



Spring2Action

Early giving underway for April 26 Day of Giving.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alton and Pat Wallace are new to Spring2Action. But the couple is not new to fundraising for a good cause as part of the Alfred Street Baptist Church Foundation, which has provided over \$2.5 million in scholarships to students in need since its inception in 2007.

This year, they have added scholarships in memory of Alexandria lynching victims Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas and hope Spring2Action will help establish those scholarships.

“We want to reach the local community for the scholarships we are proposing here,” said Alton Wallace. “We hope that through Spring2Action the community will contribute to the scholarships.”

Spring2Action, Alexandria’s community-wide Giving Day, will celebrate its 13th anniversary on April 26. The annual online fundraising event is a platform for local nonprofits to raise critical funds for various social services.

“I know our community will once again rise to the challenge to make sure all of our neighbors thrive,” said Heather Peeler, President and CEO of ACT for Alexandria, which hosts the annual fundraiser. “Sp-

ring2Action is an opportunity for all Alexandrians to come together and support the nonprofits that are essential to our city. Every donation counts.”

Early giving is underway for the 185 nonprofits participating in this year’s Giving Day. Individuals can visit www.Spring2Action.org to donate to the nonprofits of their choice. In 2022, 7,700 donors gave \$2.65 million to 172 participating nonprofits serving Alexandria. This year Spring2Action will award more than \$20,000 in prizes to organizations meeting various benchmarks throughout the day.

Participating organizations range in size from established nonprofits like Senior Service of Alexandria to lesser-known ones such as the Alexandria Sportsman’s Club or the Friends of Rocky Versace.

“The Friends of Rocky Versace is an Alexandria-based veterans’ organization,” said Kevin Rue, an army veteran who organizes the city’s annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies at the Plaza. Located in Del Ray, the Plaza is home to Alexandria’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial. “We also oversee the upkeep and preventive maintenance of the memorial.”

Rue said the goal this year is to raise \$6,000. “The Versace Plaza requires complete refurbish-

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Alfred Street Baptist Church Foundation is a newcomer to Spring2Action to raise scholarship funds in memory of Alexandria lynching victims Benjamin Thomas and Joseph McCoy.

Rethinking Duke Street

Alexandria to determine future of bus rapid transit along congested traffic corridor.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Duke Street is about to get a makeover, although the contours of its future are still in doubt.

At issue is a controversial proposal to remove two traffic lanes on Duke Street to create dedicated lanes for bus rapid transit, a move designed to reduce single-occupancy vehicles and offer enhanced transit service. Members of the Alexandria City Council are expected to vote on the proposal on June 27, which means the next few weeks will be the final opportunity for residents to weigh in on plans that have been in the works since 2008.

“Even if you don’t take a bus, this is still an important project for you,” said Hillary Orr, deputy director of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. “We’re trying to think about the larger community and how we can all work together to have a transportation system that works for everybody and gives people options.”

Agenda Alexandria

On Monday, April 24, Agenda Alexandria will be holding a panel discussion about the Duke Street Transitway. The panel discussion is free and open to the public. It starts at 7 pm, and it’ll take place at the George Washington Masonic Memorial. Panelists include:

- ❖ **Hillary Orr**, deputy director of the Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services
- ❖ **John Hillegass**, director of regional mobility and infrastructure for the Greater Washington Partnership
- ❖ **Vernon Miles**, journalist who has covered the transitway for ALXNow
- ❖ **Frank Putzu**, vice president of Seminary Hill Association

Bus service along the Duke Street corridor has the highest ridership in the city, which is one of the reasons city officials are focused on enhancing service for people who might not own a car. Although ridership declined



during the pandemic, the latest numbers from DASH show that service along Duke Street is now more popular than it was before 2020. That’s why one of the stated goals for the new transitway is to enhance bus service, giving people options other than single-occupancy vehicles that create traffic congestion and carbon emissions.

“A winning regional strategy is not to make it harder for people to use their single-occupancy vehicles. The winning strategy is to make it easier for people to move around using a multitude of options,” said John Hillegass, director of regional mobility and infrastructure for the Greater Wash-

ington Partnership. “Unfortunately right now we have a mismatch between the infrastructure we have to support other options and the infrastructure for single-occupancy vehicles.”

THE HISTORY of bus-rapid transit in Alexandria dates back to 2008, when the Alexandria City Council ditched the 1992 transportation plan in favor of a new document declaring that everyone in Alexandria should have the opportunity “to choose, on a daily basis, if they want to walk, bike or

SEE RETHINKING DUKE STREET, PAGE 6



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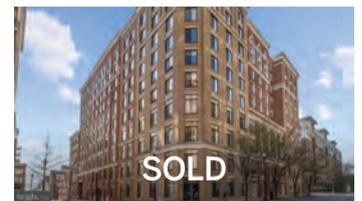
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City Council members Sarah Bagley and Kirk McPike light the candelabrum during the Holocaust Days of Remembrance ceremony April 18 at Market Square.



June Krevor and Joan Edleman, friends of the late Charlene Schiff, stand before the candelabrum that Schiff, a Holocaust survivor, and her husband Ed donated to the city.



Mayor Justin Wilson, left, presents a proclamation to Joyce Gordon recognizing her leadership on the Days of Remembrance Planning Committee.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Days of Remembrance

City honors victims of the Holocaust.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Holocaust of World War II was the genocide of six million Jews across Eastern Europe under the regime of Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler. On April 18, the City of Alexandria honored the memory of those victims during the 34th annual Days of Remembrance ceremony in Market Square.

"We have a legacy that is bound together and linked in historical oppression, a shared commitment to ensure that the genocide that occurred to 6 million Jewish people and to others does not occur again," said Beulah Baptist Church senior pastor Reverend Professor Quardricos Bernard Driskell in opening the ceremony on behalf of the faith community. "We have a commitment to ensure that the rise of anti-Semitism in this country and in this world stops."

