

CONNECTION

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station

June Is Pride Month

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PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

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Police Lack Crisis Training

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Four year old Maisie Adams, of Burke, enjoys painting a rock with bright colors at Pride Night Out at Springfield Town Center on Friday, June 23.

JUNE 29 - JULY 5, 2023

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Hoagies, Lasagna, Cheesesteaks, Cannoli and More

A Deli opens a new location in Fairfax City.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

After nearly four decades in the delicatessen business, the Kapoor family recently opened a new location in Fairfax City at 10955 Fairfax Blvd. But husband-and-wife owners Kawal and Surila Kapoor, along with their daughter, Shania Pride, are no strangers to the area.

“I grew up in Fairfax City, my first house was in Fairfax and, most recently, we had a restaurant in Fairfax Circle for three years,” said Surila Kapoor. “This is the sixth one we’ve owned.”

The Kapoor family’s previous delis were in Manassas and Arlington. But, said Pride, “They’ve been part of this community for so long, and they chose this location because it felt like home again.”

A Deli is in the same shopping



While members of the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce look on, (from left), Tom Ross and Catherine Read hold the ribbon while Surila and Kawal Kapoor man the scissors.

center as Trek Bicycle and Dunkin Donuts, near the intersection of Routes 50 and 29. Hours are Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., and Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Phone: 571-407-5060. It opened in February but didn’t have its official ribbon cutting until recently.

“I’m delighted to welcome the Kapoors to this location,” said Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read, noting



Italian cannoli decorated for the occasion.

that since she lives nearby, she’ll be a frequent customer. “Thank you so much for choosing the City of Fairfax. We love to support small businesses, and we look forward to forging a long relationship with you here in the City.”

Pleased with Fairfax City’s ongoing commercial growth, City Councilmember Tom Ross called A Deli “another example of the City wel-

coming another new business. And it’s a collaborative effort of this City, the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, our economic team and the community.”

After her husband thanked everyone for coming to the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Surila Kapoor said, “Because we’ve been in this business for 38 years, a lot of
SEE A DELI OPENS, PAGE 5



Kawal and Surila Kapoor standing by their wine selection, underneath their son Arun’s artwork.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



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- Nothing Bundt Cakes (in-kind)
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- Yard House (in-kind)

Lake Accotink Task Force Meets for the First Time



Former Fairfax County Chairman Sharon Bulova leads the task force.

Fate of this Springfield lake discussed by newly formed group.

By MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Through the years, the silt has poured into Lake Accotink and the arguments grew on what could be done to save it. After the last set of discussions in February it looked like the lake would be allowed to become wetlands. But many people didn't like this conclusion, so the Lake Accotink Task Force was formed to recommend the fate of this neighborhood icon.

Led by former board chair Sha-

ron Bulova (D) the task force met for the first time on Monday, June 26 at the Fairfax County Government Center. The task force includes former Braddock District supervisor John C. Cook (R) as well as a representative from the county park authority, community members, and environmental groups. Current Braddock District Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw is part of the group too.

The first meeting of the task force followed the theme of "Setting the Stage," and will be followed by others throughout the summer, moving the process to a decision.

Sharon Bulova opened the meeting and let Walkinshaw add a few remarks about the format of the meeting, reminding everyone about being polite and agreeing to disagree. "Bring your expertise," he said, recommending that everyone read the background documents that are on the web.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

Lake Accotink

Although this was meeting Number One of a series of meetings with the task force, "it will take the time it takes," he said, leaving the schedule open.

They went around introducing about 21 members of the task force seated at the table, and each had a background that is needed on this kind of thing. There are HOA members, environmentalists, Friends of Lake Accotink, biologists, watershed experts, tree planners, joggers and many with a short story about their experiences at Accotink as a child. There were many participants in the back of the room that were introduced as well. Everyone shared the reasons

why they were there, but it didn't seem that there were any on the side to leave it as is and let the silt turn it into a wetland.

The meeting wrapped up with a look towards the next meeting on July 10 where the staff's initial recommendation to not dredge will be looked at.

That decision was partially due to a significant cost increase to continue dredging to maintain the lake. Bulova reminded everyone that the staff's recommendation was part of their responsibility as county employees. "Staff also has a responsibility to come back and give an honest recommendation," she said.

Task Force Comes to Fruition

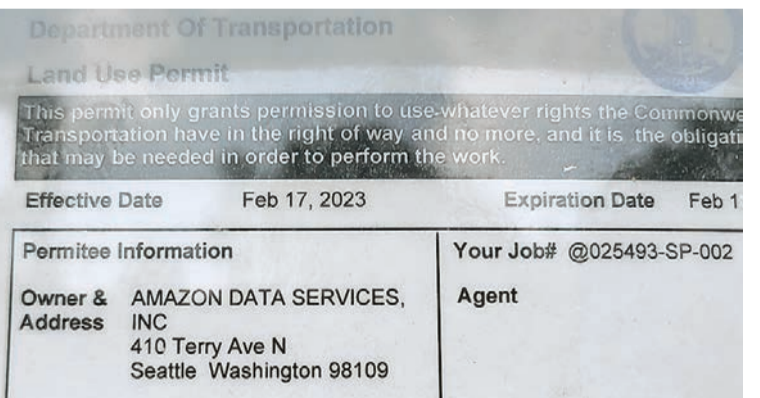
The first thought of a task force came after the meeting in February when saving the lake was on the minds of many in the area so it was an issue that needed more examination. At the Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee meeting held on April 25, Walkinshaw asked the Board to establish a Task Force on the Future of Lake Accotink and officially put forth a motion to create the task force at a Board of Supervisors meeting on May 23, 2023. He laid out the agenda for the task force which would look at dredging impacts, cost and maintenance requirements.

Amazon Data Center Coming to Franconia District



At the site there are piles of debris that were once the office buildings.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION



Amazon Data Services plans to build a data center on Loisdale Road in place of two demolished office buildings.

By MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Residents of Loisdale Estates and Newington are about to have Amazon as neighbors with an Amazon Data Center

currently under development on Loisdale Road, just south of two car dealerships in southern Springfield.

The site was previously occupied by two office buildings that went

SEE AMAZON, PAGE 10

‘An Opportunity for Development and Advancement’

Fairfax Ace Hardware is becoming employee owned.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Ace Hardware may be a well-known, national chain; but in Fairfax City, it's a beloved local business with a small-town feel and fiercely loyal customers. Over the years, it's become a bonafide part of the City's fabric because of its products, employees, welcoming atmosphere and, especially, its owner, Craig Smith.

Recently, it's embarked on a new chapter that'll make it even better, while positively impacting the lives of Smith and his employees. That's because Fairfax Ace Hardware has just merged with the employee-owned, local Ace Hardware chain, A Few Cool Hardware Stores.

