

Alexandria Gazette Packet



25 CENTS

SERVING ALEXANDRIA FOR OVER 200 YEARS • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JULY 6, 2023



Lyles-Crouch principal Patricia Zissios, center, is congratulated on her retirement by former Lyles-Crouch students Merrill Plotkin and Gabriel Sowa June 9 at LCTA.



Lyles-Crouch principal Patricia Zissios is surrounded by LTCA students during the June 9 Community Celebration that served as an unofficial retirement event for the long-time educator.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

'The GOAT'

Zissios heralded for 50-year career in education.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

To chants heralding her as the "GOAT" of educators, Patricia Zissios retired as principal of Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy following a 50-year career in education.

Invoking the sports metaphor for "the greatest of all time," Lyles-Crouch PTA president Matias Palavecino praised Zissios at the June 9 Community Celebration that served as an unofficial send off for the nationally recognized educator known to many as Dr. Z.

"No matter what I say it will not be good enough," Palavecino said. "But that's ok because with Dr. Z it's never good enough. But when you take a step back and realize she will never be satisfied for the

good of the school, that's when you realize she is one of the greats - the greatest of all time."

Palavecino rhetorically asked the crowd, "Did Phil Jackson or Bill Belichick settle for a few championships? Was it ever good enough? No. That's what separates the good from the great. Greats never settle and that's what makes Dr. Z so unique. She always wants more, what's best for the school, the students, the staff and this community. Only then you realize that she is the GOAT!"

Zissios, who officially left her position June 30, retired after 19 years at Lyles-Crouch. She had previously spent 31 years in the

Prince William and Fairfax County school systems and had announced her retirement when she was approached by then-ACPS Superintendent Rebecca Perry.

"I felt I had done what I could do when Rebecca Perry came to visit

a foundation of knowledge at a young age. Zissios has been nationally recognized for her leadership and success at Lyles-Crouch.

"Dr. Z has laid an excellent foundation for everything that has gone on here at Lyles-Crouch,"

said parent Daniel Beason. "The Core Knowledge program and its emphasis on reading has been nothing but fantastic for the kids here. It is a great bonus for

kids, especially those coming from less advantaged areas, they have that strong reading foundation to take with them for the rest of their lives. It will help them in everything they do."

At the time she was hired, Lyles-

"Leaving the connection I have with this community and the feeling of belonging will be hard."

— Lyles-Crouch principal Patricia Zissios

me," Zissios said. "She convinced me that I was the right person to come to this little school in Alexandria that would benefit from the Core Knowledge program."

The Core Knowledge curriculum focuses on teaching students

Crouch was a failing school with less than 200 students.

"The point was for me to bring my proven success with the Core Knowledge curriculum and my expertise with community outreach to Lyles-Crouch," Zissios said.

While in FCPS, Zissios was recognized in 2001 with the Northern Virginia Leadership Award for Public Service, named Springfield Citizen of the Year in 2002, and named American Legion Educator of the Year 2003 among other leadership awards.

"Over the course of the past 19 years, we have built LCTA into a true community school," Zissios added. "We have become a Core Knowledge School of Distinction, which is an incredibly difficult vetting process to achieve. We are one

SEE ZISSIOS, PAGE 7



Introducing the newest powerhouse brokerage team

Two of the most respected names in local real estate – McEneaney Associates and Middleburg Real Estate/Atoka Properties – have combined their exceptional talent and resources into one powerhouse firm. This strategic union marks a significant milestone poised to affirm their long-standing traditions of excellence and transform the future of independent real estate.

McEneaney Associates began in 1980 when John McEneaney founded his independent Alexandria brokerage with the vision “Not to be the biggest, but The Best.” More than 40 years later, that future remains bright with the announcement last week that McEneaney would be merging with Middleburg Real Estate/Atoka Properties, another premier independent brokerage that was created in 2008 (incorporating the venerable Middleburg Real Estate firm that was founded in 1939) with a commitment to polished customer service, superior agent support and dedicated community involvement.