During the ceremony, Mayor Justin Wilson and City Council members Sarah Bagley and Kirk McPike lit a candelabrum that was donated to the city by Holocaust survivor Charlene Schiff and her husband, Ed. The lighting of six candles



More than a 100 people turned out for the Holocaust Days of Remembrance ceremony April 18 at Market Square

represented the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust.

The 54-inch high, solid brass candelabrum

was donated in memory of Schiff's parents and sister, and others who perished in the Holocaust.

"Charlene was the bravest woman I've ever met," said Joan Edelman, a longtime friend of Schiff. "She never showed her bitterness about the horrors she went through. She was a role model for everybody."

Robbie Schaefer, the son of a Holocaust survivor and guitarist and songwriter for the indie folk band Eddie From Ohio, was the featured speaker at the ceremony which was part of the weeklong commemoration of the National Days of Remembrance that runs through April 24.

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum leads the nation in the weeklong Days of Remembrance commemoration, in accordance with Congressional mandate.

"We have a shared commitment to call out anti-Semitism, racism and any injustice that violates the humanity of all of God's children," Driskell said. "If together we delve down in this commitment, then one day all of God's children -- black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics -- will be able to join hands and sing in the words of that old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last. Thank God almighty all of God's people will one day be free at last.'"

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Spring2Action

FROM PAGE 1

ment every eight years, which is estimated to cost \$43,000," Rue said. "This includes regilding the 68 gold stars of Alexandria's fallen and missing Vietnam veterans, the polishing and cleaning of Rocky's statue, and ongoing cleaning."

Since its inception in 2011, Spring2Action has raised close to \$19 million for the nonprofit sector. Many nonprofits have seen increased needs with the chal-

lenging economy and pandemic recovery. Some of these needs include access to healthcare, housing and food insecurity, mentoring and tutoring for young people, and assisting refugees. The website allows donors to search by organization name or cause.

In addition to giving to individual nonprofit organizations, donors can give to a collective emergency support pool to help families who are facing financial hurdles that were exacerbated by the COVID pandem-



The Friends of Rocky Versace raise funds for the preservation and maintenance of the Capt. Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Memorial in Del Ray.

ic. The Alexandria Resilience Fund, established in 2020, is an opportunity for Alexandrians to help those struggling to make ends meet.

The ASBC Foundation has set a goal of \$10,000 for their first foray into Spring2Action.

Said Pat Wallace, "I always shoot



The Alexandria Sportsman's Club is raising funds to support scholarships for city high school athletes.

for the moon and hope for the stars."

To donate or learn more about Alexandria's Giving Day, visit: www.Spring2Action.org

CELEBRATES



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

Il Porto Ristorante owners Akbar Zadran, left, poses for a photo with general manager Lou Fellah, head waiter Jesus Perla, and brother and co-owner Wali Zadran in preparation for the upcoming 50th anniversary celebration April 26.



Il Porto Ristorante owner Wali Zadran holds a newspaper article on the planned opening of the restaurant in 1973.

A Golden Milestone

Il Porto's celebrates 50 years on King Street.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Fine dining flourishes in Alexandria, with an abundance of choices to select from across the city. But the restaurant business is fickle, with an average lifespan of just five years and up to 90 percent of new ones failing within the first year.

But one notable and impressive exception is Il Porto Ristorante, a landmark Italian eatery on King Street since it was first opened in 1973 by local legend "Mr. Ray" Giovannoni. Now under the ownership of brothers Akbar and Wali Zadran, Il Porto is preparing to celebrate its 50th anniversary with a special throwback dinner on April 26.

"We are celebrating 50 years with a special menu of dishes served 50 years ago at 50 percent off," said Wali Zadran. "The evening will also feature live music including a saxophone player, violinist and accordion player. It will be a fun, casual evening and reservations are open for everyone."

The Zadran brothers originally hail from Afghanistan, with Akbar emigrating to the U.S. and being hired by Mr. Ray as a bartender at Il Porto in 1982. He bought the restaurant from Mr. Ray in 1990 and was joined by his brother Wali in August of 2001, just weeks before the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"We've survived three down cycles," Wali said. "Business died out after 9/11. Then came the 2008 crisis and most recently



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Il Porto Ristorante has been a fixture on King Street since 1973

COVID. That was the worst. What kept us alive was the loyalty of our patrons and employees. I cannot thank my employees enough for their dedication and hard work. Some managers and even some busboys have been here longer than I have been."

Employee loyalty is another area where Il Porto has defied the odds with the average tenure in the industry just under two

months. General manager Lou Fellah has worked at the restaurant since 1997, when he began as a bartender. Head waiter Jesus Perla joined the restaurant in 1998 and executive Chef Miguel Ferman first joined the staff in 2006 before taking over in the kitchen in 2013.

Originally built over 200 years ago, the historic building has its own history with the

Il Porto Ristorante

121 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-836-8833.

www.ilportoristorante.com

original owner being a retired sea captain. After his early demise, it became a house of ill repute before that owner, Madame Le-Cleaque, was shot by an angry customer and she and her employees fled the building.

Over the years a butcher shop, artist's studio, speakeasy and repair shop were located on the premises before Mr. Ray restored the building to its natural charm and opened Il Porto. His first chef was the then-unknown Franco Landini, who went on to open his own restaurant just doors away with his brother Piero in 1979.

"I used to think before I started coming here that this was like a tourist trap," said Roger Parks, a longtime patron who first discovered Il Porto with his late wife Georgina in the early 1970s. "Then I came in one day and started watching them make the pasta every single morning and saw just how committed everyone is to serving only the best food. That's when I found out this is the real deal."

Each dish at Il Porto Italian is made from scratch, on premise, including the pasta, every day. While its roots are traditional Italian, in recent years there has been a transition to modern cooking techniques as well as focus on offering a wide selection of wines.

"The atmosphere is like a second home,

SEE IL PORTO RISTORANTE, PAGE 5
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CELEBRATES



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The staff at Il Porto Ristorante in 2022 holiday photo.

Il Porto Ristorante

FROM PAGE 4

not a corporate business,” said Wali. “The customers and employees are our family.”