"I'm extremely excited," said Smith. "I think we've found the right partner for our business, for me personally and, most importantly, for our team." And when he says, "team," he's referring to his employees. The store will still be under the Ace umbrella, but employee-owned, with Smith now co-CEO of A Few Cool Hardware Stores with its founder, Gina Schaefer.

"We're thrilled to have this store be part of this group," she said. "It's our 13th in the Washington Metropolitan area. All our stores are members of the national Ace Hardware Cooperative for purchasing to give small, hardware stores larger buying power to stay competitive."

Schaefer started the first such store in Washington, D.C., in 2003. And after establishing the third one in 2006, she said, "I had so many names listed after my signature, I started calling it, 'A Few Cool Hardware Stores,' everybody liked it and it stuck."

She and her husband, Marc Friedman, were joint CEOs and, for 10 years, they opened one new store a year. They also have a store in Old Town Alexandria; Fairfax is the 13th, and all the stores have a total of 300 employees.

This spring, Smith and Schaefer met with his 32 staff members to tell them about the change. And, said Smith, "The reaction was extremely positive."

As for him, he'll now manage all 13 stores and have a much larger team. "We've known Craig for



Posing together are some members of A Few Cool Hardware Stores and Fairfax Ace Hardware.



Gina Schaefer and Craig Smith celebrate their hardware stores' merger.

years and always liked him," said Schaefer. "Our leadership team has worked with him before and felt comfortable with him. And since he's been in the hardware business since he was a kid, he knows how Ace works."

In 2021, Schaefer and Friedman decided to sell their company to their employees through an employee stock-ownership program. After working in it for one year and 1,000 hours, each employee automatically becomes an owner.

"Marc and I were ready to exit and do something to be part of the solution to society's various

inequalities," explained Schaefer. "And this program will enable every employee, from cashiers on up, to be part of business ownership – which is usually hard to do with in a small business. But we were large enough to do that."

"We call our employees 'teammates,' and it's important to make sure they know they're valued," she continued. "It also helps us stay in competition [with other hardware stores] and makes our bond with our teammates even stronger."

A Few Cool Hardware Stores has been employee-owned for two years now, and Schaefer said the

system is working well. Employees receive money in their retirement accounts annually, based on the company's profitability at that time.

"If someone leaves, they're no longer an owner," she added. "But any money vested in them can be rolled over into a qualified retirement plan, such as a Roth IRA or a 401(k) program."

Regarding the Fairfax store, Schaefer said, "Nationally, it's ranked well for its revenue volume. It also has a diverse group of products and reflects the neighborhood in what its customers want. For example, there are really nice

outdoor products, such as grills and lawn-care items.

"And certainly, the longevity of its employees says a great deal about it. For example, Ellen, who manages the paint department, has been here 9 years – and that's a lot of experience."

Furthermore, within the next year, Smith will replace Schaefer as CEO, and she couldn't be happier. "I think Craig is going to be a great leader, and I'm comfortable that I'm leaving the business in good hands," she said. "And I love the Fairfax community because it's so supportive of this location."

Smith is pleased about the changes, as well. "The team will be vested on paper and will feel vested in the business as a whole," he said. "So they're more incentivized to perform the best they can, both from a business and an emotional standpoint."

His employees are excited, explained Smith, because "They'll have an opportunity for more professional development and advancement, there are improved financial and healthcare benefits, and they have the unique opportunity to be owners in this company."

Smith's father, Stan, is part owner of Strosniders Hardware in Bethesda, plus two other Strosniders. And in 1999, Craig began an 11-year stint working at the Bethesda store.

"I didn't know if I'd like it – and to my surprise, I loved it from the start," he said. "It changes every day. There's new excitement, and I like working with the team and customers. There's something different happening all the time to keep your mind sharp."

Smith has now owned Fairfax Ace Hardware for more than 12 years and – no surprise – his twin brother, Jeff, owns Twins Ace Hardware in Arlington. So hardware is definitely the family business; and for Craig Smith, it's also a source of fulfillment.

"What I really like is that we're a community hub, and we serve our community in virtually every type of situation – from emergency to mundane," he said. "The most gratifying thing for me to see is neighbors meeting each other here unexpectedly and striking up a conversation, laughing and smiling. And it happens a lot on the weekends."

Despite the merger, said Smith, "Not much will change here. We have a very strong team and strive to deliver great service every day, the same as always. I'm really honored that Gina and Mark chose me to guide their company; I'm very fortunate."

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

A Deli Opens a New Location in Fairfax City

FROM PAGE 2

people were waiting for us to open here.” Then, once the official festivities were done, attendees feasted on the mini sub sandwiches, meat-and-cheese kabobs and Italian cannoli that the Kapoors had made for the event. Smiling, Pride said, “My parents love to feed people. They love to do that in our family, too. And they like getting to know their customers.”

Surila said they sell lots of Italian specialties every day. “We also have imported meats, wines and cheese from Italy,” added Pride. “My parents have been working with the same distributor for decades now, and this high quality of products makes A Deli different from other delis.”

The restaurant has an extensive menu, offering a wide variety of hot and cold main dishes, plus sides and desserts. Under “Italian Specialties,” said Surila, the most popular hoagie sandwiches are the Italian, featuring mortadella, salami and provolone cheese; the hot meatball-and-cheese; and the Crazy Italian, made with mortadella, Sicilian salami, capicola ham and provolone. And they all come in 8- or 12-inch sizes. She said the lasagna, served with salad and gar-

lic bread, is also a customer favorite.

Some of the hoagies come in double portions, and there are also hot Reuben sandwiches, plus tuna melts and BLTs, as well as meals of manicotti and spaghetti and meatballs. And the specialty salads include Caesar, chef’s, Greek and caprese.

There are sides such as French fries, onion rings and potato salad, plus an assortment of cheesesteaks, including Classic Philly; steak, egg and cheese; and bacon double cheddar. For dessert, customers may choose from cannoli, cheesecake, carrot cake, tiramisu, brownies and blondies.

“We also do a lot of catering, including our lunch boxes and party platters,” said Surila. “For 100-200 people, we need two days’ notice; for smaller groups, just a day is fine.” A Deli even has happy hours, from 3-7 p.m., when customers may enjoy beer, wine and snacks.

Proud that it’s a family business, Surila explained that the “A” in A Deli stands for her older son, Arun, and the “Big A” sandwich honors her younger son, Aman. And, she added, “Someday, we’ll name another menu item after Arun’s son – my grandson, Ayden.”

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PERF: FCPD Lacked Crisis, Decision Making Training

5 of 7 police shooting incidents involved mental health crises, but training for such situations has been lacking for years.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Two months into 2023, on Feb. 22, the Fairfax County Police Department faced another police shooting. It led to what can be a defining junction for the department: the April 2023 Review by noted policing think tank PERF. Fairfax County Chief Kevin Davis had joined the department one year and eight months before the Feb. 22 police shooting, on April 23, 2021, after leading Baltimore's police.

