

“What we are seeing across the board is that it’s costing us more and more to sustain this core,” said Hill.

The focus of his proposal was on employee compensation, Hill said, and on Fairfax County Public Schools.

As for personal property taxes, after a large increase in the fiscal year 2023, Hill said that personal property taxes are projected to be flat in the fiscal year 2024.

Net county resources are projected to increase by \$365.46 million over FY 2023 Adopted Budget Plan. The FY 2024 requirements for County allocation of resources



County Executive Bryan Hill presents the proposed budget.



Chairman Jeff McKay



Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield)



The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

total \$134.51 million for priorities: county compensation- \$92.73 million; debt service/capital requirements- \$9.85 million; inflationary /contract rate adjustments-\$18.05 million; new facilities \$5.31 million, and other priorities- \$8.57 million.

The FY2024 allocation for schools is 52.2 percent of the county’s general fund.

The county’s reserves decreased by \$3.53 million but remained budgeted at the tar-

get of 10 percent of General Fund disbursements. The FY 2024 Requirements for total uses are \$275.24 million. That leaves a \$90.22 million balance for board consideration.

Hill noted that in the capital improvement program, based on inflation and escalation in construction bids, 10 to 12 percent inflationary factors had been added to most projects. Some projects are recommended to be

deferred, such as the Tyson’s Police Station and the Chantilly Regional Library. Other projects are recommended to be accelerated, such as the Tyson’s Fire Station and the Criminal Justice Academy.

“We know that we are not the only ones impacted by this economy; our community partners with which we work every day are

SEE PROPOSED BUDGET, PAGE 23

### Grassroots Coalition Calls for Fairfax County Budget that Invests in Community, Local Families, Essential Workers

Invest in Fairfax is a grassroots coalition of local families, faith leaders, small businesses, county employees, educators, first responders, community organizations, and others.

Comments from different stakeholders were provided ahead of Tuesday’s budget presentation, and edited for length here.

“We have good and bad financial years. We need to learn how to make our budget work all the time. This means keeping our current financial commitments and meeting the needs of our residents. Our investments and budget should reflect these needs.”

— David Edelman,  
Chair of the Invest in Fairfax coalition.

“As an organization focused on voting and voter registration, the League of Women Voters of Fairfax would like to see adequate funding for the Board of Elections for staffing, maintenance and equipment, and other capital needs. We

hope that the County budget reflects its One Fairfax focus and provides more funding for affordable housing and for schools in less affluent areas of our county. We also hope that the county will allocate enough resources in the budget to ensure it delivers on its resolve to ensure equality and fairness for women.”

— Anu Sahai,  
Advocacy Co-Chair, Fairfax League of Women Voters

“The Fairfax County NAACP anticipates the Board will place top priority on allocating funding to properly support essential services equitably, particularly to our vulnerable communities. One of our top priorities in 2023 will be affordable and workforce housing. Affordable housing is consistently being lost to new development and rising rents across the County and the County is already seriously short on housing affordable to most county workers. More funds are needed to incentivize owners to stabilize rents and/or replace affordable units, as well as to help first-time homebuyers purchase homes.”

— Michelle Leete,  
President, Fairfax County NAACP

“The Fairfax Education Association stands in solidarity with the Invest in Fairfax coalition in asking this board to continue to make Fairfax County the place where everyone wants to live. To do this we must continue to invest in our community which includes our school system. Yes, hard decisions will have to be made about the trajectory of this county and this is when we must remember that there was a time when Fairfax County could tout how wonderful it was to live on our communities and attend premier schools; that time is fading fast because we are no longer investing in our future.”

— Leslie Houston,  
President, Fairfax Education Association.

“The Fairfax County Federation of Teachers believes in the need for a budget emphasizing the importance of public education. The Fairfax County Public Schools FY24 budget reflects the importance of attracting and retaining the best teachers and educational professionals. The FCPS budget also emphasizes the need to adapt to the best research into literacy practices. It also reflects the necessity to raise expectations and outcomes for our most vulnerable students.

The FCFT strongly encourages the Board of Supervisors to fully fund the FCPS budget request. Strong schools are the bedrock to the future economic strength of Fairfax County, and strong schools require the support of the Board of Supervisors.”

— David Walrod,  
President, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers and special education teacher with Fairfax County Public Schools.

“Fairfax County deserves a budget which invests in good, safe jobs for all workers, and quality public services for all working families. Frontline workers throughout our community need affordable health care, need fair pay to keep up with the cost of living and address wage compression, and need safe working conditions. That’s why county employees are coming together in SEIU to call for good jobs in this year’s budget and at the bargaining table.”

— Tammie Wondong,  
SEIU Virginia 512 Fairfax President and 33-year county employee





Last year, West Springfield residents Alania Archie, left, and Lindsay Innis launch kayaks in the boating area of Lake Accotink.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

At the lake's 60th anniversary last August, there was an official proclamation.

# Lake Accotink Heading for Wetlands Designation?

**Dredging cost increases might put the lake out of reach.**

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

For the fans of Lake Accotink, the silt problem is nothing new, but the silt continues to flow down Accotink Creek creating a situation, which was the topic of the latest conference call and in-person meeting.

The officials and residents involved have a few ideas for the silt in Lake Accotink: dredging it out, trucking it out to a dumping spot, letting it dry before moving it to its final resting place. The costs for this plan have jumped from \$30 million to \$395 million, and that likely puts it out of reach for the county.

Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D-Brad-

dock) spoke up in the virtual meeting. "We can't sugar coat it, the prognosis is not good," he said. "We're facing difficult realities."

Allan Robertson, who lives nearby and a member of the Friends of Lake Accotink group, was not happy about the price jump. "Suddenly this \$400 million price tag out of nowhere," he said. "It was clear the FCPA wanted to get rid of the lake," he said.

The plan could be to leave it as-is and let it become a wetlands that they compared to Huntley Meadows Park in the Franconia District. This is unrealistic, Robertson thinks. Without dredging, it will return to a "natural state," they claimed, but it isn't so easy. Stream restoration has occurred above the lake and below the lake, but Robertson said

it is not working. "We've gotten 43% more sediment than we thought we had," he said, adding, "natural state is a ridiculous lie."

Robertson indicated that the lake's value in regulatory compliance is "\$200 million annual value to the county," he said.

The official staff recommendation from Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and the public works director recommend that Lake Accotink not be dredged and become a more wetlands type of park like Huntley Meadows. But the ultimate decision will be up to the Board of Supervisors. Right now, the issue is going through a comments period, during which residents can ask questions or make comments online thru April 1.

Some are hoping this will keep the dredg-

ing under consideration.

Kristin Brown posted a plea for saving the lake on social media, suggesting a smaller dredge and possible places to dump the silt. With a smaller dredge, the expense would not be as much and it would buy time for the Lake Accotink community to think of a better solution, she said. "We don't need 8-feet of depth, just DO SOME NOW to give us time to come up with better plans, please!" she wrote.

"The lake is a recreation asset for the community," said Robertson.

Comments can be submitted through the comment box below, via email to F515@PublicInput.com or to the project manager Charles.Smith@fairfaxcounty.gov, or by US Mail to Fairfax County DPWES - Lake Accotink Dredging, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 449, Fairfax, VA 22035.

# Mike's American Grill Kitchen Fire Led to Evacuation on Valentine's Day

**Crews took a week to repair and reopen this noted neighborhood dining spot.**

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

On Valentine's Day earlier this month, the diners at Mike's American Grill had to cut short their meals due to a fire that started in the kitchen.

According to Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, there was a three-alarm building fire at Mike's American Grill, 6200 block of Backlick Road, Springfield on Tuesday, Feb. 14 at 8:55 p.m. Approximately 150 customers and 85 employees were present at the time of the fire. All evacuated prior to fire department arrival, and in a short time, fire trucks surrounded the restaurant, extending ladders to the roof.

Officials said there were no reported civilian or firefighter injuries. Fire started in the

kitchen on the first floor. The cause remains under investigation. Damages are estimated at \$200,000.

In the week following the fire, contractors were busy at Mike's, fixing the damage which was mostly on the first floor but some had crept up to the second floor in the duct work, and that required attention too. "They are going to be open soon," said one worker, who declined to give his name. Late Tuesday, Feb. 21 they passed inspection and planned to reopen the following day.

Mike's American Grill is part of the Great American Restaurants chain. Other Great American Restaurants include Patsy's American and Randy's Prime in Vienna, Ozzie's Good Eats in Fairfax, Jackson's in Reston, Carlyle in Arlington and Coastal Flats in Fairfax and McLean.

Out front, firefighters drag the hoses across the parking lot at Mike's American Grill



PHOTOS BY FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE



Ladders provided access to the roof.



## PEOPLE

# Songwriter in Springfield Has an Ear for Lyrics

Retired scientist creates songs with an upbeat sound to drown the negatives.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

Springfield resident Barry Geldzahler has experiences in different areas, including space, traveling and living in various spots. Now he spends his time writing upbeat songs for his group called Boys'N'Barry, delivering a positive message through music.

This includes his latest hit, "It's Christmas Time," that features a brass section, piano, guitar and background vocals, belting out lyrics like "the reason for you and me and family," it goes.

"I like the feel-good stuff," Geldzahler said, and there's feel-good stuff happening every month in his songbook. A month ago, Christmas was hot, and in February it was a Valentine's song, and it goes throughout the year like that. "I try to write music every day, I carry a composition notebook with me," he said. One of his songs, "Reach for the Stars," was featured in the National Space Symposium.

Geldzahler started out thinking scientifically and went into advanced education, got a degree in astrophysics which led to a career with NASA, which went on for years. Musically he was in a band in high school, he was in another band in college. Professionally, his NASA work was partially with MIT, he lived in Germany, and married his wife who has a doctorate in social psychology. They settled in Springfield in the early 1980s.

The upbeat outlook has lived on, and for inspiration, he looks to musicians like the Beatles, Smokey Robinson, the Beach Boys, Pink and Lady Gaga. At first these musicians might seem all over the place, but they do follow a common thread of being "very melodic," he said, and it inspires his song writing. Another motivating sound was from the 1980s group REO Speedwagon that he crossed paths with at University of Illinois.

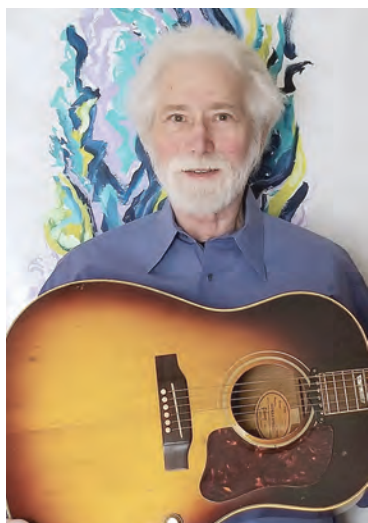
Technology is helping make it possible to live in Springfield, work with the various musicians in Boys'N'Barry over the internet, and send stuff to a single producer that pulls it all together. Members of the group live in Maryland, Los Angeles and Sweden. This works to an extent, but Geldzahler is

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PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/  
CONNECTION

Barry Geldzahler lives in Springfield but works with musicians worldwide.