Wali, 48, and Akbar, 62, are now co-owners of the restaurant and can be seen daily greeting customers, including second generation customer Rick Lane.

“My father taught these folks how to make an old fashioned,” laughed Lane on a recent visit. “But it is really the friendly people and good food at reasonable prices that keeps me coming back. There is no other atmosphere like this in Old Town.”

Akbar is especially grateful for the loyalty of customers like Lane and Parks.

“Only in America could this be possible,” said Akbar, who met his late wife Marie at the restaurant. “Even in Europe it’s very hard for a business owner to sign the business over to a person who works for them at the bottom. But in America it’s possible. Even Mr. Ray said, ‘son you may go apply for a loan but you will be disappointed. Banks are not giving any loans.’ We were in a recession when we bought this place. So Mr. Ray financed this for me. God bless his soul.”

Information on the upcoming 50th anniversary celebration can be found on Il Porto’s website and Facebook page. Reservations can be made for the special throwback
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

The back of the original 1973 menu at Il Porto Ristorante featured founder “Mr. Ray” Giavanonni.

“The customers and employees are our family.”

— Il Porto Ristorante owner Wali Zadran

dinner priced at \$39 per person online or by calling 703-836-8833.

“I really love this country,” said Akbar, who is never seen without sporting an American flag lapel pin. “And I love the country of Afghanistan. But only in America could a story like this happen. God Bless America the beautiful.”

Mid-Atlantic Antiques Festival

April 29 & 30, 2023
Saturday 10:00 - 5:00 Sunday 10:00 - 4:00

Over 60 dealers showcasing 18th & 19th Century furniture, Americana, Fine Art, Rugs, Silver, Estate Jewelry, Advertising, Garden Decor, Mid Modern, and more.

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midatlanticantiquesfestival.com

Drug TAKE BACK Day

DISPOSE OF UNUSED OR EXPIRED MEDICATIONS

APRIL 22 | 10 A.M.-2 P.M.

Pet prescriptions also accepted!

ALEXANDRIAVA.GOV/OPIOIDS | PREVENTITALEXANDRIA.ORG

SAFELY DISPOSE OF MEDICATIONS

The U.S. is experiencing an opioid epidemic and Alexandria is far from immune. The best way to fight this epidemic is to dispose of unused or expired prescription and over-the-counter medication. Individuals can drop off medication at these designated locations on April 22 or year-round at a permanent drop box location. Never flush medication down the toilet or place down the sink! Unsafe disposal of drugs can harm the environment.

Everyone should stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if they have symptoms. Individuals may choose to wear a mask at any time. Specific settings, such as health care and congregate facilities, may require masks.

To learn more about the importance of safe medication disposal, visit alexandriava.gov/opioids.

Alexandria Take Back Day Drop-Off Locations*

- Alexandria Police Headquarters
3600 Wheeler Ave.
- The Neighborhood Pharmacy of Del Ray
2204 Mt. Vernon Ave.
- Alexandria Fire Station 210
5255 Eisenhower Ave.
- NEW LOCATION! Woodbine Rehab. & Health Center
2729 King St.

*NO NEEDLES ACCEPTED AT THESE SITES

Can't make it to Drug Take Back Day? Dispose of medications year-round at one of these permanent drug drop box locations!

- The Neighborhood Pharmacy
2204 Mount Vernon Ave.
Monday-Friday: 9 a.m.-7 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Sunday: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Alexandria Police Headquarters
3600 Wheeler Ave.
Just inside the entrance
Available 24/7

Inova Alexandria Hospital
4320 Seminary Rd.
Visitor's Lobby
Next to the cashier's window
Daily: 8 a.m.-11 p.m.

NEEDLE DISPOSAL BOX ALSO AVAILABLE AT THIS LOCATION!



Rethinking Duke Street

FROM PAGE 1

take transit to their destination.” The plan identified three transit corridors: Route One, Duke Street and Beauregard Street. The vote on the 2008 Transportation Master Plan was unanimous, but then the cold, hard reality of losing traffic lanes set in and people started questioning the wisdom of dedicated bus lanes.

“I’m not convinced Duke Street needs this right now,” said then-Councilman Frank Fannon in 2011. “We could start building transit corridors everywhere, but is that justifiable?”

Despite opposition, city leaders moved forward with plans to create the region’s first dedicated bus lanes along the Route One corridor. The 4.5-mile stretch of roadway included some of the most congested streets in the region, which now feature blue Metroway buses operated by Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The bus-rapid transit vehicles feature off-board fare collection and multiple points of access. At the time, city officials heralded the new dedicated lanes as the future of transit in the region.

“Because it’s in dedicated lanes, and typically those lanes are concrete, the suspension on these vehicles is tighter,” said Rich Baier, who was director of the Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services at the time. “It’s a smoother ride.”

Now City Council members are considering the next step in that 2008 master plan, rethinking the Duke Street corridor. City officials point out a few important distinctions between the Route One corridor and the Duke Street corridor, perhaps most notably the existing demand for bus service on Duke Street. The Route 30 DASH bus along Duke Street is currently the most popular route in the city, so enhancing service here will help people who already rely on this service to navigate their way through the city. And unlike the Route One corridor, the Duke Street corridor does not run parallel to an existing Metro line. That means the need for transit service on Duke Street is much greater than it ever was on Route One.

“I had an opportunity to sit in on one of the meetings a couple of weeks ago, and the residents were very pleased,” said Councilman Canek Aguirre during a February discussion of the transit corridor. “I think this is another good example of where the staff is listening to the community and that we are working together to see this project to fruition.”