Whether or not Davis incorporates PERF's recommendations, especially to quickly incorporate ICAT Training as found in the April 2023 Review, and does so expeditiously, as PERF suggests, may shape the department for years to come.

"I am convinced that by working together and providing our police officers with more and better training in this vital area, we can save lives—and we can save officers' careers and advance their well-being as well," writes Chuck Wexler, executive director of PERF in the organization's training guide, ICAT Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics.

FCPD reported that the Feb. 22 foot pursuit by department officers in Tysons ended when two officers deployed deadly force, killing an unarmed Black suspect who allegedly stole sunglasses. However, the shooting came at the heels of 2022, when the department tied its 15-year historical record of police shootings, equaling those of 2008. The department that year saw six police shooting incidents deploying deadly force at a person or vehicle occupied by a person or persons, according to the department's Officer-Involved Shooting Summaries.

"We were in contact with Chief Davis within days of the incident at Tysons Corner," said Wexler, the executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum. "The Chief wanted an independent review of the circumstances surrounding the recent upticks in shootings in Fairfax County to identify any trends or areas where department training or police responses could be improved. The goal was to look at common denominators and trends and make recommendations that might reduce use of force in the future."

According to Lt. James Curry, FCPD Public Affairs Bureau, Davis has a long-standing relationship with Wexler and has frequent conversations with him related to PERF research and the police industry. Davis asked PERF to come in and perform this review, said Curry.

PERF immediately went on task and quickly presented its findings, dated April 2023.

Founded in 1976, "PERF has identified best practices on fundamental issues such as reducing police use of force, developing community policing and problem-oriented policing, using technologies to deliver police services to the community, and evaluating crime reduction strategies," according to PERF's website.

Curry added that historically, the Fairfax department has "been a leader among law enforcement agencies when it comes to adopting industry best practices. ... We value PERF's insight and recommendations of our department and strive to always improve for the betterment of our community."

When asked what the most significant finding was in PERF's Fairfax review, Wexler said on June 26, "The most significant finding was that a person experiencing some type of mental health-related crisis was at the root of five of the seven shootings."

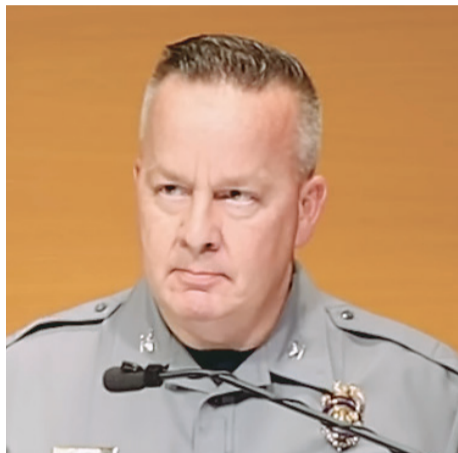
PERF's 16-page review of the Fairfax department focuses on seven Fairfax police shootings from 7-19-21 to 10-6-2022. It does not include the Feb. 22 Tysons incident, at the request of Davis. But the report does comment on the shooting based on the public release of the body worn camera footage.

Wexler said, "Our recommendation was that the department steps up their training of ICAT, including suicide by cop, to give officers the ability to identify those in crisis and use communications, assessment, and tactical skills necessary to resolve incidents in a way that minimizes use of force."

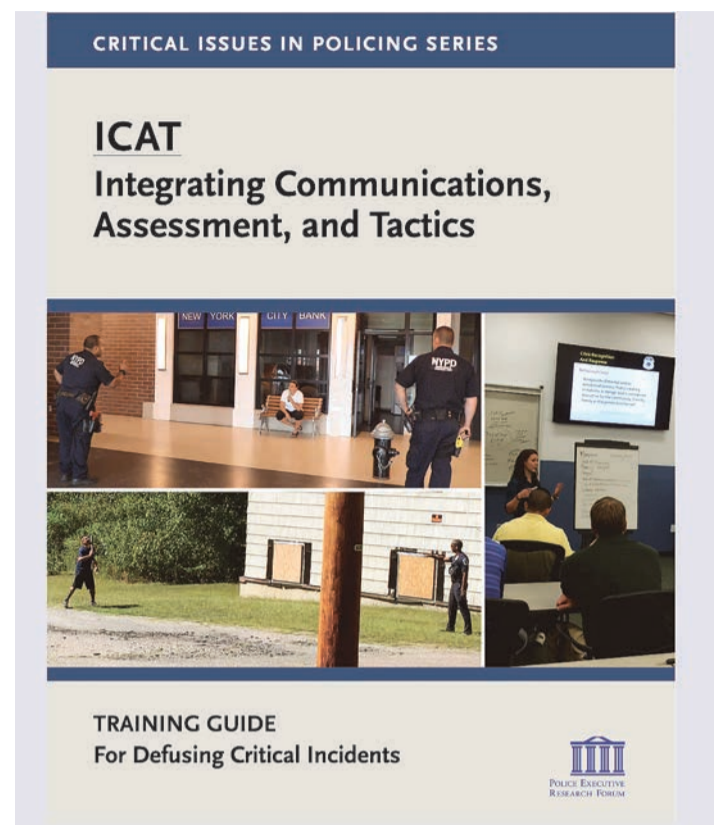
PERF's ICAT training is found to be associated with decreased use of force and injuries to both officers and residents.

The program has been specifically developed to address incidents where individuals may not be carrying firearms but could be in the midst of a mental health or other type of crisis. It provides officers with tools and options to safely defuse a situation. "The training program is anchored by the Critical Decision-Making Model that helps officers assess situations, make safe and effective decisions, and document and learn from their actions," according to PERF.

Curry said that Davis has a history of bringing PERF and ICAT training to police departments. "He previously facilitated the launch of ICAT training at the Baltimore Police Department."



Fairfax County Chief Kevin Davis



ICAT Training Guide



Chuck Wexler, executive director of PERF



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Chairman Jeff McKay

"The goal was to look at common denominators and trends and make recommendations that might reduce use of force in the future."

—Chuck Wexler,
executive director of PERF

However, in its April 2023 Fairfax review, PERF identified that in 2022, the Fairfax department recognized the need to train its officers on how to defuse critical incidents through the implementation of the PERF-developed program ICAT, but did not implement the program in 2022.

An online search verifies such. In the CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan by "Leadership Sponsor Kevin Davis, Chief of Police, and Equity Lead Major James Kraus," the department commits instead to spring of 2023. "During the spring of 2023, all FCPD officers will receive Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (iCAT) training. The training would provide officers with the

tools, skills, and options they needed to defuse a range of critical incidents successfully and safely," states the CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan.

PERF's Findings and Recommendations Regarding Mental Health-Related Calls in its April 2023 Review

PERF's review begins, "Mental Health-Related Calls Account for A Disproportionate Number of FCPD's Officer-Involved Critical Incidents." PERF devotes five pages to this section, which discusses in part the department's ICAT status and its cornerstone, "the critical decision-making model."