He was a Mid-Atlantic Song Contest Award Winner in 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2012.

planning on traveling to New York and Los Angeles in person soon to make some connections for future songs. Geldzahler likes to meet face to face, and see if there's a connection and possible future for his music. After all, all the television shows and movies being produced need some kind of music, and meeting people may be a way to make that happen.

"There's nothing like a personal connection," he said. One song that's getting a lot of airplay recently is called "Kisses on my Face," which he wrote with a friend in Australia.

At home he bounces ideas off his wife and has a son living in North Potomac, jots down ideas and keeps the music flowing. Through the years, he's won some awards with his lyrics and loves the work he's doing with Boys'N'Barry and Midwest Songs Limited LLC.

# Dr. Whyte's New Book

Released February 14, 2023

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# Using Every Tool to Help the Homeless

Fairfax City contributes \$700K to Lamb Center's building project.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

It's often difficult for city officials to balance everyone's needs, but Fairfax City Council is trying to do the best it can. As a result, it gave a large amount of money last week to a project to house the homeless, while also putting some aside to help lower-earning City employees obtain their own housing.

On Dec. 13, 2022, Council approved The Lamb Center and Wesley Housing's request to construct permanent, supportive housing at 9640 Fairfax Blvd. It'll replace the old Hy-Way Motel with an affordable, five-story apartment building that gives 54 homeless people a place to live.



Tara Ruskowski

Ten days later, The Lamb Center and Wesley asked the City to appropriate the \$825,000 in its Affordable Housing Trust Fund toward this project which is estimated to cost \$29 million. The fund was created from developers' proffers earmarked for affordable housing here.

And last Tuesday, Feb. 14, Fairfax agreed to chip in most of it, but not all. Instead, Council members approved \$700,000 from that fund. The other \$125,000 will be retained to help City employees, such as teachers and public-safety staff, afford to buy and rent homes in Fairfax, too.

Various other sources, including the Fairfax County Redevelopment & Housing Au-



Artist's rendition of the new, affordable apartment building to serve the homeless.

thority (FCRHA), are also planned to help fund the new building. However, the largest portion of upfront capital is anticipated to be provided via competitive Low Income Housing Tax Credits – and applications for them are due March 16.

It's federal money allocated annually through Virginia Housing, and already-secured local funding is a consideration re-

garding which projects receive these credits. So toward that end, a cash infusion from Fairfax City would help, as well as illustrate the City's faith in this project.

The apartment building will be a block from The Lamb Center's daytime, drop-in shelter on Campbell Drive. Wesley Housing is the project developer and – with The Lamb Center's guidance – will manage the

property. There'll be 42, 350-square-foot efficiency units; 10, one-bedroom; and two, two-bedroom for residents needing caregivers. And 15 percent will be ADA-compliant.

Residents will have their own rental leases with no time limits, and a variety of services will help them stay in and maintain their homes, find employment/income and

SEE FAIRFAX CITY, PAGE 14

## Aging While Black During Black History Month, local church helps seniors get health and financial assistance.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

On a recent Sunday afternoon, Winifred Johnson sat in the basement of New Hope Church in Vienna listening to a group of fellow members in her small congregation discuss and offer solutions to the health disparities, both financial and physical, between African American seniors and their white counterparts.

"We go down stairs after we're filled with the Holy Ghost during our service, have lunch and listen to these young people," she said.

The workshop, "Aging While Black," was created by three church members, a cardiac nurse, a retired primary care physician and an accountant. Held each Sunday afternoon during Black History Month, the one-hour sessions are designed to help elderly members of New Hope's congregation locate and gain access to health care providers and financial experts who understand and respect the cultural practices and experiences that can be attributed to their current health and financial woes.

"They've experienced a lifetime of racism in employment, health and education. ... You name it and they can tell you a story about an experience they've had with dis-

crimination," said Angela Belton, RN, a cardiac nurse and one of the program's creators. "We're helping them because we owe it to them because of all that they've endured."

"A lot of our members use home remedies when they get sick because they don't trust doctors," said one of the creators. "Instead of seeing a cardiologist, they treat high blood pressure by eating a clove of garlic stuffed into a banana slice or treat flu symptoms with honey, lemon juice and whiskey."

Getting help from people they know and trust often quells suspicions of African American seniors and removes some of the barriers

to services that they need, explains Belton.

"We do everything from helping them choose a doctor who takes Medicare to making a list of questions to ask their doctor," she said. "Some of our younger church members have even accompanied our elderly members to their doctor's appointments to make sure they're getting the help they need, sharing the right information and remembering what the doctor told them to do."

Social Security is the primary source of income for the majority of New Hope's elderly members, which limits their quality of life.

"So far we've taught them how to manage the money that they get

each month so that they can stretch it enough to help meet their basic needs. Some don't even get enough money to do that," said financial advisor and co-creator Kristen Baker. "The members who are blessed to live in their own home oftentimes have a house that needs repairs to make them safe and livable. Our younger members who're handy have gone in and made repairs."

The month-long workshop has been a source of strength and comfort to New Hope's seniors.

"It's so good that we can help our own in our own community," said Johnson.



## NEWS

# Vienna Robots Help with Renovations at Washington Cathedral

Robots and humans make their marks on the stone blocks for Washington National Cathedral.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**E**asy Stone Center on Mill Street NE in Vienna, Virginia, commonly uses CNC (computer numerically controlled) stone-cutting machines or software-programmed robots to cut, shape, and intricately carve stone fireplace hearths, surrounds, mantles, and other products from blocks of limestone, sandstone, marble, and granite. All products are custom-made to dimensions, according to business owner Chris DeCarlo of DeCarlo Enterprises, Inc., trading as Easy Stone Center.

"The company's been in business for 18 years, and it cuts stone for anything from hearths to intricate designs. We've also cut stone for the U.S. Capitol when they were doing their restoration work," he said.

Recently, Easy Stone Center received an architectural fabrication request for a private building in the District of Columbia listed on the National Register of Historic Places of the United States Department of Interior. Erected "for a thousand-year design life," construction began in 1907 when the building's foundation stone was laid during a ceremony that included an address by President Theodore Roosevelt, according to its NRHP inventory-nomination form, entry date 1974.

That building is the Washington National Cathedral, officially named the Cathedral Church of St. Peter and St. Paul — designed in the 14th-century Gothic style. It claims the status of the highest spot in Washington, D.C., given that its 300-foot tower sits on a hill 400 feet above sea level.

During a rare earthquake that occurred in the mid-Atlantic region on Aug. 23, 2011, three fleur-de-lys-shaped corner spires broke off and fell from their pinnacles.

Now, approximately 11-and-a-half-years after the earthquake, the time has arrived to cut the replacement spires. The stoneworkers at Easy Stone Center, under the direction of Mike Kennedy, have the tools, reputation, and expertise to complete the task.

Easy Stone Center owns and operates a powerful Breton shapemill, said DeCarlo. It is designed to machine into tough stone that requires high power and torque and operates with large workpieces. For example, DeCarlo said, "The company buys quarry blocks that weigh 20 tons ... They might measure 10 x 4



VIA WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL (@WNCATHEDRAL)

Joe Alonso, Cathedral Head Mason, Kevin Eckstrom, Cathedral Staff and Mike Kennedy, Easy Stone, Center.

x 5 feet. They are cut with a block saw, which has an 11-foot-6-inch diameter."

The cathedral is made of limestone blocks. Under Kennedy's hands, the software suite allows control of the machining center through 3D CAD/CAM programming of complex stone components. The 5-axis machining center is perfect for cutting, shaping, block slotting, turning, and milling, giving statues and columns complicated, intricate, and exact shapes for restoration work.

The Washington National Cathedral posted on Instagram at Washington National Cathedral (@WNCathedral) that even though the cathedral is entirely hand-crafted, "sometimes they get a little help from robots."

"As we seek the remaining \$14 million to finally complete the repairs from the 2011 earthquake, a robotic carving drill in nearby Vienna, Va., is helping to shave some time and money from the project. The giant drill at Easy Stone Center takes a computerized rendering of the carved pinnacles and finials and rough-cuts the Indiana limestone to about 80 percent finished."

According to the post, "The giant stones will be transported to the cathedral, where their stone carvers will finish the detail work by hand. They will use centuries-old techniques and tools. When the stones are finished, they'll eventually go to the top of the cathedral's central tower to replace giant pinnacles that were damaged in the earthquake."

The Washington Cathedral continues to fundraise for repairs. The overall target is to raise \$150 million. Visit their website for more information.

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# OPINION

## Honored to Be Your Delegate

**Ken Plum, longest-serving Democrat in the House of Delegates first elected in 1977, will not run for reelection.**

BY DEL KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

**N**ext year will be the first time in 48 years that I will not be in public office or be a candidate for office. I am not running for re-election this year.

I am indebted to the voters of Reston and nearby communities for returning me to office every two years. I am the senior member of the House of Delegates having served for a total of 44 years. I will continue to serve until my current term concludes at the end of this year.

I entered politics and the House of Delegates to fulfill a lifelong dream that Virginia could do better than being a backward Southern state and could fulfill the dreams expressed by our Founding Fathers who were Virginians. The 100-member House of Delegates I entered in 1978 was made up of 76 members who called themselves Democrats but more accurately were Dixiecrats—the most conservative of the



Democrats. The few Republicans were more moderate.

I was pleased to be part of the progressive Democrats who controlled the General Assembly in 2020-2021 and who passed the most progressive and transformative agenda ever in the history of the state. We have made significant strides, but as the current session of the General Assembly has shown we need to be vigilant and continue our efforts.

Over the years I worked on many issues including ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, expansion of human rights protections including LGBTQ+, preservation of our natural resources including climate change concerns and restoring the Chesapeake Bay, broadened participation in elections, protection of women's reproductive rights, expansion of transportation alternatives, safeguarding communities from gun and other violence, creating and maintaining the best possible education system from preschool to higher education, and more.

I could not be prouder than I am of the members of the Democratic caucus who succeed me. The caucus is made up of more women than men, persons of color, a different generation, and a broader perspective than has ever been represented in the State Capitol.

Even Capitol Square looks different than it did when I first arrived. The oversize statue of Robert E. Lee that dominated the original House of Delegates chamber has been removed. The statue of Governor and later Senator Harry F. Byrd that stood by the sidewalk between legislative offices and the Capitol is gone as is the tight hold of his conservative grip on state government that stifled the state's development for more than a half-century. Signifying the changes that have occurred over recent years is a memorial dedicated to the Indigenous people who occupied the area we now call a state for thousands of years before the English arrived. A unique memorial pays tribute to the women who contributed mightily to the state's history, and a civil rights memorial now stands featuring Barbara Johns who led a school walkout that launched the Civil Rights Movement in the state and led to the end of school segregation.

I remain the delegate for the new 7th district until the end of this year. Please call on me if I can be of assistance to you during that period. My heartfelt thanks to all who made my career of public service possible.