THE OPTIONS now under consideration include a variety of ways to enhance bus service along Duke Street. The option that would involve the least amount of change would be an option for the buses to use traffic lanes along with all the other vehicles on the street. From a transit perspective, this would be the least efficient way to move people through the city because it would not allow the buses to bypass cars stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic gridlock. The option that would maximize transit potential would have dedicated bus lanes from Land-

Corridor Concept A Mostly Center-running & Mixed Traffic



•Segment 1:

- Center bus lanes in both directions
- Utilize available roadway space for busway improvements

•Segment 2A:

- Mixed traffic bus operations in both directions
- Avoid residential service roads with busway improvements

•Segment 2B:

- Eastbound center bus lane, westbound mixed traffic
- Goal was to avoid Telegraph Road congestion

•Segment 3:

- Eastbound mixed traffic through Telegraph Road to balance traffic and bus operations
- Westbound center bus lane

**DUKE STREET
IN MOTION**

“One of the big challenges with Duke Street that I think most people agree on is that people don’t like it the way it is. There’s a lot of congestion, and it is also one of our highest crash corridors in the city.”
— Hillary Orr, deputy director, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services

Corridor Concept B Mostly Curb-running & Mixed Traffic



•Segment 1:

- Curb bus lanes in both directions
- Utilize available roadway space for busway improvements

•Segment 2A:

- Mixed traffic bus operations in both directions

•Segment 2B:

- Mixed traffic bus operations in both directions
- Avoid significant impacts at Alexandria Commons

•Segment 3:

- Eastbound mixed traffic, westbound curb lane through Telegraph Road interchange
- Center bus lanes east of Telegraph to King Street

**DUKE STREET
IN MOTION**

mark to Jordan Street as well as parts of Duke Street from Quaker Lane to the King Street Metro station. Aside from removing two travel lanes from Duke Street, this option would also remove several left-turn lanes forcing drivers into using u turns to arrive at their destination.

“One of the big challenges with Duke Street that I think most people agree on is that people don’t like it the way it is,” said Orr. “There’s a lot of congestion, and it is also

one of our highest crash corridors in the city.”

Aside from making a decision about whether Duke Street needs dedicated bus lanes, City Council members will also determine what kind of sidewalks and bike lanes are available along the corridor. One option has a shared use path along most of the corridor, forcing pedestrians to share a path with motorized scooters and cyclists. Another option creates a designated cycle track that would allow motorized vehicles

and cyclists to have their own lanes from Landmark to Jordan Street and from Roth Street to Telegraph Road. For many people, the idea of creating a cycle track along parts of Duke Street is resurrecting some of the toxic politics around the debate over bike lanes on Seminary Road.

“Being a veteran of some of the bike lane conversations, I thought our position was to not do that,” said Councilman John Taylor Chapman.

Clip & Save: Drug Take Back, April 22 and Every Day

City of Alexandria residents can safely dispose of unneeded prescription and over-the-counter medications, including those prescribed by veterinarians, during National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on April 22. Residents have several options for disposal, including designated collection sites during the event, permanent medication drop-off locations, a permanent needle disposal box and methods for disposing of medication safely at home.

A collection will take place on Saturday, April 22, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the following drop-off sites staffed by the Alexandria Police Department and the Alexandria Sheriff's Office:

- ❖ Woodbine Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center (2729 King St.)
- ❖ Alexandria Police Department Headquarters (3600 Wheeler Ave.)
- ❖ Fire Station 210 (5255 Eisenhower Ave.)

- ❖ The Neighborhood Pharmacy of Del Ray (2204 Mt. Vernon Ave.)

The following locations offer secure permanent medication drop boxes for year-round disposal:

- ❖ The Neighborhood Pharmacy of Del Ray (2204 Mt. Vernon Ave.), available Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

- ❖ Inova Alexandria Hospital (4320 Seminary Road, inside the visitor entrance and next to the cashier window), available daily, 8 a.m. -11 p.m.

- ❖ Alexandria Police Department (3600 Wheeler Ave., inside the front entrance, ring bell for access); available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Needles are not accepted during the take back event or in the permanent medication drop boxes that provide year-round disposal. Dispose of needles and syringes in a separate designated permanent drop box at Inova Alexandria, accessible at the same location and hours as the hospital's drop off box for medications.

For safe medication disposal at home, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria is promoting the availability of free Deterra drug disposal pouches available for pick-up at the Alexandria Health Department, located on the fourth floor of the Redella S. "Del" Pepper Community Resource Center at 4850 Mark Center Drive.

If you do not have access to a drug disposal kit, follow these steps:

Check medication bottles for instructions on proper disposal. If no instructions are present, remove medication from its original contain-

er. Do not crush tablets or capsules. Mix medication with an undesirable, inedible substance, such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds. Place mixture in a sealable bag or container and throw away in the trash. Black out all personal information on the prescription label so it is unreadable.

Medicines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to

misuse and abuse, especially opioid prescriptions.

In 2022, the City collected 1,886 pounds of unused medication at drug take back day events and from year-round permanent drop boxes, a 42.3% increase in the amount of medication collected in 2020. Since 2010, over 13,500 pounds of medication have been collected and dis-

posed of safely through take back day events and from year-round permanent drop boxes.

Drugs are also an environmental hazard to waterways and should never be flushed down the toilet. Drug take back days and permanent drop boxes help support the goals of the Eco-City Alexandria initiative to ensure that people can

live healthier and economically productive lives, while reducing their impact on the environment.

Visit alexandriava.gov/SAPCA to learn more about ways to prevent substance use and misuse. Visit alexandriava.gov/Opioids for more information about Alexandria's efforts to fight the national opioid epidemic.

STATIONARY ENGINEER APPRENTICESHIP



Applications for the IUOE Local 99 Apprenticeship Program will be accepted during the period of May 1—5, 2023, inclusive. Applications must be completed in person by the applicant at Engineer Center 9315 Largo Drive West, Upper Marlboro, MD 20774 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. \$35 application fee includes drug screen.

For additional information scan the QR Code.



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
Brooke Sydnor Curran

Every year, our Community Impact Report is our chance to share our proudest achievements for Alexandria public school students. And in 2022, we made tremendous progress in our efforts to transform learning through movement.

We made this happen by filling classrooms with our active seating packages and through our newly launched before-, during- and after-school clubs and expanded Social, Emotional and Academic Learning, or SEAL, lessons.