Connect with us at www.McEneaney.com

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Celebrating Women

ACW presents 2023 awards.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria's future female leaders were feted at the 2023 Alexandria Celebrates Women Awards June 28 at the Athenaeum.

Six up-and-coming young women leaders were selected to be honored at this year's awards with a reception held to benefit the Alexandria Domestic Violence Safehouse.

"We are so proud to showcase these young future leaders," said ACW chair Pat Miller. "Each is extraordinary in their own amazing personal contributions."

Vice Mayor Amy Jackson and Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker were on hand as ACW recognized the accomplishments of Ariana Attidore, Eliza Gwin, Zahra Rahimi, Betty Amron, Sarah Porter and Elizabeth Rutter.

Bennett-Parker served as emcee and Metro Voices, the women's choir affiliated with the Alexandria Harmonizers, provided entertainment.

Alexandria Celebrates Women is a volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit recognizing the accomplishments and contributions of Alexandria's



Vice Mayor Amy Jackson, left, and Del Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, right, congratulate Alexandria Celebrates Women scholarship winners Eliza Gwin, Ariana Attidore and Zahra Rahimi June 28 at the Athenaeum.

"We are so proud to showcase these young future leaders."

— Alexandria Celebrates Women chair Pat Miller

women of the past, present and future. For more information on this year's ACW honorees, visit www.AlexandriaCelebratesWomen.com

Mental Health in the Workplace

CCNA hosts community workshop.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Concerned Citizens Network of Alexandria, in partnership with Saint Joseph's Catholic Church, hosted a community stakeholders breakfast with the theme "Building Partnerships to Address Mental Health in the Workforce" June 29 at the church hall.

Dr. GiShawn Mance, Associate Professor of Psychology at Howard University and a licensed clinical psychologist, and Rawle Andrews Esq., executive director of the American Psychiatric Association Foundation, were special guests at the event.

SEE MENTAL HEALTH, PAGE 8
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Col. James Paige (ret.) welcomes guests to the Concerned Citizens Network of Alexandria Mental Health Workshop June 29 at Saint Joseph's Catholic Church.



Alexandria's Youth Leadership Conference 2022.

Registration Opens for Alexandria Youth Leadership Conference

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE GAZETTE

Alexandria's Youth Leadership Conference will be holding its 10th annual event Aug. 8-10 in person after two years of holding a hybrid event during Covid.

Chloe Yokitis has attended two conferences and says it will be really neat to connect the faces with the voices she heard on chat. "I got quite a few friends to sign up this year so there will be some friendly faces around as well as a chance to meet new people."

The Youth Leadership Conference is open for rising 9th through 12th graders in the City of Alexandria. "The conference will feature interactive workshops teaching youth how to engage, lead, and advocate for issues in the community," according to Jennifer Cohen Cordero, Communications Manager, City of Alexandria, Department of Community and Human Services. The idea is to strengthen the skills young people need to succeed and to help them feel valued by their community.

A networking session between participants and City leaders will take place on the last afternoon which allows youth to learn about City government, non-profit organizations and various commissions. In addition, it provides an opportunity for leaders of these organizations to recruit talented youth who have the necessary skills to contribute to their groups.

Yokitis says she got connected with the Alexandria Center for Children at last year's event. "I was able to help get volunteers and spread the word for their Family Fun Day at William Ramsay." She adds, "I had a friend who went to a conference and got connected with Vice Mayor Amy Jackson. She got to be an intern in her office."

Yokitis also serves as a Keep It 360 Peer Advocate, a group which works closely with SAPCA, the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy, and the Alexandria Sexual Assault Center to assist with prevention and outreach efforts. "I go to middle schools once a month to their after school program and talk about healthy relations, drug abuse—telling people information they need to know but no one really tells them." She says for instance we show them a picture of two people dating and smiling and some kids will assume the couple has a really healthy relationship. "But they don't know what may be going on behind the scene."