## General Assembly Is Finalizing Bills

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL (D-36)

**N**ow that the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates have completed work on all bills from each chamber, each chamber has begun work on bills from the other chamber. Some of the more difficult bills met their fate last week.

It appears that both houses will approve around 20 of my bills which I will discuss in a future column. This column focuses on several of my bills that the House of Delegates rejected.

### Protecting Choice

In the aftermath of last year's Dobbs decision, we must do everything we can to protect Virginia women and healthcare providers from prosecution for exercising their reproductive healthcare rights. Virginia is likely to become a sanctuary for women seeking reproductive healthcare due to our geographic position and existing laws. My legislation would prohibit the extradition of Virginia medical professionals who provide reproductive healthcare to other states. It failed on a party-line vote.

I also sought to allow Virginia women to sue any company that



sells or provides access to their personal reproductive healthcare information such as their menstrual data or location history derived from phone use that can be used to determine if they have visited a reproductive healthcare clinic. None is covered by state or federal healthcare privacy laws. My bill would have effectively ended the dissemination of this information for monetization or use in prosecution. The Senate approved my bill on a bipartisan vote, but a House committee killed it on a party-line vote.

The same House committee also rejected my legislation to clarify Virginia's emergency protection order or "red flag law." Red flag laws permit a court to order the temporary removal of firearms from people that may be a danger to others or themselves. These laws have reduced suicide by 9-14% in adopting states, but these laws do nothing if they are not used. About 60 of Virginia's 140 jurisdictions saw little to no use of the law. After the Senate approved my legislation on a bipartisan vote, a House committee defeated it.

In 2020, former Governor Ralph Northam's comptroller advised state agencies to redact the names

of all state employees using their official employment credit cards for paying for things like hotels and restaurants. I crafted a bill with the Virginia Coalition for Open Government to end redaction of this information so Virginians can see the names of state employees who spend taxpayer dollars. The Senate passed my bill unanimously, but a House subcommittee killed it on a party-line vote.

### Making Solar More Available

I also carried two bills to make shared solar energy more available. Shared solar allows consumers and small businesses to pur-

chase access to a solar farm and net the energy produced by the farm against their home electricity bill. This allows people to have access to solar if they cannot construct panels on their own roofs due to tree cover, homeowners' association rules or financial constraints or because they do not own their roof.

In 2020, I passed legislation authorizing a shared solar program in Dominion Power territory, but Virginia's State Corporation Commission set a minimum bill amount to cover a share of costs of using the

SEE SUROVELL, PAGE 23

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# Be the SPARC

BY KAITLIN PAYNE



I am encouraged that Virginia's General Assembly is considering a budget amendment that will have a profound impact on my life and that of so many friends. The \$250,000 amendment will support Specially Adapted Resources Clubs (SPARC), a day program that provides vital continuing education, leisure learning and chronic long-term care to adults with severe disabilities at five locations in Northern Virginia.

I have been a member of SPARC for eight years and love attending four days a week. I am 35 and can't walk or use my hands due to quadriplegic cerebral palsy. I also have low vision, and my voice is slow and difficult for some to understand. At SPARC, I have friends and involvement in the community, and the activities are adapted. I love it. No other day program offers opportunities that truly include me.

SPARC was founded in 2006 and changed the long-term care blueprint for young adults with severe disabilities. From the beginning, SPARC provided a safe and caring environment where young adults with severe disabilities learn and simply have fun together. SPARC provides the same supportive structure and continues the learning that we had in school while also giving us a place to socialize with a community of our peers.

SPARC has spent almost two decades proving how to efficiently deliver high-quality day programs to our community. It leverages existing resources and funding pools available to it and the families and people like me that it serves. It's a model that should be replicated. I know that the program is more effective and less costly than other options, but the funding SPARC receives is not enough.

My mom pays \$600 a month for me to attend, and even though it hasn't risen in several years that is a lot for us to afford. I am sad when I think that the cost limits the benefit of this wonderful program for other people like me.

Virginia is regularly ranked as the top state for conducting business, second for hospital patient care and safety, and fifth in education. But sadly, it ranks 39th for quality of life for people with disabilities. Investments like this can improve that and also save taxpayer dollars.

I am hoping that Virginia supports this amendment. I also hope that more people understand that enhancing lives for people with severe disabilities is a worthy and smart investment.

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# ‘Every Fatal Overdose Statistic Represents a Person’

Straight talk about opioids in Fairfax County.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he nationwide opioid epidemic continues to rage – and Fairfax County is not exempt. The problems here are real and deadly, with the main driver being fentanyl – usually mixed into other drugs such as heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine to increase their potency.

So to educate the public about what’s happening, the county Police Department and the Centreville Immigration Forum (CIF) held an Opioid Awareness meeting, Feb. 1 at the CIF office in Centreville. Speaking in both English and Spanish was Det. John Farrell, who’s been with FCPD more than 20 years, including a stint at the Sully District Police Station.

“Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, is factory-made,” he said. “It’s 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Most of it comes from China to Mexico and then to American communities. It gives users a small moment of happiness, but its effects include lethargy, nausea, confusion, depressed breathing and addiction.”

Fentanyl use can also lead to overdoses and death. In fact, during a community meeting on Feb. 8, Capt. Rachel Levy, Sully District Station commander, said, “Last year, we had five fatal opioid overdoses here and nine nonfatal. This year, so far, we’ve had two confirmed overdoses.” And 2023 has just begun.

Countywide, said Farrell, “We had almost 80 fentanyl deaths in the last year. It’s all



Rainbow-colored, fake oxycodone M30 tablets containing fentanyl.

over the county, in every district. And it’s not uncommon for us to see someone have several nonfatal overdoses before they have a fatal one. In 2018, we had 68 deaths, with 82 in 2021 and 76 in 2022. And there’s a person behind every statistic – a brother, sister, father, mother.”

He said fentanyl is either taken orally in pill form, crushed into a powder to be snorted or smoked, or changed into a liquid and injected via a needle. Often, said Farrell, “Youths put it on aluminum foil, light it underneath and inhale the vapors.”

He said fentanyl compressed into light blue pills bearing an M30 logo are what police here are seeing most frequently. “They come into the U.S. as powder,” said Farrell. “And as they’re pressed into pills, we don’t know how much fentanyl is in them.”



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Det. John Farrell



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The CSB's Anis Saccoh

Making matters worse is that they’ve recently become less expensive. “In the past two years, the cost of fentanyl has gone from \$30/pill to \$5/pill, so it’s easy to get,” said the detective. He then told parents how to tell if their son or daughter is using drugs.

Farrell said they should be alert for any changes in their children’s behavior or personality – including mood swings, lack of interest in their usual activities, poor hygiene,

digestive problems, trouble sleeping, and strained relationships with friends and family. Other physical signs are red eyes, dilated pupils, unexpected weight loss, red cheeks, shaking and unexplained injuries.

Another indication, he said, is a “constant need for money. When we see clusters of these behaviors, we need to ask ourselves if our child is using.” He also advised parents to look for drug paraphernalia such as pipes, lighters, bongs, aluminum foil and needles in their children’s rooms. For example, he said straws are used to snort the powder from pills that have been pulverized.

Signs of overdoses, said Farrell, are a slow or irregular heartbeat, blue lips, snoring or labored breathing, convulsions and loss of consciousness. “Snoring and difficulty breathing are major signs because fentanyl depresses the respiratory system and can lead to death,” he said.

“When you suspect someone has overdosed, call 911 immediately,” said Farrell. He also reassured the predominantly Hispanic audience that Spanish speakers are available to talk with them. Furthermore, he added,

“The laws protect the person calling in about the overdose. People in the house won’t be charged criminally, nor will the overdose victim.”

If help reaches the victim in time, said Farrell, Narcan spray will quickly reverse the ef-

**Nonfatal drug overdoses in Fairfax County nearly doubled between 2018 and 2021, skyrocketing from 142 to 271 – with another 246 in 2022. In 2018, there were 68 deaths, with 82 in 2021 and 76 in 2022.**



The comparative strengths.



# Opioids In Fairfax County

FROM PAGE 10

fects of an opioid overdose. “That’s why we want to get them help as soon as possible,” he said. “And we’ll still call 911 because we won’t know the amount of fentanyl in the person’s system.”

Farrell said police are constantly seeing “stronger and more potent versions of drugs” being made. For example, he said, “A version of fentanyl called carfentanil is the most lethal drug, followed by fentanyl and then heroin,” because it takes so much less carfentanil to kill someone than the other two narcotics.

Compounding the ever-increasing drug problem, he stressed, is that “You can’t tell fake and real fentanyl pills apart. They’re made to resemble OxyContin, Xanax, Adderall and other pharmaceuticals and contain no real medicine. Worse yet, said Farrell, is that they’re deliberately produced in rainbow colors to look like candy, so they’ll attract children.

And according to the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), “It only takes 2 milligrams – the amount on the tip of a pencil – to be lethal. And four out of every 10 fake pills with fentanyl contain a potentially lethal dose.”

Farrell showed a slide depicting the slang terms dealers use when marketing their wares to customers via texts and other messaging. For instance, the word “plug” stands for dealer, and “jam” means to get high. “Erks” stands for Percocet, and terms for OxyContin and Xanax include: “blues, 30s, M box, bars, school buses and football.”

But that’s not all. There’s also a whole, emoji drug code by which dealers target and communicate with their teenage customers. Dealers can also tell them via emoji what they have to sell, how much of it they have and how strong it is. (See chart). For example, a maple leaf is the universal symbol for drugs, and a cookie means the dealer has a large batch to sell.

“With the parents’ consent, I’ll look for these words and emojis in the phone messages of an overdose victim to see who’s the dealer,” said Farrell. “Most likely, anything blue or with the letter ‘P’ [means narcotics]. Parents should also often look in their children’s phones to see what they’re looking at.”

Speaking next was Anis Saccoh, a behavioral health specialist with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB). This entity works to both treat and prevent drug and alcohol misuse and to promote wellness, and Saccoh deals with the prevention side.

He said sometimes people use drugs because of mental-health issues so “We give them resources to deal with them. We also offer in-depth classes, in both English and Spanish, on how to respond to a person

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## EMOJI DRUG CODE | DECODED

### COMMON EMOJI CODES

#### FAKE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

##### PERCOCET & OXYCODONE



##### XANAX



##### ADDERALL



#### DEALER SIGNALS

##### DEALER ADVERTISING



##### HIGH POTENCY



##### UNIVERSAL FOR DRUGS



##### LARGE BATCH



#### OTHER DRUGS

##### METH



##### HEROIN



##### COCAINE



##### MDMA & MOLLIES



##### MUSHROOMS



##### COUGH SYRUP



##### MARIJUANA



This reference guide is intended to give parents, caregivers, educators, and other influencers a better sense of how emojis are being used in conjunction with illegal drugs. Fake prescription pills, commonly laced with deadly fentanyl and methamphetamine, are often sold on social media and e-commerce platforms – making them available to anyone with a smartphone.