But none of this is possible without our supporters. It’s thanks to them that we’re able to apply solutions to drive change in Alexandria—to level the learning field for students, especially those most in need.

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A NEW NAME, A FRESH LOOK

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- Launched a new website & programmatic materials that are translated to different languages



10,000+ K-12 STUDENTS & hundreds of educators benefitted from our programming so all kids can feel and learn their best.



ACTIVE SEATING
Distributed & installed **719** active seating pieces & **15** stationary bikes; **86%** went to middle & high schools & **14%** went to special ed classrooms.

OUT OF SCHOOL TIME

- Running/Walking
- Dancing
- Lacrosse
- Jump Rope
- Boxcercise

Launched **14** before-, during- & after-school programs across **6** schools, mostly in middle & high schools.

The benefits of these programs follow kids back to the classroom.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & ACADEMIC LEARNING
Expanded our SEAL programming & rolled it out to all ACPS teachers.

Developed **5** adaptable 30-minute lessons that help students understand their emotions & practice how to use movement to feel & learn their best.



Play Ball!

Miracle League begins spring season.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Miracle League of Alexandria held its season opener April 15 at the Kelley Cares Miracle Field with participants, family and friends celebrating the 12th year of the baseball program for special needs children and adults.

“The Miracle League of Alexandria started in the spring of 2011,” said Mac Slover, chair of the Miracle League of Alexandria board. “We’re celebrating our 12th year and are very excited about being able to continue to offer this program to the Alexandria community.”

The Miracle League provides opportunities for children and adults who suffer from any physical or cognitive disabilities that cause them to be excluded from conventional baseball leagues. The league uses a volunteer buddy system called Angels in the Outfield that pairs each player with an able-bodied peer to help the athletes.

Slover, who retired from the Department of Parks and Recreation in 2018, was a driving force behind establishing the Miracle League of Alexandria. Along with Bill Rivers,



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Participants and volunteers in the Miracle League of Alexandria gather for a group photo to celebrate opening day April 15 at the Kelley Cares Miracle Field at the Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center.

SEE MIRACLE LEAGUE, PAGE 11

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Miracle League

FROM PAGE 10

the two helped raise awareness and funds to build the rubberized field that allows those with special needs to safely play baseball.

“Right now we have 45 people – both youth and adults – signed up for this season,” Slover said. “In this league the men will hit baseballs and the women will hit softballs.”

Slover helped establish a Miracle League in Prince William County and is also working on a partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools.

“Mac has coordinated to bring our students from the middle school and the high school over for day games in which the students have an opportunity to play on an accessible field,” said Allison MacMahon, a Miracle League board member and instructional specialist with ACPS. “Teachers and central office staff members will be able to support those students as they play baseball in an accessible way.”

The Miracle League is a national program founded in 2000 in Atlanta and has grown to over 300 teams from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

“This is a great opportunity for players, volunteers and staff members to come together and everyone have a good time,” said Rivers, a past president of the Miracle League of Alexandria. “Our goal is for players to have fun, staff members to have fun, volunteers to have fun, and of course for Mac and I to have fun.”

For more information or the 2023 season schedule, visit www.miracleleagueofalexandria.com

“We are very excited about being able to continue to offer this program to the Alexandria community.”
— Miracle League board chair Mac Slover

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

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SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 15



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Spampanato plays “Les Maison dan Les Dunes” by Gabriel DuPont, a little known composer who was featured in his recent concert.

Spampanato Tantalizes Audiences with International Flair

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
GAZETTE PACKET

Adriano Spampanato rings a large brass bell on a rainy afternoon at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Alexandria. He said they are starting a bell choir but “sometimes I ring it to get the choir’s attention.”

Spampanato came to St. Paul’s from Paris by way of New York City just as the church was opening back up after the impact of COVID. “When I came here they were still meeting with masks. It’s funny how we forget about masks and go on with life.”

He had come to D.C. to work for the Washington National Opera Young Artists program for two years. He heard about the organist in residence position at St. Paul’s “but they loved me and asked would I stay longer.”

Spampanato says his parents are Italian but he grew up in France. But everything in his house was Italian—the tv, the bed, the food. He says he speaks Italian with his mom and French with his dad. “The French always said I was Italian and the Italians always said I was French. That’s what I love about America. They don’t care. I can be who I want to be.”

He says he used to live in Paris and didn’t know much about D.C. before he came here. He emphasizes D.C. is not a big city. “I like it when it’s crowded. I feel alive. But D.C. is a gorgeous city, a bit quiet, but culturally not as enriching as you would expect.”

Spampanato likes it in Alexandria. “When I was part of the scene in other cities in Europe, I worked for a big concert opera and was like a piece of the puzzle; I wasn’t able to express myself. But here I have the liberty to create something I have in my mind. I am real happy here.”

In the beginning at St. Paul’s, Spampanato says he mostly played the organ but now “the music director and I have decided I can do more.” Spampanato says he assists the Music Director, Eric Schnobrick with music selection. “There is a lot of work to do in organizing music — to match the best music with the readings.” And Spampanato plays



Adriano Spampanato rings one of the large brass bells for the new bell choir at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

and sings at the 5 p.m. service. “I was shy with my accent but people really like it.” He continues, “This is an easy congregation. They like all kinds of music, and they compliment me.”

Now he is Assistant Music Director with a dream. “I think big. I would like to have an ensemble that presents a concert series and to invite people from all over the world.” He particularly likes Indian music for its spiritual and ancestral qualities and would like to work on some crossover music.

“We could find a different location each week. Can you imagine a big concert on the waterfront; it would bring people to the City. And we could go touring. I could find a good small space in Alexandria — the city is right there — you can go out afterwards and have a drink.” He wants to make the concerts “entertaining, not boring, the kind you want to bring your friends back to.” He says there is



Spampanato explains his big dream for a concert series to invite the world and make Alexandria a well known music city.

a lot of orchestra and opera in America. “We need baroque and chamber.”

Spampanato says he would like to have Alexandria be seen as a musical city.