The findings and recommendations of PERF's investigation documented that in the five police shooting cases, a bullet missed one person, while three others survived their police gunshot wounds. However, an FCPD officer fatally shot the fifth individual, a 32-year-old man who was reportedly breaking items in his family home and had a history of anxiety and depression. It is worth noting that the man was not considered to be violent, according to the dispatcher. Approaching officers with a bottle and a large mask, an 11-year veteran police officer discharged his firearm and fatally shot the man.

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PERF: FCPD Lacked Crisis Training

FROM PAGE 6

PERF refers in its Fairfax review to the research study, “Overlooked in the Undercounted: The Role of Mental Illness in Fatal Law Enforcement Encounters,” by the Treatment Advocacy Center. “A minimum of 1 in 4 fatal police encounters ends the life of an individual with severe mental illness. ... Where official government data regarding police shootings and mental illness have been analyzed—in one U.S. city and several other Western countries—the findings indicate that mental health disorders are a factor in as many as 1 in 2 fatal law enforcement encounters,” the study states.

However, as of March 28, 2023, only 33 percent had completed the training program, and the department conducted its training sessions alphabetically. That meant that officers whose last names began with the letter “A,” then “B,” then “C,” and so on, received training first, rather than prioritizing officers who frequently interact with the public.

PERF’s Recommendation #1 is that FCPD speed up its efforts to provide ICAT training to officers who have not yet received it.

ICAT is PERF’s Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) training program. The data-proven program gives officers more tools, skills, and options for handling critical incidents, especially those involving subjects who are in mental distress and not armed with a firearm. View the report cited in the Fairfax review by PERF Louisville Metro Police Department’s Initial Findings.

PERF suggests that given the Fairfax department’s significant increase in and prevalence of mental health crises in these incidents, it should consider how it can fast-track ICAT training. PERF notes this “particularly for those officers in operational roles such as Patrol, Operations Support, Violent Crimes, and Organized Crime and Narcotics.”

PERF recommended in its review, “Paying overtime and running two training sessions per day are among the options worth considering to ensure the FCPD personnel who most need ICAT training receive it as soon as possible.” They also recommend that the department prioritize this training for officers who will interact with the public the most.

Curry said, “The leadership of Chief Davis is a critical reason why our department began this training ... As Fairfax County Police Chief (Davis) continues to ensure this valuable training and others are provided to all our FCPD members, To date, 804 officers have completed ICAT training, with the remainder of the Department to finish by the beginning of October. This training is a priority for all sworn members of FCPD, to include our specialized units. “

Suicide by Cop

ICAT training covers “suicide by cop” and identifying people in crisis, according to its review. PERF found that officers should be trained to recognize crisis situations, especially suicidal ones, and avoid escalating the situation. The officers in three of the Fairfax police shootings were aware of a mental health crisis, and subjects displayed early signs of premeditated or spontaneous suicide by cop, according to the report.

Responding officers were notified that a wom-



A scenario enacted as part of the ICAT Training Guide, officers demonstrate effective approaches for handling a situation in which a woman’s son is off his meds, refusing to cooperate, and is swinging a bat. The scenario is remarkably similar to a police shooting incident on July 7, 2022 in McLean that left Jasper Aaron Lynch dead.

A person experiencing some type of mental health-related crisis was at the root of five of the seven shootings in 2022.

an had threatened to knife herself and others in one case, and in another situation, a nonviolent man was depressed and anxious. In two situations, police fired when people charged at them.

PERF’s Recommendation #2 advises FCPD in its review to use the critical decision making model in training and promote the model “throughout the culture of the organization.

“Opportunities for integrating [the critical decision making model] CDM throughout the organization include departmental policy, training modules across a range of topics, after-action reviews, Performance Review Boards, supervisory use-of-force reviews, body-worn camera audits, and roll-call briefings. ... Training officers to more effectively slow down and think — rather than quickly react and respond — can affect their ultimate decisions.”

PERF’s Recommendation #3 is that FCPD should modify General Order 609, - Mental Health Calls for Service. The order does not currently require or recommend that first-line supervisors respond to mental health-related crisis calls. PERF noted that supervisors can play an extremely important role in helping to resolve these incidents safely.

In its Fairfax review, PERF referred to its 2021 report, “Suicide by Cop: Protocol and Training

Guide,” and said that the presence of a supervisor could have a stabilizing effect on other officers. “As first-line supervisors, sergeants can also assign roles, establish perimeters and staging areas, request additional resources, and coordinate the entire response.”

PERF reported on other incidents that might also benefit from the review. The department officers chased with their guns drawn. PERF discovered in its Fairfax review a 2023 public video that “appears to show a sergeant chasing a man.” Ultimately, he drew and fired his gun, killing the man who allegedly stole a pair of sunglasses from a department store. PERF states the use of ICAT’s cornerstone, critical decision-making, “may have led the officer to think through other available options from the start and may have inspired a different response.”

Chairman Jeff McKay said on June 26 that in Fairfax County, they review their practices, training, and policies on a continual basis to ensure best practices. “Whether it is through the co-production of policy, implementing programs like Diversion First and the co-responder model, or engaging outside experts like PERF, we are committed to leading the way for what policing in the 21st century should be.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FREE INDEPENDENCE DAY LYFT RIDES

Preparing to combat that time of year when, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, over a third (39%, 2021) of U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers, a local nonprofit organization announced that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during the Independence Day holiday.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2023 Independence Day SoberRide program will be in operation beginning at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 4th (Independence Day) and operate until 4:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 5th as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period. During this 12-hour period,

area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app’s ‘Payment’ tab (under the ‘Add Lyft Pass’ option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP’s 2023 Independence Day SoberRide promo code will be posted at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 4th on www.SoberRide.com.

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Pride Night Out Creates Safe Space

June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Springfield Town Center sponsored Pride Night Out on Friday, June 23, in partnership with Safe Space NOVA. The event, held in the center's Grand Court, was in keeping with Safe Space NOVA's mission of providing safe, accepting, and supporting environments to combat social stigmas, bullying and other challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth. The event included music, entertainment, a photo-booth, community vendors, and giveaways.

The event's main entertainment was a drag performance by Evry Pleasure. She describes her show as "the perfect mix between pageantry, comedy, and dancing ... full of energy, laughter, and glamour with a dose of pleasure that will keep you asking for more!" She started her drag career in 2019, with encouragement from another drag artist. The individual behind the make-up and costumes moved from Puerto Rico to Northern Virginia in 2020 to attend George Washington University. He continued to entertain regularly in this area while studying, graduating in 2022 with a Master's degree in Public Administration, and now works for NASA. As Pleasure at the Springfield event, her appearance, along



Drag performer Evry Pleasure at Springfield Town Center Pride Night Out Friday, June 23.

with a dance performance, included a charity meet & greet with photo opportunity to benefit Safe Space NOVA.