#ONEPILLCANKILL

dea.gov/onepill

*Disclaimer: These emojis reflect common examples found in DEA investigations. This list is not all-inclusive, and the images above are a representative sample.*



#### The emoji drug code between dealers and customers.

who’s overdosed. And we deal with why drugs are so attractive to people.”

Nonfatal drug overdoses in Fairfax County nearly doubled between 2018 and 2021, skyrocketing from 142 to 271 – with another 246 in 2022. “These aren’t just numbers,” said Saccoh. “They’re your kids, your friends, your neighbors in the community; that’s who we’re trying to reach.”

He then passed out information telling various county resources available to people, numbers to call in a mental-health emergency, the services offered by CSB and

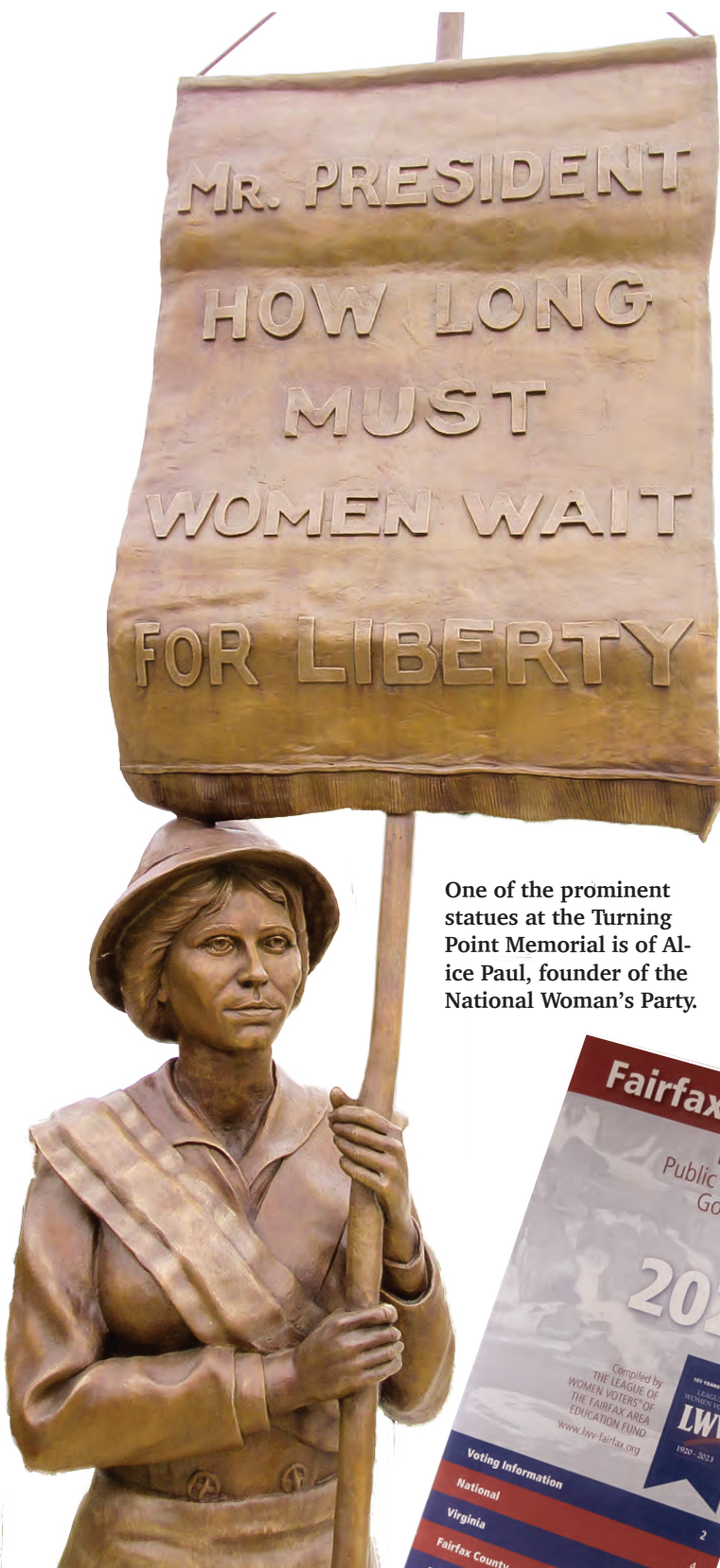
how to access them, plus locations where CSB classes are held. For more information, call 703-383-8451 or email csbprevention@fairfaxcounty.gov.

In response to audience questions about how prevalent drugs are in the county, and what police are doing to combat them, Farrell said, “There are many drug dealers in Fairfax County. The bigger dealers are outside the county, but drugs come here to middle-level dealers and then to teens – who carry around some pills and distribute them to their friends.”

He said police SROs (school resource officers) are trained in drug identification, and “We use social media and undercover officers to try to identify the dealers.” Saccoh noted the CSB is also working with school nurses and others to help them deal with drug problems in their schools.

A woman then asked what would happen if an undocumented person reported a drug overdose. “They won’t get into trouble with the police or immigration,” replied Farrell. “Fairfax County police don’t work with immigration.”





One of the prominent statues at the Turning Point Memorial is of Alice Paul, founder of the National Woman's Party.

The Fairfax League of Women Voters prepares "Fairfax Facts" every year.



The Fairfax League of Women Voters has registration events all over the county many times a year.

## VOTING RIGHTS

# Still Fighting for Voting Rights

In 1920, the National American Woman Suffrage Association became the League of Women Voters.

By GLENDA C. BOOTH  
THE CONNECTION

Love was in the air last week on Valentine's Day. For the League of Women Voters (LWV), love is always in the air, the love of voting. Feb. 14 was the 103rd anniversary of the national League of Women Voters and this year marks the 75th anniversary of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area.

Registering voters is the heart and soul of the organization. Registration volunteers go to farmers' markets, festivals, libraries, town meetings, high schools, colleges and new citizen ceremonies. In 2022, the Fairfax LWV registered 4,500 voters in the Fairfax area, including over 2,000 at local high schools and 2,300 at naturalization ceremonies for new citizens. Nationwide, the League registered 35,000 new citizens as first-time voters. This spring, members will conduct voter registration drives at George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College and recruit the next generation of LWV members.

Annandale resident and Fairfax co-president Pat Fege especially enjoys registering high school students. "I strongly believe that voting is the most important right of citizenship and must be accessible, valued and used," she said. "When students register to vote, the information they learn in government classes has a real-life connection. They understand that through voting, they can have an impact on their government."

On Feb. 22 at Mount Vernon Estate, the Fairfax League, which has members in both Fairfax City and County, will register new citizens at a naturalization ceremony. "This is the first act these people take as new American citizens, to register to vote, because we are there," says Arina van Breda, Director of Voter Registration for the chapter.

The League is strictly nonpartisan, never endorsing candidates, with around 2,000 members, men and women, in Virginia. "Lots of other organizations get involved in voter registration once every four years," notes van Breda. "We are



Statue of Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and founder of the League of Women Voters, at the Turning Point Memorial.

doing this year in and year out. We promote civic engagement and do so in a civil manner. And because we have been doing this for over 100 years, people know they can trust the information the League provides."

"The League of Women Voters is the largest organization that has its ears to the ground to voters," says Alma Couverthie, chief programs officer for the national League. "Our power and influence as the oldest voting rights organization support our mission to empower voters and defend policies that support a strong and equitable democracy."

## Voting Not Always Assured

Voter registration and voting have had a bumpy history. Voting advocates cite obstacles throughout U.S. history like literacy tests, partisan and racial gerrymandering of districts, inconvenient polling

**"Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it."**  
— Suffragist Susan B. Anthony

place hours and locations and photo identification requirements.

It took the suffrage movement 72 years of zealous activism to get women the right to vote into the U.S. Constitution, finally succeeding in 1920. That happened after suffragists persistently picketed the White House, lobbied a recalcitrant Congress, staged parades, had endless meetings and conducted wide-

spread pamphleteering.

Fairfax County was the scene of a turning point in that movement. In 1917, over 1,000 suffragists, dubbed the "Silent Sentinels," peacefully picketed President Woodrow Wilson on the White House sidewalk seeking his support for the suffrage amendment. On Nov. 10, 1917, police arrested 27 women picketers for "obstructing traffic" and jailed them in the Occoquan Workhouse at Lorton, fed them mostly hard bread and maggot-laden soup and denied them water. Guards chained Lucy Burns by her wrists to her cell door all night. The night of Nov. 15, 1917, at the workhouse became known as the "Night of Terror." In 2021, the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial commemorating the movement opened near the former Workhouse.

The League was born out of the suffragist movement when in 1920, the National American Woman Suffrage Association became the League of Women Voters.

Deb Wake, president of the Virginia LWV says, "103 years ago, women knew we could not change laws until we had the right to vote and that to vote, women needed to be educated on the issues."

## Paying to Vote

Until 1851, in Virginia, only adult, white, property-owning men



A naturalization ceremony at USCIS District Office in Merrifield, Virginia earlier this month after which the new citizens were registered to vote by LWV volunteers.

had the right to vote. In that year, the legislature repealed the property ownership requirement, thus en-

## Panel Discussion

March 8, panel discussion:

"Finding our Voice - The Vote," with the Fairfax County Public Library system. <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/9940341>  
What's on the 2023 Ballot, Fairfax Facts and LWV activities.  
Primary date is June 20. <https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/>.

franchising all white men. After Reconstruction (1865 to 1877), many southern states, including Virginia, enacted a poll tax as a prerequisite for voting, which effectively disenfranchised poor people and Black people.

Virginia's poll taxes remained in effect until the 1960s and ended, in part, due to the efforts of Evelyn Thomas Butts a 41 year old Black community activist, mother of three and grandmother who was married to a disabled veteran and worked as a seamstress. In November 1963, Evelyn Thomas Butts and her attorney Joseph A. Jordan Jr. filed the first suit in a federal court seeking to have the poll tax declared unconstitutional. In March 1964, Annie E. Harper and a group of people from Fairfax County filed another federal suit against the poll tax. The two cases were later combined. On March 24, 1966, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the combined cases called Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections that the use of a poll tax in

Fairfax County resident Lynn Garvey-Hodge often re-enacts suffragist Mrs. Robert "Mimi" Himes and will be a panelist at the LWV March 8 event.



LWVFA volunteers after registering students at South County High School: (from left) Beth Tudan, Jessica Storrs, Sheryl Williams, LWVFA co-president Pat Fege, Arina van Breda, Debby Pool, Judy Smith.



Fairfax League members had a life-size cutout of suffragist Susan B. Anthony at Supervisor Dan Storck's Feb. 11 town meeting. Here, left to right, Elizabeth Woodruff, Teresa Knox, "Susan B. Anthony" and Arina van Breda.



A recent voter registration and information event on campus at NOVA Annandale, with volunteers Kristen Ferrand (center) and Mary Ann Bradley speaking to a student.



Elizabeth Woodruff, Arina van Breda and Teresa Knox encouraged people to register and vote at Supervisor Dan Storck's Feb. 11 town meeting.