He is hoping to begin these concerts in September. But it is complicated, and there are so many decisions — which season to begin; do you want a theme for the concerts or potpourri? He adds there is the overall structure to create and the financial consideration to get supportive donors. “I have a lot of skills but not all the skills.”

He is always thinking about how to make things better and says they are slowly making changes in the sound of the organ. “There is one stop I don’t like. I don’t like the sharp sound.” But making changes is complicated and expensive so the organ builder

will change the pipes “to lower the sound so it will blend with the rest.” The next step is the really lowest stop which is digital “but I don’t want digital. Adding the lowest pipe will make it more warm.”

He tosses his colorful scarf over the sparkly sweater. “I love fashion. Sometimes I wear clothes to express yourself in each way.”

Spampanato sits at the piano practicing a piece by Gabriel DuPont that will be part of his upcoming April 14 concert focusing on French artists. “DuPont is not a well known composer that I chose for my dissertation. He was known for opera and chamber music but passed away before his time. What might have been? I was in my bedroom in Caen listening and heard him on the radio. He is not famous but listen to this.”

Spampanato begins playing slowly. “La Maison dans Les Dunes” is deep, honest and sincere. It has a lonely tug at your heart. He plays a jazzy chord. It adds something more sweet. “And then I discovered where he lived. Who has a house on the dunes? Also he is both an organist and a pianist like me so we have a connection.”

Adriano pursued his studies at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, earning four Bachelor’s degrees (piano, organ, choreographic accompanying, and musicology) and a Master’s degree with academic honors in collaborative piano.

When he isn’t singing, conducting or playing at St. Paul’s, he often performs with his musical partner, the soprano Axelle Fanyo, at venues around the world. They recently won the Grand Prix Prince Rainier III of Monaco prize for singer-pianist duos at the 11th Nadia and Lili Boulanger International Voice-Piano Competition.

The recent program was held at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church at 228 S. Pitt at 7 p.m. on April 14. It featured an evening of French classical music played by Spampanato including for piano Francis Poulenc, Deodat de Severac, Claude Debussy and Gabriel Dupont and for organ Leon Boellmann, Gothic Minuet, Prayer to Notre-Dame and Toccata. Attendees were invited to attend an outdoor wine reception on the church grounds after the concert.

CALENDAR



The 39th Annual PNC Parkway Classic takes place Sunday, April 23, 2023 in Alexandria.

ALEXANDRIA EARTH DAY

April 2023, various events, Virtual and In-Person. Help commemorate the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day with a month full of environmentally focused events, activities, and online initiatives that center on the Eco-City Vision in which Alexandria's residents, businesses, and City government participate in a vibrant community that is always mindful of the needs and lifestyle of the generations to come. We all need to do our part and what better way than through fun, educational, and engaging opportunities. For more information go to: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/EarthDay>

NOW THRU APRIL 30

Matthew McLaughlin Art Exhibit. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Reception: Sunday, March 26, 4 - 6 p.m.; Artist Talk: Sunday, April 30, 2 - 3. Matthew McLaughlin's work explores how people define space in relationship to themselves on multiple levels, through personal and public forums, by bringing together those themes via mixed-media works from multiple series. The exhibition covers three distinct series, Proxemic Boundaries, Plotting Truths, and Reflective Cartography.

NOW THRU APRIL 29

"A Tale of Two Studios." Del Ray Artisans partners with Art Enables Gallery & Studio in an open-themed showcase of the inspiring art of these two community organizations to convey an essential story about creative expression and art-making. At Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Opening Reception: Friday, April 7 from 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays 12-6 p.m., and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (closed April 30). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

GARDENING TIPS AT GREEN SPRING GARDENS

Garden Talk - Small-Space Veggie Gardening, At 4603 Green Spring Road in Alexandria. Saturday, April 22, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Don't have a large yard? With a little creativity, even the smallest patio, deck or townhouse yard can be turned into a successful vegetable garden! Let Extension Master

Gardener docents show you how to grow vegetables in a small space. Whatever your space constraints, you too can grow delicious and nutritious fruits and vegetables! Enrollment is \$12 per person. Green Spring Gardens is located at 4603 Green Spring Road in Alexandria. For more information on these and other gardening program offerings, call 703-642-5173.

FRIDAY/APRIL 21

"Pitch Me" Challenge Event. The Drew Wynne Foundation presents its Pitch Me Challenge event scheduled to take place at Building Momentum in Alexandria. The event is designed to support entrepreneurs and provide them with the opportunity to showcase their innovative ideas and win funding for their ventures. The Pitch Me Challenge is a competition-style event that invites entrepreneurs to pitch their business ideas to a panel of experienced judges. Participants will have the chance to present their ideas in a three-minute pitch, followed by a five-minute Q&A session with the judges. The Pitch Me Challenge event is free to attend, but registration is required. To register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/drew-wynne-pitch-me-challenge-tickets-568227663237>

FRIDAY/APRIL 21

Book Release: Reclamation by C. Alexandria-Bernard Thomas. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Join in the book release of Reclamation. by C. Alexandria-Bernard Thomas, a Black Non-Binary, award-winning poet, teaching artist, an advocate for Child Abuse Prevention, the LGBTQIA community, and Mental Health Awareness. Their forthcoming collection of poems, titled Reclamation., is a poetic journey through C. Alexandria-Bernard Thomas' process of re-emergence and re-acceptance of self. It is their rebirth and ownership of all that has sought to destroy them.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

Garden Talk - Small-Space Veggie Gardening. 10:30-11:30 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (Adults) Don't have a large yard? With a little creativity, even the smallest patio, deck or townhouse

yard can be turned into a successful vegetable garden! Let Extension Master Gardeners show you how to grow vegetables in a small space. Whatever your space constraints, you too can grow delicious and nutritious fruits and vegetables! \$12 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 11B.N6ER.

SATURDAY/APRIL 22

5th Annual Environment Expo. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Fort Hunt Park, 8999 Fort Hunt Rd. Come out for live music, demonstrations, workshops, nature walks, giveaways and more!