This year's conference theme is "Find Your Voice, Find Your Strength, Find Your Future." The event is hosted by the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy, the Alexandria Sexual Assault Center, the Alexandria Library and the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria. The conference is free but students must register by Aug. 2.

Yokitis says last year she remembers that they had sessions on how to build community and how to apply your ability, "They determined each of our leadership colors. I remember I had two—orange and yellow. One is warm and empathetic and the other a go-getter. I have both, and they go together."

She says she looks forward to having all of this year's conference in person, "and I look forward to lunch. It's a good bonding experience."

Youth who attend the conference will also receive updates during the year about internships, volunteer and leadership opportunities and other ways to get involved in the Alexandria community.

For more information visit alexandriava.gov/ACAP

Local Writers Win Virginia Press Association Awards

Connection and Gazette garner awards for work published in 2022.

BY MARY KIMM
THE CONNECTION

Each year the Virginia Press Association holds a competition to select the best published material from newspapers and news sites from across the state. The contest is judged by journalists from outside the commonwealth, for what is one of the largest such competitions in the country.

It has been no small accomplishment just to keep publishing in this economic climate, between the pandemic and the decline in newspaper advertising. But we continue to be called to provide the best journalism we can to the communities we serve. We have great readers. We've been blessed with a group of remarkable writers. We're pleased that we won 15 awards. Many categories are judged as a "body of work," so a group of three or sometimes more stories, as you can see below.

In the Alexandria Gazette Packet:

Jeanne Theismann & Janet Barnett, First Place for Combination Picture/Story. 'I Pledge Allegiance' Naturalization ceremony celebrates newest American citizens. See the entry at [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Design_and_Presentation/M01_Combination_Picture_and_Story_\(N4\)/First_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_1/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Design_and_Presentation/M01_Combination_Picture_and_Story_(N4)/First_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_1/Attachment_01.pdf)

Michael Lee Pope, First Place for Business & Financial Writing: Reconsidering Marijuana, Tax Code Thunderstruck, Up in Smoke: Black market to remain underground for now as lawmakers reject licensing scheme. Judge Comment: "An interesting topic that will surely dominate headlines, especially in agricultural states. Perspectives regarding marijuana have changed dramatically over the years. I like your ledes, as well." See [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W03_Business_and_Financial_Writing_\(N4\)/First_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_1/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W03_Business_and_Financial_Writing_(N4)/First_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_1/Attachment_01.pdf)

Shirley Ruhe and Laurence Foong, Second Place, Informational Graphics, "Follow the Long Faith Journey of a Tomato" Judge Comment: "Photos add pop to a standard map." [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_\(N4\)/Third_Place_Mount_Vernon_Gazette_3/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_(N4)/Third_Place_Mount_Vernon_Gazette_3/Attachment_01.pdf)



Ashley Simpson



Bonnie Hobbs



Eden Brown



Glenda Booth



Janet Barnett



Jeanne Theismann



Laurence Foong



Michael Lee Pope



Mike Salmon



Shirley Ruhe



Susan Laume

Alexandria Gazette Packet

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SEPTEMBER 22, 2022

'I Pledge Allegiance' Naturalization ceremony celebrates newest American citizens.



New American citizens recite the Pledge of Allegiance at a Citizens Day naturalization ceremony Sept. 13 at Market Square.



Maximiliano Aedoespicto at the ceremony honoring new American citizens Sept. 13 at Market Square.



Two of America's newest citizens celebrate at the Sept 13 naturalization ceremony at Market Square.



A new U.S. citizen places a hand over her heart as she recites the Pledge of Allegiance Sept. 13 at Market Square.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Mayor Justin Wilson was on hand as 25 immigrants from 24 different countries were welcomed as America's newest citizens with a Citizenship Day celebration Sept. 13 in Market

Square. "The ceremony was the first in-person naturalization event since 2019.

"This journey has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life," said Maximiliano Aedoespicto, whose family are first-generation immigrants from Chile. "This day is a fulfillment of everything

my parents gave up in leaving our family back home. Getting the citizenship today fulfills their entire journey and just makes this place more of a real home for me."