SEE STILL FIGHTING, PAGE 7



## VOTING RIGHTS

# Still Fighting for Voting Rights

FROM PAGE 13

## Active Advocates

The Chapter soon began to take on several local public policy issues, including advocating for a strong public school system and dismantling racial segregation in schools. “Complete integration of Fairfax County Public Schools was achieved by the late 1960s,” wrote Colvard. Since the 1970s, the League has championed the equal rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 2022, the League convinced the Board of Supervisors to endorse the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Every year, the chapter publishes Fairfax Facts, a compendium of local government information.

League members also lobby state legislators, including making trips to Richmond during General Assembly sessions. This year, among other measures, they supported repealing the witness requirement for absentee ballot envelopes, the right to marry amendment, ranked choice voting and bills requiring safe gun storage. They opposed diverting public funds to private schools.

A major initiative in 1993 was the “motor voter” bill, to enable citizens to register to vote at motor vehicle agencies automatically and by mail and at agencies that serve the public.

While most Americans today take the right to vote for granted, League members are quick to draw on suffragist Susan B. Anthony’s words: “Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it.”



A newly naturalized citizen being registered to vote by LWVFA volunteer and former president, Anu Sahai. In 2022, the LWVFA registered nearly 2,300 new citizens to vote.

PHOTO BY ARINA VAN BREDA



LWV volunteer Kristen Ferrand at a recent South County high school voter registration event explaining voter registration in the classroom.

PHOTO BY ARINA VAN BREDA



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

At the Turning Point Memorial, panels tell the story of the American women’s suffrage movement.

## Fairfax City contributes \$700K to Lamb Center’s Building Project

FROM PAGE 6

address their physical- and behavioral-health needs. And this housing will cost no more than 30 percent of a resident’s income, or a minimum of \$50/month.

Council members discussed the funding request at both their Feb. 7 and Feb. 14 meetings. At the first one – which was a work session – FCRHA Director Tom Fleetwood said the total support from that entity would equal “approximately \$20.6 million over the first 30 years of the project” via upfront capital and long-term, rent-subsidy contributions.

And Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read said \$825,000 is “a small amount of money” considering the overall project cost and the fact that it’ll put a roof over the heads of 54 unhoused people.

The second meeting included a public hearing on this issue since the \$825,000 was included in a City supplemental appropriation resolution for the third quarter of FY 23. Resident Laura Stokes, who lives near where the building will go, urged Council to approve the resolution and said she appreciated everything the City is doing to help the homeless.

The Lamb Center’s Martin Lockerd thanked Read and the Council for helping “the poor people of this City. And the fact that you’re putting up some money to help with affordable housing is applaudable. So many jurisdictions would throw up their hands.”

Vicanzia Bonaspina said the project will help “people down on their luck. They have value and deserve dignity, and this will help get them off the street and into housing.” And Saddam Al Salim said an investment now will “pay off in the future.”

“The funds in the Affordable Housing Fund have languished for years with no plans for their use,” said Judy Fisher. “Allocate them to The Lamb Center.”

“This is a remarkable project, and it’s a blessing that we have these funds available,” added Julie Knight. “Using them now is an important contribution to move [this building] forward. But I also urge you to look at

and support the needs of the service workers – teachers, public-safety personnel, etc. – who live in our City.”

TLC Executive Director Tara Ruszkowski thanked the Council for its leadership. “There are lots of jurisdictions who talk about homelessness, but this is a community really addressing it,” she said. “This is a City and Council of action; you’re using every tool you have to help the homeless. We’re so grateful for the way you’re attacking the challenges we face as a community, and we look forward to working with you in partnership.”

Deacon Dave Larrabee, who’s served 24 years at The Lamb Center, said he’s seen how “housing saves and transforms lives, and benefits the community. I’ve also seen many of our neighbors who’ve died on the streets, experiencing homelessness. Many homeless people have had trauma in their lives, and it’s compounded by homelessness.”

“Once in housing, I’ve seen them heal. And supportive housing ensures they get the assistance they need to thrive. They’re also no longer a draw on emergency services, saving taxpayers money. I’m grateful to live in this community that cares about all of our neighbors. I urge you to vote in favor of this \$825,000 investment. Thank you so much for all you do.”

Ultimately, the Council approved most of it. Councilmember So Lim made a motion to reduce the amount to \$700,000. “I’d also like the ability to help public-safety staff, teachers and people who work for us in the City with their homebuying and renting,” she explained. “And this reduction won’t hurt the project.”

While this building is “hugely important,” added Councilmember Kate Doyle Feingold, other nonprofits here wanted to know how they could have gotten some of this money too. But there wasn’t a process.”

Still, said Councilmember Billy Bates, “I believe we did the best we could, given the time frame and limited resources we have.” Council then voted and approved the \$700,000 contribution unanimously.



## HACKATHON

# Teen Turns Sensory Disability to Focus on Seeing Farther

**M**et Edward Zhang, the teen behind CodeOn, an event with ambition to change the world for about ten million people in the United States affected by retinal diseases. Zhang's own condition inspired him in his quest to make life better for others with severe vision problems.

If that seems a gargantuan task, consider what Zhang has accomplished so far. Zhang has a rare retinal disease called Retinoschisis, and is legally blind with a visual acuity of 20/200. Although he could see normally until about 4th grade, the next three years would be traumatic as the disease took hold. He was forced to miss a considerable amount of school during this period as he endured multiple operations because of complications with internal bleeding from retinal detachments and ensuing recovery periods. His treatment was complicated by a lack of doctors with this specialty on the east coast, forcing travel to Detroit, Michigan for treatment. His condition would stabilize eventually, but with a trade off. His vision remains at about a fifth of normal vision.

Zhang has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for school and wears a special telescope attachment mounted on trifocal glasses to see the board. Dealing with schoolwork and other simple



PHOTO COURTESY EDWARD ZHANG

Edward Zhang (right) works with Pranav Kappa during their lunch break to prepare for the hackathon event



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/  
THE CONNECTION

Edward Zhang

tasks, like reading a restaurant menu or navigating streets on cloudy days when he can't discern traffic lights, required him to come up with new ways to cope. He describes his situation until high school as having to "essentially just do this by myself, because we

didn't really, my family and I, know of anyone else that had this condition and since this was a rare condition, even the doctors

didn't really know what to do ... so I had to come up with my own solutions."

Things look brighter for Zhang now that he's reached high school and met a "visually impaired community."

He says, "I chanced upon a local visually impaired community – a support network of low-vision teachers, researchers, patients, and doctors." Also through his specialty optometrist he met others through groups like the Foundation Fighting Blindness and Virginia Lion's Eye Institute Foundation. "By

meeting and engaging with this visually impaired community over the years, I began to realize that I wasn't alone and that I could make a difference in the world by focusing on my abilities."

Part of that focus on abilities meant applying for Thomas Jefferson. Although he had missed foundation learning areas, he did well on the entrance tests and essays. His only accommodation in application consideration was use of large type test booklets with 16 point font instead of 12 point. Zhang doesn't claim the description of "gifted," but he says, "If I want something, I really dive into it. I feel like when I really dive into something, I'm very good at it."

Other things that Zhang is good at include: mastering the Rubik's cube, made more difficult by being color recognition challenged; computer science and artificial intelligence (AI), starting an AI school club; and attaining "Master" in Google's Kaggle machine learning.

Zhang shares: "Over the past two years, I have been trying to give back to this community who have helped me so much, from helping mentor younger students to embarking on my own computer science research with Artificial Intelligence algorithms on retinal disease research. I hope to continue this path through CodeOn."

Those interested in participating see the registration form found at [www.codeon2023.org](http://www.codeon2023.org). More information on the event also is available on that web site.

## CodeOn 2023 Seeks Hackers

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

**W**e may soon be adding more remarkable computer solutions to the list through efforts of high schooler Edward Zhang and his team of teens. A senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Zhang is organizing a student participation event, CodeOn 2023, where 7th-12th grade students can take on the challenge of designing novel solutions for those with vision impairment and a variety of social issues.

A hackathon, also known as a codefest, is an event that brings computer programmers and other interested people together to build new software and other approaches to bring solutions to a target issue.

Zhang says vision solutions may include, "a mobile application navigation aid for the blind or new algorithmic solutions to improve rare retinal disease diagnosis." For those with other interests, solutions will address computer literacy, gender and disability equity, and the environmental factors of



Abhinav Angirekula and Ethan Valentine diagram connections of computer solution impacts

food and water security. For the event, a group of student volunteers will support an anticipated 150 to 200 participant hackers. Hackers can expect the challenge of hackathon problem statements for the event held at Edlin School, in Reston, on March 12, beginning at 8 a.m. The event seeks to attract students with computer interest and skills from across the metropolitan area. A variety of technical skills workshops also are planned.

The hackathon's search for solutions to visual impairment is in partnership with the non-profit Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB). The organization's on-going efforts seek to speed low vision awareness, fund clinical trial research from donations, and collaborate to create innovative solutions to problems related to vision and disability.

More information is available at [www.codeon2023.org](http://www.codeon2023.org).

## Hackathon in search of solutions for vision impairment.

PHOTOS COURTESY EDWARD ZHANG

#CODEON2023

# CODEON

## CHARITY HACKATHON

Code and build meaningful projects during a 12 hour period to address pressing social issues. Listen to guest speakers, gain portable skills from workshops, and raise money for great causes.

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• Crafting Navigation Aids for the Blind	• Basic Programming
• Increasing Computer Literacy	• Artificial Intelligence
• Gender & Disability Inequity	• Engineering
• Environment: Water and Food Security	• Robotics

**REGISTER HERE**

[CODEON2023.ORG](http://CODEON2023.ORG)

Hackathon seeks participants



# Dia Aurora Has Won Top Girl Scout Award and Now Is Eagle Scout

**A**t an Eagle Scout Court of Honor ceremony on February 13 at St. John's Episcopal, Church in McLean, Dia Aurora became an Eagle Scout. She is one of only a few girls to earn both the highest Girl Scout award - the Gold Award, and the BSA, Eagle Scout award.

Seena Singh describes Dia as a loving, kind, giving person who always stays positive and brings people together. Dia's scouting friends describe her as open minded, patient with an ability to motivate others, Singh says .

"Scouting, to me, means the opportunity to love the outdoors," says Aurora. "I have gone backpacking in high elevations and snow camping in 20 degree weather. While I did struggle to survive these experiences, I have gained valuable lessons out of them. Lastly, being one of the first girls to earn their gold award in Girl Scouts, and my eagle award in scouts of America has truly been an accomplishment for me. I have gained strong leadership skills, confidence, patience, and more."

In November 2022, the Woman's Club of McLean awarded Dia Au-



PHOTO BY KATHRYN MACKENSEN

Dia Aurora center, with (from left) her troop, 128 Scout Master, Seena Singh, and BSA assistant scoutmaster, Geoff Balleisen.

rorra a Certificate of Appreciation "for sharing her creative, positive spirit, and robust efforts in support of our grassroots effort to benefit those in need." Dia raised \$3200 for Second Story, a charity long supported by the Woman's Club of McLean, which provides life skills support for teenagers, experiencing crisis and young people expe-

riencing homelessness.