SUNDAY/APRIL 23

39th Annual PNC Parkway Classic. Mount Vernon Estate through Old Town Alexandria. Alexandria's hometown destination race returns this Spring when the 39th PNC Parkway Classic hits the pavement on Sunday, April 23, 2023. The race, organized by local running retailer Pacers Running, attracts thousands of runners and spectators who want to experience the George Washington Memorial Parkway from a unique perspective. The race features both a 5K, and a 10-mile race offering starting at 8:00 a.m. as well as a 600-meter Kids Dash race for the little runners kicking off at 10:30 a.m. The Classic 5k Course will start and finish at Oronoco Bay Park. The 10-mile race will start at Mt. Vernon Estate with the course taking runners up the George Washington Memorial Parkway and ending at Oronoco Bay Park. Visit the website: www.parkwayclassic.com.

SUNDAY/APRIL 23

Del Ray Garden Fest. Noon to 4 p.m. At Bean Creative Field, 2207 Mt Vernon Ave, Alexandria. VCE Master Gardeners will be on hand to provide all the information you need to have a healthy garden this year—how to test your soil, what to plant, and how to improve your vegetable harvest. Fun, food and activities for all! For more information go to <https://www.visitdelray.com/>

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Obituary

Obituary



Annabelle Lee Kistner Genchur of Alexandria, VA was born in Indiana County, PA on January 10, 1940, and passed away from complications due to a stroke on Saturday, April 15, 2023. A graduate of Mount Vernon High School, Ann was a career civil servant for the Army Materiel Command in Alexandria, VA. Ann is survived by her three children: Edward Bryan Genchur, Gerold Troy Genchur, and Desiree Lee Genchur; her sister Beverley Hirzel; her brothers George and Frank Kistner; four grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

Ann was a loving and compassionate mother, sister, and daughter who loved her family, her friends, and her church. When her children were young, she enjoyed being outdoors with them, including family camping, boating, and playing games. In her later years, she became an avid reader and more active in her church.

Ann was preceded in death by her parents, George and Goldie Kistner, and her sister Joan Kistner Erickson.

A memorial service will be held at Everly Wheatley Funeral Home, 1500 W. Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA on Friday April 21, 2023 at noon, followed by a viewing that ends at 4:00PM.

The family requests donations in lieu of flowers to Cameron United Methodist Church, 3130 Franconia Road, Alexandria, VA 22310.

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Obituary

CASSIDY, MICHAEL WAYNE

Michael Cassidy died peacefully at home with his dog Winnie at his side on April 8, 2023. Michael was the only child of Harry and Blanche Cassidy. He is survived by his Virginia cousins and hundreds of friends. Michael was born in Hanover County, Virginia, in 1948. He graduated from the University of Richmond. After a stint in the U.S. Coast Guard, he joined the Smithsonian Institution and was there for his entire career. He lived first in Washington, D.C. and then moved to Alexandria, Virginia, in 1980. He had a lovely home - its crowning glory was his beautiful hillside garden. He was a member of a number of garden clubs, including the Four Seasons Garden Club and the Rock Garden Club. Michael was a talented cook and hosted many lovely parties on his patio. He was buried on April 13 in the Walnut Grove Cemetery in Hanover County, between his parents. A celebration of his life will be held at a later time in Alexandria.

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 13

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 26
Chamber XCHANGE. 6-8 p.m. At Founders Hall, 106 N. Lee Street, Alexandria. Powered by The Chamber ALX. April presenters: Julie Chapman, Founder and Chair ALX Dog Walk; Cheyanne Dwyer, Chief Strategy Officer of Building Momentum; and Brad Halsey, CEO and Co-Founder of Building Momentum. For more information on the program, reach out to us at Lpatish@thechamberalx.com

THURSDAY/APRIL 27
Poem in Your Pocket. 6:30 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. City of Alexandria Poet Laureate, Zeina Azzam, will lead the Poem in Your Pocket Celebration at the Athenaeum. The formal program begins at 7 p.m. She will be joined by winning poets of the 2023 DASHing Words in Motion program, who will have their poems displayed inside the DASH buses and trolleys in April and May. Limited seating will be available, so reservations are required. To make a reservation email arts@alexandriava.gov.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29
Alexandria African American Family Reunion. The Alexandria Public Library is having their very first "Alexandria African American Family Reunion" on April 29, 2023. The library wants you to share your family photos. They will have their scanning machines ready to make copies of your pictures. If you would like your pictures scanned prior to the event, visit the blog at - <http://www.theotheralexandria.com> and while there, read the article on "The Importance of Photos." For additional information on the Reunion, click on this link - <https://mailchi.mp/alexlibraryva/newsletter-1108914?e=117c38e-cbf>

SATURDAY/APRIL 29
Healthy Kids Day. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. At YMCA Alexandria, 420 East Monroe Ave., Alexandria. This free, annual event features all sorts of family-friendly activities to encourage healthy kids, healthy families, and a healthy start to the summer season. Meet firefighters and check out a fire truck, get your face painted, and create something new in our STEAM Maker Space. Enjoy Family Zumba, Family Swim (1-3 p.m.), and a Doggie Parade (12:30-1:00 p.m.). Grab a piece of fresh fruit, courtesy of the American Heart Association, and get up-to-date on important vaccines provided by Giant Pharmacy. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/healthy-kids-day-at-ymca-alexandria-tickets-609846716947>

SATURDAY/APRIL 29
Native Plant Sale. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At 1701 N. Quaker Lane parking lot, Alexandria. Largest native plant sale in DC Metro Area hosts 10 vendors from VA, MD, PA, and DC selling native perennials, shrubs, and trees for sun or shade. This event is free. Call 571-232-0375 or www.NorthernAlexandriaNativePlantSale.org.

APRIL 29-30
"Cinderella Spring Ballet." At George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria. Presented

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BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 11

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteer-alexandria.org

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteer-alexandria.org/ALIVE>

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or dondrea@aol.com.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia.