Michael Valverde, Associate Director for Field Operations for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, administered the Oath of

SEE NATURALIZATION, PAGE 6

Jeanne Theismann and Janet Barnett are an awesome team, and continue their award winning ways with this first place entry for combination picture and story.

[com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Graphics_Illustrations_and_Art/G02_Informational_Graphics_\(N4\)/Second_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_2/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Graphics_Illustrations_and_Art/G02_Informational_Graphics_(N4)/Second_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_2/Attachment_01.pdf)

Jeanne Theismann, Feature Story Writing - Third Place, "Uncommon Valor Survivors mark Iwo Jima 77th anniversary" Judge Comment: "Nicely done. Love the history." See [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W10_Feature_Story_Writing_\(excluding_Obituaries\)__\(N4\)/Third_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_3/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W10_Feature_Story_Writing_(excluding_Obituaries)__(N4)/Third_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_3/Attachment_01.pdf)

Mount Vernon Gazette

Glenda Booth, Third Place, Health, Science & Environment Writing. Down the Toilet; Down the Drain. Then What?; The Potomac River Is Healing but Problems Remain; Eagles Are Thriving but Face Challenges. Judge Comment: "Takes reader where they might have never been to deliver impactful information." See [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_\(N3\)/Second_Place_Arlington_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_(N3)/Second_Place_Arlington_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf)

and Advertising Contest/Writing/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_(N4)/Third_Place_Mount_Vernon_Gazette_3/Attachment_01.pdf

Arlington Connection

Eden Brown, First Place, Feature Writing Portfolio. Old Instruments, New Friends in Arlington; Arlington's USA Team Headed To Finals in Ramadan Tourney; Nightmare on Jackson Street. Judge comment: "Eden Brown is a seasoned, clever writer with a magical pen; well-articulated in all venues; vivid details, word choice and clever titles keep you wanting to read more." See [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W09_Feature_Writing_Portfolio_\(N3\)/First_Place_Arlington_Connection_1/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W09_Feature_Writing_Portfolio_(N3)/First_Place_Arlington_Connection_1/Attachment_01.pdf)

Ashley Simpson, Second Place, Feature Profile Writing: What Makes Ted Run. Judge Comment: "Very inspiring story that not only tells of his accomplishments, but also his motivations. Nicely done." [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W11_Feature_Profile_Writing_\(including_News_Obituaries\)__\(N3\)/Second_Place_Arlington_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/W11_Feature_Profile_Writing_(including_News_Obituaries)__(N3)/Second_Place_Arlington_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf)

Eden Brown, Second Place; Health, Science & Environment Writing, Arlington Man Who Donated Kidney Will Climb 7 Summits; Glad I Flunked May Home Safety Check; Fishy Story: Thousands of Fish Die In Four Mile Run, Cause Unknown; Judge Comment: "Uses a very readable storytelling format."

[http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_\(N3\)/Second_Place_Arlington_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_(N3)/Second_Place_Arlington_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf)

Shirley Ruhe, Third Place, Combination Picture & Story. Once Part of Segregated Arlington, Now, Jennie Dean Park is expanded with larger playground, renovated picnic pavilion, softball and baseball, plus art that honors its history. [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Design_and_Presentation/M01_Combination_Picture_and_Story_\(N3\)/Third_Place_Arlington_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Design_and_Presentation/M01_Combination_Picture_and_Story_(N3)/Third_Place_Arlington_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf)

SEE CONNECTION, PAGE 6
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OPINION

How Far We've Strayed?


To the editor:

Gerald B. File's racial equity toolkit letter shows how far we've strayed from the original thinking behind our civil rights laws, which were designed to require "color blind" approaches in employment, education, etc. The idea of using statistics to "prove" discrimination crept in later, but always had generous escape valves if an alternative explanation could be made. Today's avant garde "diversity, equity, and inclusion" arise from a narrow exception to "color blind" college admissions, technically justified as a "business exception," but which have grown to an extent that they eclipse our civil rights laws' original intent. Although popular, particularly with urban governments and large corporations, "diversity, equity, and inclusion" sit on a shaky legal foundation because our civil rights laws were designed as "color blind." Alexandria's city hall recently learned this the hard way in a federal lawsuit against one of its diversity initiatives. Last month, the U.S. Supreme Court reminded higher education that diversity had been allowed as a consideration for only a limited time and its time was up.