Dia will continue lending her energy and creativity to the Woman's Club of McLean as they prepare for their next big event, a Kitchen and Garden Tour on Thursday, April 27 2023 to benefit and celebrate the McLean Volunteer Fire Department's 100 years of service to the community.



From left: Nayani's brother, Rishan, Colin Powell Elementary Principal Jamie Luerssen, Nayani, teacher Amy Patterson and Nayani's parents Pallavi and Raj.

## Colin Powell Elementary Student Wins DAR American History Essay Contest

**N**ayani Reddy, a fifth-grade student from Colin Powell Elementary, recited her winning essay for the

annual DAR Lane's Mill Chapter American History Essay contest on Feb. 4, 2023.

Nayani's essay imagined herself

to be a delegate at the Second Continental Congress of 1775, which was instrumental in forming the United States of America.



Oakton Dance Team.

## Oakton Dance Team Among Top Teams

**T**he Oakton High School Dance Team brought home two coveted finalist trophies from the 2023 annual Universal Dance Association National Dance Team Championship held Feb. 3 – 5 at ESPN's Wide World of Sports in Orlando, Florida. Under the direction of head coach Karen Rowley and assistant coach Jennifer Pyles Wright, returning Dance Team graduates Nina Vu-Gia and Gabby Parrillo, and the leadership of seniors Amber Li, Ili Rong, Sabrina Villafior, and Ava Wolsborn, the Oakton dancers placed within the top 12 of the over 100 teams in the Varsity High Kick and Game Day categories.

This was not Oakton's first successful trip to Nationals. During the 22 years of Coach Rowley's tenure, Oakton's Dance Team has placed in the top 15 in the country 17 times. This remarkable record can be attributed to the steadfast dedication and hard work of the dancers and coaches, who commit nearly eight months of the year to strength training, conditioning, developing technical skills, and perfecting choreography, say the team's fans. Those efforts, along with the support of parents and dance team alumnae, have made Oakton's dancers some of the best in the country year after year.

## Vienna Restaurant Week

**V**ienna Restaurant Week kicks off Friday, March 3 through Sunday, March 12, 2023, the second year the event will showcase the town's dining community.

The highly anticipated Spring program will feature 50 participants from restaurants to fast-casual eateries throughout the Town of Vienna. This is the largest number of participants to date for this Vienna restaurant dining campaign. During the week-long event, participating restaurants will offer three-course prix fixe menus of \$25 for lunch/brunch and \$35-40 for dinner per person. In addition to the curated menus, specialty restaurants, and eater-

ies will offer discounted a la carte dining providing food lovers the opportunity to further explore Vienna's culinary scene.

Vienna Restaurant Week is sponsored by the Town of Vienna Economic Development Division. The goal of the dining program is to expose visitors and area residents to the Town of Vienna, increase the number of guests each eatery welcomes during this week, and increase brand recognition for participating restaurants and the Vienna community.

Diners are encouraged to follow at @ExploreViennaVA on Instagram and Facebook and tag #ViennaRestaurantWeek. Visit [explor-eviennava.com/restaurantweek](http://explor-eviennava.com/restaurantweek).



## SERVICE

### Billingsley of Vienna Among First Peace Corps Volunteers to Return to Service Overseas

Vienna resident Morgan Billingsley is among the first Peace Corps volunteers to return to overseas service since the agency's unprecedented global evacuation in March 2020. The Peace Corps suspended global operations and evacuated nearly 7,000 volunteers from more than 60 countries at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My primary goal for the next two years in Panama is to learn. We have been invited to live alongside members of vibrant communities that have graciously agreed to share their wisdom, culture, and history with us," said Billingsley. "I hope to spend the majority of my time building community, listening, and working together on initiatives that will have the greatest impact."

Billingsley is a graduate of James Madison University with a bachelor's degree in justice studies. She will serve as an agriculture volunteer in Panama.

The volunteer cohorts are made up of both first-time volunteers and volunteers who were evacuated in early 2020. Upon finishing a three-month training, volunteers will collaborate with their host communities on locally prioritized projects in one of Peace Corps' six sectors – agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health or youth in development – and all will engage in COVID-19 response and recovery work.

Currently, the agency is recruiting volunteers to serve in 56 countries around the world at the request of host country governments, to connect through the Peace Corps' grassroots approach across communities and cultures. Volunteers have already returned



Vienna resident Morgan Billingsley is among the first Peace Corps volunteers to return to overseas service since the agency's unprecedented global evacuation in March 2020.

to a total of 47 countries around the world. The Peace Corps continues to monitor COVID-19 trends in all of its host countries and will send volunteers to serve as conditions permit. Americans interested in transformative service and lifelong connections should apply to Peace Corps service at [www.peace-corps.gov/apply](http://www.peace-corps.gov/apply). Apply before April 1 to make a global connection by fall 2023.

#### BULLETIN BOARD

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

##### BURLINGTON COMING TO SPRINGFIELD TOWN CENTER

PREIT announced that it has signed a lease with Burlington Stores for a new 30,000-square-foot store at Springfield Town Center, expected to open in 2023. It will join the new LEGO Discovery Center and several other new additions including Lovisa, Box-Lunch, Daily Thread, and Carters among others. The opening of these new tenants will drive occupancy at Springfield Town Center to a record 95.5%

##### VIENNA PARKING SURVEY OPEN THROUGH FEB. 28

Nearly 200 people have already responded to a survey about parking in Vienna, led by the Town's Department of Public Works and Economic Development offices. The survey is part of a study to explore Vienna's present-day and future parking needs in the Town's business district. Town leaders are encouraging all Vienna residents, visitors and businesses to take the survey to help ensure future parking plans

are in line with community needs. The survey is available through the Town of Vienna website: [www.viennava.gov](http://www.viennava.gov). To request a paper copy, email Natalie. Monkou@viennava.gov or call 703-255- 6338. The survey will be open through Feb. 28, 2023.

##### 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](mailto:fcsvanow@gmail.com) or [www.FCSVA.org](http://www.FCSVA.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](http://www.goldengirls.org).

## Here's What's Happening at MCC!

### Presented by The Alden

**FEB  
23**

Performing Arts Movie  
Thursday, Feb. 23, 1 p.m.

Free admission.  
Preregistration recommended.

### Youth Event

Sweetheart Parent-Child Dance  
Friday, Feb. 24, 7-9 p.m.

\$20 per participant

**FEB  
24**



### Presented by The Alden

Jonathan Rockefeller Productions  
"Paddington Gets in a Jam"  
Saturday, Feb. 25, 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.

**FEB  
25**

\$30/\$20 MCC district residents  
\$27 students and seniors

\$45/\$35 VIP Tickets  
to 1 p.m. show only

### Presented by The Alden

Foreign Language Movie  
Thursday, March 2, 1 p.m.

Free admission.  
Registration recommended.

**MAR  
2**

### Old Firehouse Center School Break Trips

**MAR  
3**

Altitude Trampoline &  
Timeline Arcade Trip  
Friday, March 3, 8 a.m.

\$70/\$60 MCC district residents

### Presented by The Alden

Mad River Theater Works:  
"Freedom Flight"  
Friday, March 3, 4 p.m.

\$25/\$15 MCC district residents  
\$20 students and seniors

**MAR  
3**



The McLean  
Community Center  
[www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org)

Home of The Alden Theatre  
[www.aldentheatre.org](http://www.aldentheatre.org)

1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean, VA 22101  
703-790-0123

[@mcleanvacenter](https://www.facebook.com/mcleanvacenter)  
[@mcleancenterva](https://www.instagram.com/mcleancenterva)





## PET CONNECTION

# For Dogs, Warm Day Walks... & Ice Rinks??

## Chasing the warmth in February.

By SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

**T**easingly spring-like warm days have popped up amid seasonal and unusually cold ones this February. Many residents are ready to leave the area's coldest month, January, behind to enjoy February's warmer averages of 31 to 52 degrees Fahrenheit. Instead, dog walkers were surprised to find some February days dipping near zero with wind chills after slipping on leashes to head outdoors in past weeks. Those chills helped many, including our dogs, appreciate the unusually warm February days all the more. On those sunny days, we found area dogs out walking jauntily with smiling owners, all in good spirits, brought on by the enjoyment of easy weather and discarding winter coats. Some owners took time to tell stories of the mischief that can come of too much time inside escaping the cold and memories of past fun.

In one last grasp at winter sport, and picking up on the theme of warm love in February, NOVA Parks and the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) asked animal lovers to extend the warm spirit of Valentine's Day with their "Share the Love" event on Feb 19. By donating needed pet supplies, participants received a discounted entry ticket to ice skating at Cameron Run Regional Park. As temperatures on that day shouted Spring not Winter, it was a reminder that the

While less well appointed dogs walk, some are able to roll in their own special conveyance, complete with a ramped rear entrance. Although there's no sauna or mini-bar in their limo, yet, Titan and Roscoe, two senior Dachshunds, need chauffeuring these days regardless of weather to enjoy the same trails they once walked with ease. Caring owner Sarah Chey, of Springfield, makes sure they get their beloved outside time, and a chance to do their old men grumbling at passers-by. They know they have a good ride, and they will brook no possible carjacks getting too close.



PHOTO COURTESY NOVA PARKS

Homeless dog at AWLA returns the warmth of a caring volunteer during enjoyment of a break from the kennel for an outside walk in the sunshine.

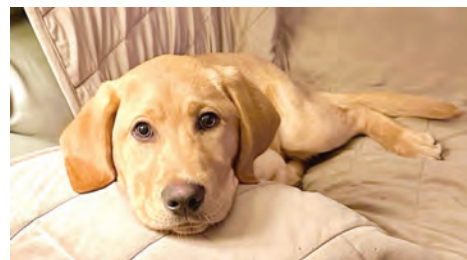


PHOTO COURTESY B. BELETSKY

He's an advocate of long walks on any day and needs only short rests between. Here practicing a look of innocence only young pups can achieve before his next round of mischief, is 5-months-old Bogey. He was recently accused of stealing two steaks being prepped for the grill in the kitchen at his Springfield home by owner Bill Beletsky. Bogey's advocates pointed out that there was no evidence to support that beef, his short legs, and that this country has a doctrine of innocence until proven guilty. What could have made his owners think HE did it?

skating park is marking its last days until its end of February closure. Soon it will transition into its Spring and Summer role of waterpark, mini golf, batting cage practice and picnic area with the chill of winter left behind. And while dogs were not invited to ice skate, they are welcome in the park to join their people in celebrating the warm days of spring and summer.

Cameron Run Regional Park is located at 4001 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria; see <https://www.novaparks.com/parks/cameron-run-regional-park> for more information and reservations.