A selection of upbeat dance music was provided by DJ Pierre Bakhos, with Exclusively Entertainment. A Washington D.C. native, DJ Pierre got his music start playing at University of Maryland fraternity parties. He went on to attend a university recording engineering program in Florida, and then to playing at festivals and venues across the country.

Americans have been exposed to and en-

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



College students Ashton Zedebrowski, age 20, of Fairfax, and Jamie Cook, 19, of Alexandria, attending the event, praise Safe Space NOVA for providing financial and housing support for LGBTQ+ youth in need.

joyed drag entertainment for many years in television and cinema family entertainment, including popular favorites: Robin Williams' Mrs. Doubtfire; Tyler Perry's Ma-

bel Simmons; Dustin Hoffman's Tootsie; Jamie Farr's Corporal Max Klinger; and Barry Humphries' Dame Edna; as well as Rupaul's Drag Race; and all the way back to 1959 with Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon dressed in drag for "Some Like it Hot," to name a few.

Recently, drag show entertainers have faced protests from conservative groups to block them from being seen by children in several states. While NPR-PBS NewHour-Marist polling, indicates 58 percent of respondents said they oppose laws restricting the performances, and only 39 percent said they support banning them; Republicans and those with children under the age of 18 were more likely to support restrictions.

Evry Pleasure performs mostly at night clubs where young people are not present. However, she shares, when she is around younger crowds she often gets questions about her gender discovery. She says, "While every journey of identity is different, drag can be a way to explore gender identity." Although not Trans himself, as Evry, she is happy to be an inspiration for those for whom the attraction to the artistry and costuming of drag go beyond entertainment to self discovery.

SEE PRIDE NIGHT OUT, PAGE 12

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ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY/JULY 1

Fireworks. 6-10 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center will present a pre-Independence fireworks event Saturday, July 1 from 6-10 p.m. on its Lorton, VA 55-acre campus. The event includes the fireworks display (beginning at dark, approximately 9:15 p.m.), live music, free access to galleries, artist studios and museum; food and beverages are available for purchase. Entrance is free; parking is \$40 per vehicle. VIP tickets are available for \$120 and includes private reception, food, wine tasting and reserved seating for the fireworks show. To purchase tickets, visit workhousearts.org/fireworks.



Independence Day Fireworks will begin on June 30 and July 1 around the region.

SUNDAY/JULY 2

Independence Day Fireworks.

At Yeonas Park, Town of Vienna. Festivities including live music, children's entertainment, games and other family fun begin at 4 p.m., and a 20-minute fireworks display will begin at 9:30 p.m. Those who plan to attend the celebration are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or picnic blankets. The Vienna Little League concession stand will be open offering food and beverages for sale, or residents may bring their own snacks. No alcohol, glass containers, sparklers/fireworks or dogs are permitted. Lawn chairs are not permitted on the baseball fields but may be used anywhere else in the park. Visit www.viennava.gov/fireworks.

GREAT FALLS 4TH OF JULY

At Village Centre, Great Falls.

Celebrate Great Falls Foundation and get ready for the cuteness of the Little Patriots Parade on the 4th of July! This has been a local Great Falls tradition since 1955, and it kicks off the morning festivities in the Village Centre. Dress your little ones (babies through kindergartners, plus siblings) in patriotic attire and walk or pull them in a decorated "ride" around the Village Centre Green. Awards include Young George Washington, Miss Betsy Ross, Little Liberty, Best Decorated Wagon, Best Curly Hair, and Most Entertaining. Register for free on-site at 8:30 a.m., and the parade begins promptly at 9 am. Sponsored by the Women's Club of Great Falls.

JUNE 30 AND JULY 1

Independence Day Fireworks.

At George Washington's Mount Vernon. Enjoy an evening of family fun and Independence Day fireworks along with patriotic music to celebrate the nation's founding. Guests also can attend a special wreath-laying at Washington's Tomb, watch colonial ice cream-making demonstrations, and enjoy 18th-century dancing. The Mansion will be lit in red, white, and blue during this event scheduled for June 30 and July 1.

JULY 1

Independence Day at Lake Fairfax Park.

At 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Ticketed entry to Lake Fairfax Park begins at noon, and the park will close to new arrivals at approximately 8:45 p.m. Parking fees are \$15 per vehicle in advance or \$20 per vehicle at the gate. Bicyclists and pedestrians are free. Lake Fairfax is a destination location providing 476 acres of parkland.

You'll find a wide range of family friendly activities. Visitors can enjoy the Water Mine Family Swimming Hole water park, skate park, pump track, several hiking and biking trails, and athletic fields. All picnic areas will be offered on a first-come-first serve basis. Food trucks will open for business from noon until 9 p.m. Live music will begin at 4 p.m., featuring Ted Garber, Frying Pan Farm Bluegrass Jam and Sonic Boom. Cap off an eventful holiday with a patriotic fireworks display beginning at approximately 9:15 p.m.

HERNDON 4TH OF JULY

Celebration and fireworks display in Bready Park, Town of Herndon.

Celebration begins at 6:30 p.m., fireworks 9:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.herndon-va.gov/July4

FOURTH OF JULY IN CLIFTON

Town of Clifton, Main Street

3:45 p.m. - Parade Line-Up at Dell/Kincheloe
4:00 p.m. - Parade Start
4:30 p.m. - Ayre Square flag raising
5:00 p.m. - CBA Potluck and Celebration

RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER

2023 SUMMER

ENTERTAINMENT LINEUP

Saturdays, June 17 - August 5
10:00 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

At Reston Town Square Park, Reston

Bring the kids for magic, comedy, puppets, music and lots of laughs. Shows include Rocknocos, Lohr Family Antics, The Uncle Devin Show and Turley the Magician. See the full schedule here: Family Fun Entertainment Series. Family Fun Entertainment is presented by RCC and Reston Town Center Association in cooperation with MSE Productions, Inc. Reston Town Center garages offer free parking on Saturdays.