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 14

by the Metropolitan School of the Arts. More than 40 Metropolitan School of the Arts students will perform Cinderella, including: Justin Roach, who performs as Prince Charming. Roach, grade 12, was accepted into the Syracuse University Musical Theater Dance program in New York with a full tuition scholarship; and Sara Yoon, grade 12, has been at MSA since age 3. Yoon completed her Royal Academy of Dance examinations through the highest level, receiving a high distinction. Dates: On Sat., April 29 at 12 PM and 5 PM, and Sun., April 30 at 12 PM and 5 PM. Tickets are ranging from \$22 to \$25 per person. Go to www.metropolitanarts.org for more information and tickets, or click go to Cinderella tickets.

MAY 5-27

The "Prints in May@DRA: Exploring the Possibilities" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans gallery features traditional printmaking techniques such as reliefs, intaglios, monoprints and handmade prints with mixed media, along with artworks

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To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnoa.org.

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria's pre-teens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for "Space of Her Own," and "Space of His Own," serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult role models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit www.spaceofherown.org and www.spaceofhisown.org. For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov or phone at 703-746-4687.

Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed. To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, brianmorreale@gmail.com

SUPPORT GROUPS

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at suzjdoyle@gmail.com or 571-403-0673.

The Parkinson's Disease Support Group of Alexandria meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. At the Hollin Hall Senior Center, Room 109, 1500 Shenandoah Road. All Parkinson's patients and caregivers are welcome.

The Caregiver Support Group is facilitated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center, 1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email DAAS@alexandriava.gov.

created using computer graphics programs and other objects enhanced with block prints or imprints. View at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed May 28). Details: DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

APRIL

Wed. 19: Graham Nash – Sixty Years of Songs & Stories \$99.50

Thu. 20: Langhorne Slim & John Craigie \$39.50

Mon. 24: Steve Morse Band \$65.00

Wed. 26: Suzanne Vega – An Intimate Evening of Songs and Stories \$55.00

Fri. 28: Ohio Players \$69.50

Sat. 29: Eaglemania – The World's Greatest Tribute to the Eagles \$45.00

Sun. 30: Herman's Hermits starring Peter Noone \$55.00

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CENTRE VIEW

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

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

Please, help save these historical papers. All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and 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 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.

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

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

Connection Newspapers... Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette, Centre View, Potomac Almanac
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The Dog's Honest Truth



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Since we'll be out of town for a few days – and can't take our new puppy Burton with us, arrangements for his away-from-home accommodations have been made. For the first time in over five months, dog and owner will be separated. I am not looking forward to it. Burton will be spending the next two days and one night staying with fellow dog owners, Jen and Murph. Rather than subject Burton to the stress of being caged at his veterinarian's kennel, he'll be overnighing instead in Huntington, Maryland in a big single-family house. He'll have run of that house and when he needs to go outside, he'll have a large fenced-in yard to explore and even better, he'll have another dog, Cooper, to occupy him. Besides, he's not quite old enough, and/or vaccinated completely yet to risk exposing him to a kennel environment where a miscellaneous disease or a virus might exist. I know Burton will be in excellent, loving hands, but that's not my problem. My problem is me and the logistics of the drop-off. Because of schedules and availability, we'll still be at home without Burton for nearly a day before we leave.

As I write this in real time, I'm still at home – without Burton, and I miss him terribly. A dog is such a full-time responsibility that not having him around is extremely noticeable. I feel like I'm not doing something I should be doing with him: walking, playing, petting, wrestling, ball-throwing, stick-fetching, feeding, treating, et cetera. Moreover, until we leave later today, for the time that I'm being dogless, I am lonely and bored, even though there are still four cats and one wife in the house. In addition, not having any dog-centric responsibilities for the next few days is triggering some other feelings that subconsciously I've buried (having been so preoccupied with Burton): my brother, Richard's surprising (but not shocking) death on Dec. 3rd.

On Dec. 3rd, Burton was four months old and not yet housebroken. As such, me and my wife, Dina have been taking him out constantly, especially since he's a puppy, throughout the day and overnight as well, trying to reinforce certain dos and don'ts. Also, it seemed like every week, one of us was taking him to the vet for one puppy shot or another: distemper, DHPP, rabies, para influenza. It's not overwhelming or anything as we're familiar with the drill (requirements). Nonetheless, it's easy to get preoccupied. Then (not suddenly), we have no dog anything for two-plus days, one day of which was half at home, now.

Left to my own devices, with no distractions (not that Burton is a distraction, but you know what I mean, right?), I began to feel my brother's death more substantially again. Not that I hadn't learned to live with it, but I had found a place for it, I thought. It wasn't top of mind. It was middle of mind. And it seemed to be in a good place. After I dropped Burton off and came home – with no dog responsibilities, Richard's death became top-of-mind, sort of unexpectedly. Here I thought I was coping and assimilating his loss into a new routine. The only routine I was assimilating was life with a puppy. With Burton away for the weekend, I've had no distraction. And it has become painfully obvious that my brother's death is still weighing on me. Once again, the loss felt palpable. Almost as if I was experiencing it for a second time. I hadn't assimilated anything after all. I was too busy with the dog to realize it. Now, I realize it. My brother is dead. And I'm extremely sad.

At least my brother got to meet Burton once (his nephew as he called him) on his birthday in late October. Richard was doing so well. I never imagined (anticipated is probably a better description) that that would be the last birthday and the second to last time I would see my brother alive. And the fact that Burton was involved with Richard, even for a little bit, gives me some comfort. It created a connection of sorts between them that helps me to smile about an otherwise horrible situation. I can recall how happy Richard was that night when we brought Burton, kennel, and all, into the house. We positioned Burton's kennel on the floor in the dining room right next to Richard so they could be physically close. Dogs have a wonderful capacity to spread joy wherever they go. And this evening was no exception. As minimal as their interaction was, nonetheless, it was a happy memory I have and will continue to have of my brother. And I need as many of them as possible. And thanks to Burton, I have an extra-special one. One for which I am forever grateful.

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

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



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