Enjoying the sun and shared breed friendships, are (back row) Laura Chipkin, of Arlington, Terri Everett, of Alexandria, Danny Reighard, of Alexandria, James Dickey, of Arlington, Evelyn Novins, of Falls Church, and (front row), Mango, Bowen, Tia, and Haley. Though the dog friends have some medical challenges among them, they still insist on nice day outings and the comrade of walks together.

Out enjoying the Spring-like temperatures, the Coopers, once a family of three, expanded with the addition of Cooper, now 13 months old. First "son" Charlie, an 8-year-old-terrier mix, a big cuddler in a small body, has had to give up some lap time to Cooper, but still loves his new brother, say parents Amy and David Merkel, of Springfield.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Lexi, 15 months, is the color of white sand. Turns out she loves everything beach. She's a sand digger, specializing in destroying the precarious foundations of beach chair legs. Being something of a food gourmet, always ready for a treat, and continuing in her beach theme, she scored a counter surfed swordfish. She hangs ten, or would that be 20, with Steve and Tia Noff, of Lorton.

SEE MORE PET CONNECTION, PAGE 20



# Capital Remodel and Garden Show

Nationally known designer and McLean native Yip Vern is scheduled to appear.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

One McLean's native sons will be back in Northern Virginia this weekend. Designer Yip Vern is scheduled to appear at the Capital Remodel and Garden Show on Feb. 24 at 2 p.m. and 1 p.m. on Feb. 25 at the Dulles Expo Center.

Yip gained national prominence during the four seasons he spent on the original run of TLC's Trading Spaces. During the past 10 years he's appeared on HGTV shows, including "HGTV Design Star" and "Bang for Your Buck."

Expo-goers will have a chance to hear his expert advice.

"I'll be talking about universal design tips that everyone can adapt for their home. And ways to get the most out of your home in this post-pandemic world we live in, he said. "I love being back in the DC area. No matter where I travel or how many years I've lived



PHOTO CREDIT CAPITAL REMODEL + GARDEN SHOW

**Capital Remodel + Garden Show is this weekend at the Dulles Expo Center.**

in Atlanta, DC and Northern Virginia always feels like home in a way no other place can." Yip is now working on this third book



PHOTO CREDIT CAPITAL REMODEL + GARDEN SHOW

McLean native and nationally known interior designer Yip Vern is scheduled to appear at the Capital Remodel + Garden Show this weekend at the Dulles Expo Center.

which is scheduled to be released next spring. He designs fabrics, wallcovering and sheets for Vern Yip for Trend. He's celebrating the tenth anniversary of his brand and releasing a second wallcovering collection that will make its debut this September.

For more information on the Capital Remodel and Garden Show, visit Official Capital Remodel + Garden Show | February 24-26, 2023 | Chantilly, Virginia  
<https://www.capitalremodelandgarden.com/>





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PET CONNECTION 2023

New Pets Extend Families



Mia, Mike, and Baby Louis Olem of Herndon



The family doggie domino effect continues. New pup Zoey coming home for the first time to Ama Hobson.



Ollie and Mollie belonging to Lindsey (Lindz) Welsh of Alexandria, spend a week with me, Mercia Hobson, staff reporter for the Connection. The Poms lend little paws-able help to my stories. Luckily I have a delete key. Lindsey is my daughter. When the Poms leave, I miss them tremendously.



Next thing I know, Lindz, my daughter, gifts me a little Pom of my own. "You need a Pom," she says.



Cool Koala gives Oshi much needed chew time.



There's nowhere else Oshi wants to be than front and center of all stories in progress.



Oceanna, Oshi for short, is very small and exceedingly cute.



# ENTERTAINMENT

## 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>

## 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>

## WEDNESDAY/FEB. 22

Tea 'n Painting. 2-3:30 p.m. At the Lake House, Reston. Are you looking for a fun way to express your creative side? Start your new year with a creative afternoon of tea and painting. Sip on your tea while creating a landscape painting along with a positive affirmation for the new year. At the end of class, you can take home your final masterpiece. All skill levels welcome.

## THURSDAY/FEB. 23

Evening of Ensembles. 7:30-9 p.m. At West Springfield High School, 6100 Rolling Road, Springfield. Come to an enjoyable evening of ensembles! Presenting the Fairfax Wind Symphony, Woodwind Ensemble, Brass Ensemble, Percussion Ensemble & WSHS small ensemble. Visit the website: [www.fairfax-windsymphony.org](http://www.fairfax-windsymphony.org)

## FRIDAY/FEB. 24

Sweetheart Parent-Child Dance. 7-9 p.m. At McLean Community Center, McLean. Children are invited to come to MCC for a fancy "date" with their parent or guardian. Featured activities include a DJ, photo booth, craft projects and light refreshments. Create lasting memories by joining us at MCC's Sweetheart Dance. For more information, call MCC at 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, or visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

## FRIDAY/FEB. 24

Oil Painting Demo. 11 a.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Art Society is honored to welcome Gavin Glakas to give a demonstration of portrait painting in oil. His works hang in the permanent collections of the U.S. Capitol, the Virginia State Capitol, the CIA, universities, museums and numerous private collections. This event is free and open to the public.



"Paddington Gets in a Jam" will be presented on Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023 at the McLean Community Center.



Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel will be presented on Sunday, Feb. 26, 2023, at GMU Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

## FEB. 24-26 AND MARCH 3-5

"A Raisin in the Sun." At Theater at Seneca Ridge Middle School. Sterling Playmakers' first show of 2023 is the American masterwork, A Raisin in the Sun, by Lorraine Hansberry, in honor of Black History Month (February) and International Women's Month (March).

## SATURDAY/FEB. 25

"Paddington Gets in a Jam." 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. At The Alden, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Alden at the McLean Community Center (MCC) presents Jonathan Rockefeller Productions' delightful children's show, "Paddington Gets in a Jam," for two performances. Admission tickets are \$30, \$20 for MCC district residents and \$27 for seniors and students. From page to stage—Paddington, children literature's favorite accident-prone bear, makes his stage debut in this fun-filled, family comedy. Visit [alldentheatre.org](http://alldentheatre.org) or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711 for more information or to purchase tickets.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 25

Chloé Arnold's Syncopated Ladies LIVE! 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Viral tap dance phenomenon Syncopated Ladies LIVE! is the brainchild of D.C.-native and Emmy® Award-nominated tap dancer and choreog-

rapher Chloé Arnold, who is a protégé of Debbie Allen. This fierce all-female troupe of hoofers has amassed more than 100 million video views online for their hypnotic and rhythmic performances. Dancing to today's cutting-edge music, from pop to hip-hop to salsa, and even a couple tear-jerking ballads, Syncopated Ladies LIVE! is an electrifying, action-filled show featuring a live onstage vocalist.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 25

Monthly Food Drive. 10 a.m. to noon. At ArtSpace Herndon, Center Street, Herndon. The Rotary Satellite of Herndon-Reston will be holding its monthly food drive for link, and feminine hygiene (and other hygiene) products for the Women's shelter of FAITHus.org. Most desired items are hygiene products, which are extremely expensive if your budget is tight. Sanitary napkins and diapers (especially the larger diaper sizes), deodorant, disposable razors, toothbrushes and toothpaste, are always in high demand because of their cost. If you can swing even one package of these, it will help women and their families. Visit [www.HerndonRestonRotary.org](http://www.HerndonRestonRotary.org).

## SUNDAY/FEB. 26

Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel. 7

p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Go beyond chocolates and flowers when you take your sweetheart to experience an evening of Musical Valentines. In this stirring Keyboard Conversations® with Jeffrey Siegel, be swept away with music of infinite passion, poetry, and longing by Brahms, Schumann, Liszt, and Chopin, and learn how the composers were inspired by the loves in their own lives.

## SUNDAY/FEB. 26

Burke Historical Society. 3-4 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Helga Warren will speak on her book, an account of her German father's journey to Paris, Normandy, a POW camp in Alabama, and to a new life as an American.

## SUNDAY/FEB. 26

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At the Old Brogue Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring IONA. Tickets must be purchased in advance at [www.oldbrogue.com](http://www.oldbrogue.com) - \$21 general admission.

## WEDNESDAY/MARCH 1

Mary Ann Redmond with Deren Blessman and Dan Leonard. 6:30-8:30 p.m. At the Old Brogue, 760 Walker Road, Great Falls. \$15 cover. Call 703-759-3309.

## MARCH 2-5

Tyson's Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale. Tyson's Pimmit Regional Library 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Thursday, 2 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Friday, 3 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, 4 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday, 5 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less. Call 703-338-3307.

## MARCH 3-12

Vienna Restaurant Week. Celebrating its second year, the event will showcase the culinary breadth of the town's dining community. The Spring program will feature 50 participants from restaurants to fast-casual eateries throughout the Town of Vienna. During the week-long event, participating restaurants will offer three-course prix fixe menus of \$25 for lunch/brunch and \$35-40 for dinner per person. In addition to the curated menus, specialty restaurants, and eateries will offer discounted a la carte dining providing food lovers the opportunity to further explore Vienna's culinary scene. Diners are encouraged to follow at @ExploreViennaVA on Instagram and Facebook and tag #ViennaRestaurantWeek. For more information, visit [exploreviennava.com/restaurantweek](http://exploreviennava.com/restaurantweek).

## Surovell

FROM PAGE 8

legacy or traditional system, but failed to fully consider the benefits of solar, such as climate change mitigation, better air quality, fewer service outages and grid upgrades. My second bill would have created a new program in Southwest and Southside Virginia. The House rejected both bills on party-line votes after the Senate passed them with large bipartisan majorities.

Finally, the COVID pandemic taught us how critical and exposed our healthcare and grocery store workers are in their jobs serving us every day. Recent polls

show that 81% of Virginians support sick leave for all workers. Our front-line workers deserve it more than anyone. When frontline workers are regularly exposed to viruses and get sick, they are forced to choose between getting paid and getting better and many have no choice but to work sick. A modest sick leave benefit would help everyone. A House committee killed my bill on a party line vote.

This week, both chambers will act on some of the toughest bills filed in this session and legislators will conduct negotiations on final budget amendments before we adjourn this Saturday.

Please send me your feedback at [scott@scottsurovell.org](mailto:scott@scottsurovell.org)



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**Attention: Community Service Providers**

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is seeking applications to establish grant awards to agencies providing comprehensive suicide prevention and opioid addiction programs for Military Service Members, Veterans, and their families throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

To learn more about this grant program, scan the QR code below or go to [bit.ly/dvssosrfa2](http://bit.ly/dvssosrfa2) to access the Request for Application (RFA).

**Don't delay. Applications for grants are due February 28, 2023.**

Questions? Contact Vivian.Doobay@dvs.virginia.gov or 804.482.8505



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## Announcements

## Announcements

## Legals

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## Employment

## Employment

### CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VA CAREER WORKSHOP & HIRING FAIR

The City of Alexandria, VA will host a **Career Development Workshop and Hiring Fair** to provide opportunities for job seekers, particularly those who were recently affected by the mass tech industry layoffs around the region and nationally. City Employees exploring other opportunities within the City are also encouraged to attend.