Sunday Art in the Park with the Shenandoah Conservatory

Sundays, thru August 27

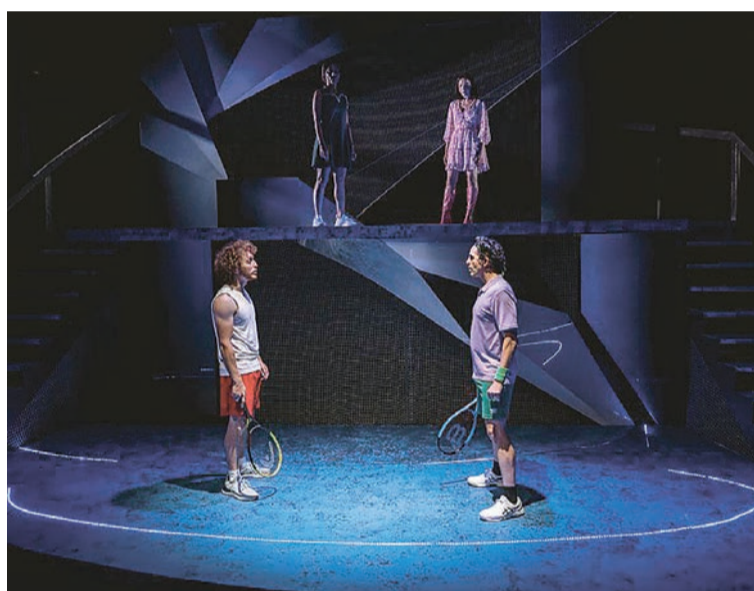
7 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Reston Town Square Park

Wind down your weekend with classical, jazz and cabaret-style music provided by faculty and students from Shenandoah University's acclaimed music conservatory. This series will run through August 27. Visit Sunday Art in the Park for the complete schedule. Reston Town Center garage parking is free on Sundays. Sunday Art in the Park is presented by RCC and Reston



The Town of Herndon will celebrate the Fourth of July in Bready Park with fireworks.



"The Last Match" has been extended to July 2 at 1st Stage in Tysons.

Town Center Association in cooperation with Shenandoah University.

NOW THRU JULY 2

(EXTENDED)

"The Last Match." At 1st Stage,

1524 Spring Hill Road Tysons.

Played out under the bright lights of the U.S. Open Semifinals, The Last Match pits rising Russian star, Sergei Sergeyev against American great, Tim Porter in an epic showdown that follows two tennis titans through pivotal moments in their lives both on-and-off the court. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$50 general admission, \$47 seniors (65+), \$15 students, educators, and military. The first 20 tickets sold for every performance will cost only \$20. Thursday evening tickets are \$35. Purchase online at www.1st-stage.org or 703-854-1856.

SATURDAY/JULY 1

Red White 'n Brew 5K Race.

The second annual Red White 'n Brew 5K invites runners to celebrate the 4th of July with running, food and beer. Participants are encouraged to run decked out in red, white and blue for their 3.1 miles. The Red White 'n Brew 5K starts at 8 a.m. from House 6 Brewing Company, 44427 Atwater Drive, Ashburn. The Red White 'n Brew 5K is produced by mb LoGistics & events. New this year, runners can also participate in the Stars & Stripes Fun Run and the RWB Hot Dog Mile. The Stars & Stripes Fun Run, approximately a 1K in

distance, will begin at 9 a.m. from the 5K start line. Participants will rocket through the .62 mile course and receive a commemorative short sleeve tech shirt. Also making its debut is the RWB Hot Dog Mile which kicks off at 9:30 a.m. RWB Hot Dog Mile participants will run one mile (4 quarter mile laps) around House 6 Brewing Co. after eating one hot dog before each lap. The RWB Hot Dog Mile can be run individually or as a team of two or four. Participants 21 and older from all three races (5k, Fun Run and Hot Dog Mile) are encouraged to add a House 6 beer to their registration. Visit www.redwhitenbrew.com

MONDAY/JULY 3

American Red Cross Blood Donation

8 a.m. to 12 p.m. American Red Cross, Fairfax Room, 8550 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Everyday the Red Cross collects 14% of the hospital's blood supply to ensure healthcare for surgical, trauma and cancer patients alike. It's incomprehensible how life changing a confirmed donated pint of blood can do for a patient who almost lost hope. Call 240-618-9468.

SATURDAY/JULY 8

The City of Alexandria celebrates its

274th birthday on Saturday, July 8, starting at 6 p.m., with a performance by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra and a grand finale fireworks display at 9:30 p.m. Enjoy the big birthday experience including cupcakes, local vendors and live music. Oronoco Bay Park, 100 Madison St.

6 p.m. - Opening Music; 7:30 p.m. - Welcome by NPR's Suraya Mohamed. Announcement by Town Crier, Remarks by Mayor Justin Wilson, Poetry by Alexandria Poet Laureate Zeina Azzam; 8 p.m. - Distribution of birthday cupcakes by members of City Council; 8:30 p.m. - Performance by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra; 9:30 p.m. - Grand finale fireworks display with Alexandria Symphony Orchestra performing 1812
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Birthday>

JULY 15 & AUGUST 19

Summer Concert Series: Genres.

7-9 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, The Plaza, McLean. Join the Summer Concert Series featuring performance artists Keeton on July 15 for a Pop throwback and Delta Spur with Country & Classic Rock on August 19. Enjoy takeout and cocktails from our restaurants while dancing and singing along to your favorite tunes!

FREE SUMMER CONCERTS AT MCLEAN CENTRAL PARK

The Alden in McLean presents its annual Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park at McLean Central Park. This free outdoor concert series runs now through Sunday, July 30. Performances start at 3 p.m., and the June concerts are designed to be family friendly. McLean Central Park is located at 1468 Dolley Madison Blvd.

Schedule

Sunday, July 2, 3 p.m. - Capital Blend

Sunday, July 9, 3 p.m. - Czarna Wolgastar: Intergalactic Balkan Surf Jazz Trio

Sunday, July 16, 3 p.m. - Six Pack

Rodeo

Sunday, July 23, 3 p.m. - Justin

Trawick

Sunday, July 30, 3 p.m. - Philip Bowen

For more information, call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711 or visit The Alden website: aldentheatre.org.

LAKE ANNE'S PLAZA

CONCERT SERIES

Lake Anne Live! brings Thursday evening concerts to the plaza from now through July 27. The free concerts will feature music and dance from local musicians and dance instructors. The plaza is located at 1609 Washington Plaza North. All concerts are free.

Schedule:

June 29 (7-9 p.m.): Bruce Corsino concert

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 11

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NEWS

**Amazon
Data Center
Coming**

FROM PAGE 3
up about 10 years ago but were never fully occupied. The buildings at 7951 and 7961 Loisdale Road were demolished in early June, and currently the 17.5-acre site is being cleared. They were not able to save any of the buildings for future use.

Once the clearing is complete, Amazon will build a 120,000 sq ft, two-story data center, but the timeframe is unclear.

According to Amazon Web Services spokesperson Duncan Neasham, the "AWS data centers bring job creation, investment, and educational programs that are benefiting communities across the United States. AWS has helped grow Virginia's economy and supported thousands of highly skilled jobs by investing over \$51.9 billion in the Commonwealth, including our data center infrastructure in Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties. We are proud of the ways we benefit our communities and look forward to helping the continued growth of Fairfax County."

Neasham noted that Amazon paid \$334 million in personal property taxes in 2022. Academically, the Amazon Web Services Academy is offered in 123 colleges and universities in Virginia and over 9,000 Virginia students have access to Amazon Web Services "Think Big Spaces" each academic year.