#### CAREER WORKSHOP

Monday, February 27 · 9 a.m.-12 p.m. · Nannie J Lee Center  
1108 Jefferson St, Alexandria, VA

This program will provide job seekers with coaching on interviewing skills, resume reviewing and critiquing and strategies for creating your next opportunity after a layoff.

#### JOB HIRING FAIR

Tuesday, February 28 · 10 a.m.-2 p.m. · Nannie J Lee Center  
1108 Jefferson St, Alexandria, VA

After job seekers are prepared, the City will host a hiring fair featuring representatives from various City departments and an opportunity to apply for vacancies in City government.

To register and learn more, visit [alexandriava.gov/jobs](http://alexandriava.gov/jobs)

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## Legals

### PUBLIC NOTICE

AT&T proposes to modify an existing facility (new tip heights 138.5' & 139') on the building at 7617 Little River Turnpike, Annapandale, VA(20230060). Interested parties may contact Scott Horn (856-809-1202) (1012 Industrial Dr., West Berlin, NJ 08091) with comments regarding potential effects on historic properties.

## Employment

Software Developer – Develop/create/modify comp apps & dev/design software solutions per user needs/use to optimize operational efficiency. Req'd Bachelor of Comp Sci or IT(or func equivalent)+ 24mos exp w/ knowledge/use of Javascript, HTML, CSS, SQL, IIS & Application Server. Must be willing to travel throughout U.S. per temp client assignment. Resume to Unique Technology Group Corp, 6560 Backlick Rd, Ste 216, Springfield, VA 22150.

### Be a part of our:

**Wellbeing** pages, the first week of every month.

Delight in our **HomeLifeStyle** sections, the second week of every month. Peek at the top real estate sales, glimpse over-the-top remodeling projects, get practical suggestions for your home.

Celebrate students, camps, schools, enrichment programs, colleges and more in our **A-plus: Education, Learning, Fun** pages, the third week of every month.

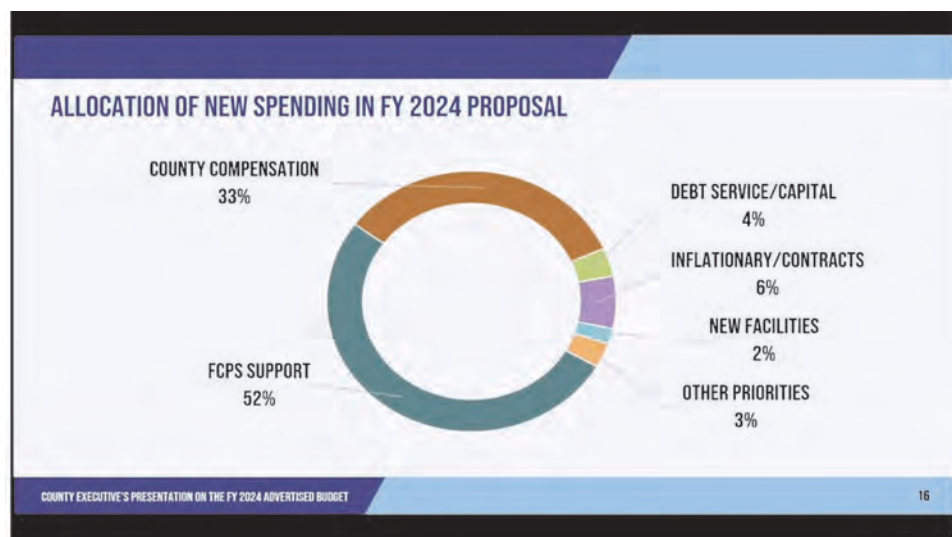
**Senior Living**, fourth week of every month.

### Questions?

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Allocation of new spending

**SUPPORT FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS** \$144.26M

- Provides funding of \$144.10 million towards the School Operating transfer request included in the Superintendent's Proposed Budget
- Superintendent's budget requested increase of \$159.6 million
- Proposed budget includes:
  - \$84 million in increased sales tax and state aid
    - Projected revenues did not account for \$12.7 million state error, which was not identified until after release of the Proposed budget
  - 3% Market Scale Adjustment for all employees and Step Increases for eligible employees
  - Salary scale extension of one step
  - 1% retention bonus
- The additional \$0.16 million for School debt service is discussed later in the presentation

Fairfax County PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S PRESENTATION ON THE FY 2024 ADVERTISED BUDGET 17

Support for Fairfax County Public Schools

# Proposed Budget Has a Long Way To Go

FROM PAGE 3

similarly struggling with labor and cost increases," said Hill.

Reactions from the supervisors varied. "I think probably all of us have a sense of a mixed bag here. To say the least, this kind of feels a little bit like watching the stock market. One day things are looking good, and the next day it's all gone," Chairman Jeff McKay said. McKay added that he wanted people to understand that this budget proposal "fully funds" the FCPS transfer request. "We know, as recently as last week... there will likely be significant changes at the state level, sitting on historic, unprecedented ... surplus."

Vice Chair Penny Gross (D- Mason) said, "The MRA (Market Rate Adjustment) was a little bit of a disappointment at 2 percent, but we need to work through this. I think part of our challenges (is) with supposedly, the pandemic being behind us. The crushing effects of the pandemic are not behind us- supply chain issues and others. It's going to take us a long time to get out of the pandemic economy."

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) provided a written statement after that session.

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## FAIRFAX COUNTY BUDGET TIMELINE

- February 21:** County Executive releases FY 2024 Advertised Budget Plan
- February 23:** School Board adopts FY 2024 (proposed) Budget Plan
- February 28:** Joint County/School Budget Committee to discuss FY 2024 budget and tax rate
- March 7:** Board of Supervisors Advertises FY 2024 tax rate
- April 11-13:** Board of Supervisors holds public hearings on FY 2024 Budget
- April 28:** Board of Supervisors Budget Committee meeting for pre-markup
- May 2:** Board of Supervisors marks up FY 2024 Budget
- May 9:** Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2024 Budget
- May 25:** School Board adopts FY 2024 Approved Budget
- July 1:** FY 2024 Budget Year begins

"It is no surprise a tax increase on the average homeowner is still on the table with this Board's unrestrained spending, a declining commercial real estate tax base and the end of federal pandemic aid. Surrounding jurisdictions, not to mention prior Fairfax County Boards, have been doing what I have been proposing: looking at ways to cut spending and find efficiencies. This Board has refused and our residents, who are already suffering due to the pandemic and inflation, are paying for it."

## BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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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 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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## Sides Can Sometimes Have Scary Effects



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

My mother-in-law, Peggy Morrison died from cancer in late Oct. 1986. Since Peggy was an extremely private person – and lived two hours away from us by car in Harrisburg, Pa., her daughter/ my wife Dina, and I were kept mostly out of her health loop. We knew a little when there was an awful lot more to know. Part of what I remember hearing/learning then was, as insidious as cancer is, sometimes it's the side effects of the treatment that contributes nearly as much to the patient's death.

At my initial Team Lourie meeting – where we all first met my oncologist in late Feb. 2009, I remember his reading the diagnostic reports from the multiple doctors who participated in my assessment: "Stage IV, lung cancer," "Stage IV lung cancer," "Stage IV lung cancer," and "Stage IV lung cancer" yet again from the pulmonologist, radiologist, thoracic surgeon and finally from the general surgeon who performed the biopsy (along with the pathologist's report), all in agreement. Dumb-founded, blind-sided (I'd been symptom free for nearly two months) and completely blown away by this finding/the consensus that I had non-small cell cancer, stage IV, I summoned up the poise to ask a scenario-type question grasping for the unreachable: definitive answers about my future. Remembering the circumstances surrounding my mother-in-law's death 23 years earlier, I asked if there was any truth to the theory that sometimes it's not the cancer but rather the side effects that hasten the patient's death? My oncologist gave me a qualified answer: "Yes. Sometimes."

With that backdrop – and with minimal cancer knowledge and/or experience from which to draw, I have been emotionally very sensitive (make that scared) when the side effects of my various chemotherapies and immunotherapies were discussed with my oncologist. And even though I've been on a roller coaster of emotions these last 14 years, it's been only recently when there's been significant side-effect anxiety and an inevitability almost.

It manifested in my most recent bloodwork. Two levels were outside the perimeters (provided in parentheses on the report) even for me: my liver and kidney functions. So much so that my oncologist directed me – and submitted the order, to get an MRI of these two vital organs. Two major organs which, if damaged/compromised, would be, as we say in New England "Katie bar the door," which means trouble. As you can probably imagine, this blip on my health radar brought back all the fear I'd been keeping "in the vault."

This is the scan I wrote about a few weeks ago when I had scheduled an MRI on a Fri. (first available) aware that the lateness in the week might mean I wouldn't get a result until Mon., given the ebb and flow on medical stuff. (It's not quite akin to the wheels of justice, but it's never quick enough). Invariably, I suffer accordingly. Amazingly, I was rewarded for my self-control. Later that same day – before the weekend, I received the radiologist's report in my email: "Stable MRI." No indication of anything.

Then this week, part two. My internal medicine doctor emailed me requesting that I get another blood test, specifically to measure my A1C (diabetes). He was concerned that my bilirubin level (liver) was trending higher going back three months and perhaps I had crossed over to the dark side (full on diabetes). I returned to the lab for the second visit this week per doctor's orders, and once again, I was rewarded for my compliance. The light was shining – and it showed these two levels had declined a minimum 20%-plus and my A1C number was still a bit high, as was feared, but not problematic, all things considered.

If you all heard a huge sigh of relief on Tues. afternoon, Feb. 7th, that was me. For the moment it appears as if I can continue my life-sustaining daily medication for the treatment of my stage IV, papillary thyroid cancer, going on two-plus years now. No side-effect complications. No change in my medication/protocol. No urgency. No or else. No nothing. Just plain old "Stable," which as I've said many times before, is an assessment with which I can live.

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





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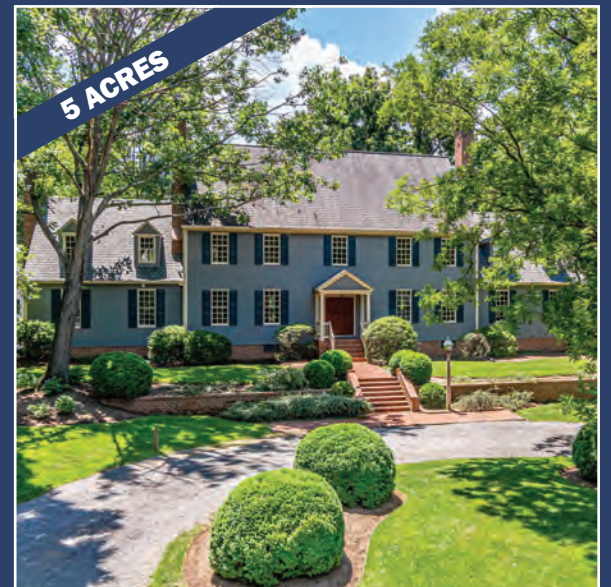
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