According to the document generated by a Planning Commission Meeting on Jan. 26, 2022, the site will be outfitted with frontage improvements, trail out front outfitted with ADA ramps, applicant will install an ADA compliant bus shelter within VDOT right-of-way, it will be outfitted with Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations, bicycle parking and a landscape plan.

The site is in the Franconia District.

CALENDAR

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about an
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connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 9

- July 6 (6-9 p.m.): Bachata Instruction and Dance with David Norton
 July 13 (7-9 p.m.): To be announced on Lake Anne Plaza's social media pages
 July 20 (7-9 p.m.): Concert with the Reston Community Orchestra
 July 27 (6-9 p.m.): Salsa and Bachata Instruction and Dance with David Norton

FREE CONCERT SERIES AT BURKE LAKE PARK

Every Wednesday night from June 28th through August 23rd at 7p.m., Supervisor Pat Herrity (Springfield District) along with the Fairfax County Park Authority will be hosting the fifth annual Free Concerts in the Park series at Burke Lake Park. The series has expanded to nine shows with pop, rock and R&B music. Peterson's Ice Cream, 2 Silos beer and food trucks will be on site at all concerts. Attendees are encouraged to bring blankets and/or a lawn chair.

JUNE

28 Randy Thompson Band

JULY

- 5 The Nighthawks
 12 SoHo Down
 19 Speidel, Goodrich, Goggin & Lille
 26 The Skip Castro Band

AUGUST

- 2 The English Channel
 9 The Road Ducks
 16 The Colin Thompson Band
 23 Riptide

SATURDAY CONCERTS AT WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton • 7:30 p.m.

JULY

- July 1 Workhouse Fireworks Festival (Ticketed event. For details visit www.workhousearts.org) Rain date is July 8th.
 July 8 The Radio Sparks (Modern Rock) This will be a ticketed event if the July 1st Fireworks Festival is postponed to July 8th.
 July 15 Project Locrea (World Music)
 July 22 Bachelor Boys Band (High Energy Cover Music)
 July 29 Bobby Blackhat Band (Traditional/Contemporary Blues)

AUGUST

- 5 Workhouse Musical Event (Ticketed event. For details visit www.workhousearts.org)
 12 Quin Tango (Classical Argentinian Tango Music)
 19 Karl Stoll & The Danger Zone (Rock, Blues)
 26 The United States Army Field Band Six-String Soldiers (Country)

CONCERTS AT FRYING PAN FARM

Thursday Evenings 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. At Park Lawn Near Farnyard

JULY

- 6 Speidel, Goggin & Lille (Rock)
 13 Natyabhoomi School of Dance (Indian Dance and Music)
 20 Stacy Brooks Band (Blues)
 27 Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen (Bluegrass)

AUGUST

- 3 Patsy Cline Tribute Band (Country)
 10 City of Fairfax Band Alte Kameraden German Band (Music of Germany)
 17 The United States Army Blues Band Swamp Romp (Jazz)

ARTS IN THE PARKS

Experience free, fun, family-oriented alternatives to cartoons and video games with performances in parks this summer. Part of the Park Authority's Summer Entertainment Series, Arts in the Parks entertains children, teaches the importance of protecting our natural resources, introduces them to live entertainment in an informal, kid-friendly atmosphere, and forges a connection between kids and parks.

Don't miss memorable shows starring The Great Zucchini, Marsha and the Positrons, Mr. Lilo Gonzalez, 123 Andres, Groovy Nate, Uncle Devin and Geoff Marsh! Free performances featuring comedy, children's songs, magic, puppets and juggling are hosted at the following locations:

Burke Lake Park Amphitheater (7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station), Saturdays at 10 a.m.

www.connectionnewspapers.com

Frying Pan Park Visitor Center Pavilion (2739 West Ox Road, Herndon), Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

E.C. Lawrence Park Amphitheater (5040 Walney Road, Chantilly), Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Mason District Park Amphitheater (6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale), Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Trinity Centre (5860 Trinity Parkway, Centreville), Saturdays in August at 7 p.m. (followed by outdoor movies)

Wakefield Park, in front of the Rec Center, (8100 Braddock Road, Annandale), Saturdays at 10 a.m.

For a complete calendar of summer performances for Arts in the Parks, visit the Summer Entertainment Series Arts in the Parks webpage.

JULY 21-23 SOUTH ASIAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

The DC South Asian Arts Council Inc, a non-profit arts organization, unveils the 1st ever DC South Asian Music Festival from July 21-23. From the soul-stirring classical vocal and instrumental masterpieces to the mesmerizing Sufi, Ghazal, and Evergreen Bollywood, it promises to be an unforgettable musical journey. Sarod Maestro Amjad Ali Khan and sons Amaan Ali Bangash and Ayaan Ali Bangash, open the festival with their enchanting classical traditions on Friday, July 21. Saturday, July 22 starts with a Singing Competition, a showcase of exceptional local South Asian talent, taking the stage. On Saturday July 22 and Sunday July 23, the exceptional performances continue.

Wheaton High School, 12401 Dalewood Dr, Silver Spring, MD 20906

For full schedule, passes and tickets, visit <https://www.dcsaaci.org>

FAIRFAX GOLF TOURNAMENTS

Get ready for a lineup of golf tournaments hosted by Golf Fairfax at Fairfax County Park Authority golf courses throughout the month of July.

First up at Burke Lake Golf Center on July 1 at 9 a.m., teams of two ages 7 and up compete in an 18-hole scramble format. There will also be a closest to the pin contest. Shotgun start. Cost \$85 per team, includes lunch. Prizes for first, second and third place teams. No rain date. Burke Lake Golf Center, 6915 Ox Road in Fairfax Station. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/burke-lake> or call 703-323-1641.

On July 2 at 8 a.m. at Pinecrest Golf Course, teams of two ages 7 and up compete in a 9-hole scramble format. There will also be a closest to the pin contest. Shotgun start. Cost \$90 per team, includes lunch. Prizes for first, second and third place teams in three age divisions: Adult/Junior 7-12, Adult/Junior 13-17, Adult/Adult. No rain date. Pinecrest Golf Course, 6600 Little River Turnpike, Alexandria. For more <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/pinecrest> or call 703-941-1061.

Junior Club Championship at Oak Marr Golf Center on July 15. Junior golfers age 17 and under compete in a 9-hole stroke play tournament. Players will be divided into two age divisions, 12 and under, and 13-17. Cost \$35. Prizes for first, second and third place teams, as well as closest to the pin in each division. The golfer with the lowest overall score will be crowned the Junior Club Champion. Tee times will be assigned two days before the event. Rain date July 22. Oak Marr Golf Center, 3136 Jermantown Road in Oakton. For more <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/oak-marr> or call 703-255-5390.

On July 15, show your skills at the Modified Stableford Tournament at Jefferson Golf Course. Open to golfers age 18 and up, this event features a 9-hole stroke play competition using the Modified Stableford scoring system. Golfers earn points for achieving scores better than par, such as double eagles, eagles and birdies; and they will get deductions for scores worse than par, bogeys and double bogeys. The golfer with the most points at the end of the tournament wins. Cost \$35. Rain date July 22.

Jefferson Golf Course, 7900 Lee Highway in Falls Church. For more <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/jefferson> or call 703-573-0444. To register for upcoming golf events, visit Park Authority Golf's tournament webpage <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/golf/tournaments>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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
 1606 King Street • Alexandria, VA • 703-778-9431

Within the Next Month



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

One of the most persistent and enduring thoughts I have is very much a product of my survival. When you're told by your oncologist – and by association, your pulmonologist, your thoracic surgeon, a pathologist, and by your long-time internal medicine, primary care provider, that you have stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer and have a "13 months to two years" prognosis, your life is turned completely upside down and inside out. To say your life will never be the same is the understatement of the year. To characterize it any differently would be naïve/delusional.

As such, your sense of time – and appreciation of time, changes. How do you live in the present when you've been told by several physicians that in effect, you have no future? Your perspective and orientation go to an emotional place you've likely never been to before. And oh, by the way, you pretty much cede control of your life to this most unwanted intruder: cancer, as well.

And then, low and behold, to all your doctors' surprise, you don't succumb to your disease. In fact, you live a relatively normal life, from outward appearances, going on 14 and half years. So far, that's 13 years-ish past the do-or-die prognosis you received. Eventually, since you're still living, you sort of work in, or perhaps even plan for a future. A future which has been tenuous and hardly guaranteed. Yet, in this conundrum of living after being told you were likely going to die, suddenly, sort of, the future is upon you.

But it's a future that's coated in the past. How can one look forward when previously you were constantly being pulled backward to a pre-existing grim reaper if there ever was one: "terminal" cancer. Then you don't die. Years pass and your sense and expectation of time is thrown completely out of whack. Living forward, how do you live and try to ignore all the indicators and professional opinions that say you were going to die much sooner than you or they anticipated? Somehow, you must bury the lead, as they say.

So, you put these thoughts in the vault, per a Jerry Seinfeld episode, and try to live as if you're not dying. But as simple as that may sound, if you compartmentalize, the fact and truth of the matter is there's always a nagging subconscious Ying and yang that hides in plain sight. And so, you think, what happens if and when the results of lab work diagnostic scans (PET, MRI, CT and Bone) change – for the dramatically, dare I say, inevitably worse? This is the definition of unproductive thought. But that's the battle that rages in your brain – the conscious and the subconscious.

And when this internal emotional struggle manifests for me, it's typically when my next quarterly scans are around the next quarter. As it so happens, and it serves as good fodder for this column, it is "now," as made famous by legendary football coach, George Allen, pronouncing that "The future is now." – as is mine right now. Certainly, after 14 years, I'm experienced dealing with this reality. Nevertheless, the future is now, and I can't deny that the longer I live the more intense my fear that change is coming. Moreover, neither can I deny that this process is getting more difficult to endure. I can't help thinking that one of these days, the figurative hammer is going to come crashing down on my computer when my most recent lab and/or scan results are emailed to me.

When I received notification in my email that these quarterly results have been emailed, I take a deep breath, exhale, pray to God for good news and then I click on the link (I'm physically shaking, by the way, during this process) and wait for the nearly instantaneous download. I read with trepidation and fear and hope to find enough familiar positive-sounding conclusions/assessments from the doctors. At this juncture, I am usually on my own. Dina is often working at a local barn caring for a damaged horse and my doctors are not exactly waiting on hold for my reaction, ready to answer any questions. When I am lucky enough – to have my warranty extended, so to speak, after receiving the results with which I can live, I am reminded of "Mad Magazine" and Alfred E. Newman: "What me worry?" So much to do about nothing. "What a waste of worry," I say to myself. Let me assure you, waiting for cancer-related results is hardly nothing. In fact, it is the subject for which worry was invented. I wish there was another way to get through this quarterly ordeal, but I'm afraid, on many levels, there isn't.

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



Sharon Stevenson of Alexandria, attending with friend Warren Frazer, says, “There are too many closed minded people and we need to be more inclusive. We’re all human beings and should be treated with respect.” Pride Night Out at Springfield Town Center, June 23.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

The drag performance drew the gathered crowd’s attention at all ages

Pride Night Out

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Springfield Town Center has a history of support for an array of diverse groups in the community, including a Lunar New Year Celebration, supporting the AAPI community; an annual Black Owned Business Showcase and Support Black Owned Brands 365 campaign; and holiday performances by local church groups, including an annual Chanukah celebration.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, Lee District, attending, said of the town center sponsored pride event, “It’s very important to assure an inclusive community and for people to feel acceptance. [Pride] events help to assure those in different genders know they are part of the community.”

Speaking for the center, Justin Roth commented, “We are proud to host Pride Night Out at Springfield Town Center and firmly embody the spirit of inclusion and diversity. We believe in creating a welcoming environment for all and, in this case, celebrating the LGBTQ+ community and fostering a sense of unity.”

The Springfield Pride Night event comes as more conservative regions of the country also struggle with allowing or banning gender-affirming health care for minors. Twenty states now have or are preparing to pass gender affirming care bans. Last week, a federal judge in Arkansas was the first to overturn such a ban. The judge’s ruling argues that the care ban is unconstitutional in violating young people’s right to equal protection and due process of law, for them and their parents. The judge also ruled that the Arkansas ban violates the free speech rights of doctors in the state. Federal judges in three states, Florida, Alabama, and Indiana had temporarily blocked bans on gender-affirming care. The Arkansas ruling, considered a landmark case, could impact such bans across the country.



Four year old Maisie Adams, of Burke, enjoys painting a rock with bright colors at Pride Night Out at Springfield Town Center on Friday, June 23.



DJ Pierre provided upbeat music during Pride Night Out at Springfield Town Center, and background for Evry Pleasure’s dance routine



Pride Night Out at Springfield Town Center drew family groups as well members of the LGBTQ+ community



Evry Pleasure strikes a dramatic pose during her dance routine at Pride Night Out at Springfield Town Center.



Bright colored give-away items attracted interest

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), notes “Positive environments are important to help all youth thrive. However, the health needs of LGBTQ+ youth can differ from their heterosexual peers.” CDC studies indicate that LGBTQ+ youth are at

increased risk for suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and suicide. In addition, LGBTQ+ youth are more likely than heterosexual youth to report high levels of bullying and substance abuse.

In our area, to counter these perils, Safe

Space seeks to provide a positive environment and welcoming staff that embrace, uplift, and encourage. Their goal is to ensure 14–18 year olds in the Northern Virginia area have access to an organization and activities that promote equality.