Mr. File's concern about marginalized Hispanic communities, whose self-esteem, he claims, would benefit from seeing a member of their heritage in a leadership position, suffers from the irony that, under school segregation, minority students saw members of their heritage routinely in leadership positions; the only "tweak" needed would have been to open up the superintendent's position to all segregated schools' principals so that superintendents were not always White. Our civil rights laws require, instead, making personnel decisions based only on candidates' credentials.

There is nothing nefarious in Black staff's slight overrepresentation relative to student body at Alexandria's high school campuses because Blacks should be expected to comprise a disproportionate share of the applicant pool, owing to lower drop-out rates than Hispanics, higher percentages of U.S. citizenship (government employers often require citizenship and cannot hire applicants lacking legal work authorization), and above average naturalization rates.

Dino Drudi
Alexandria





**ALEXANDRIA
YOUTH LEADERSHIP
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Find Your Future*

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The Alexandria Youth Leadership Conference empowers emerging young leaders by providing training opportunities and connecting them to resources in their community.

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Connection and Gazette Win Awards in 2022

FROM PAGE 4
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Ashley Simpson, Third Place, Feature Writing Portfolio. On the Horns of the Dilemma; Best of Both Worlds for Dog Siblings Samson and Mishka; It's Not All About Running for Arlington's 100-Marathon Man. Judge Comment: "Ashley Simpson is a straightforward, to the point writer; she sets up a contrast for a well-argued viewpoint. Her material is relevant with good ideas." [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W09_Feature_Writing_Portfolio_\(N3\)/Third_Place_Arlington_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W09_Feature_Writing_Portfolio_(N3)/Third_Place_Arlington_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf)

Shirley Ruhe, Alternate, Feature Series or Continuing Story, Teach Your Kids About Hunger During March Nutrition Month; How to Help Hungry People as Costs Rise; Frozen Hands Cart Home Frozen Turkeys at AFAC Turkey Week, You can help with record need for food. Judge Comment: "A great entry with a few technical errors. A very competitive category. Kudos to all of the publications with entries in this category for delving into their communities to find topics that are informative, entertaining and valuable to the local community." [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W08_Feature_Series_or_Continuing_Story_\(N2,N3\)/Alternate_Winner_Arlington_Connection_4/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W08_Feature_Series_or_Continuing_Story_(N2,N3)/Alternate_Winner_Arlington_Connection_4/Attachment_01.pdf)

Fairfax County Connection Newspapers

Susan Laume, First Place, General News Writing, Americans Show Love For Ukraine, Injured Ukrainian Soldiers Treated Locally, War Takes Heavy Toll on Ukrainian Women, Injured Ukrainian Soldiers Enjoy a Fishing Adventure, Injured Ukrainian Soldiers Receive Treatment Locally; Judge Comment: "Awesome way to tie compelling local coverage with an international news story" [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W12_General_News_Writing_\(N3\)/First_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_1/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W12_General_News_Writing_(N3)/First_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_1/Attachment_01.pdf)

Susan Laume, Second Place, Breaking News Writing. "Coyote Bites Cause Cautionary Park Closure" [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W02_Breaking_News_Writing_\(N3\)/Second_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W02_Breaking_News_Writing_(N3)/Second_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_2/Attachment_01.pdf)

Bonnie Hobbs, Third Place, General News Writing, 'You Can't Imagine Living Without Your Daughter' Remembering Reema and Erin, 15 years after VT tragedy; Doing Good in Her Name, Celeste Peterson honors her child by serving her neighbors; Helping Others to Honor Those Who Were Killed; [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W12_General_News_Writing_\(N3\)/Third_Place_Fairfax_County_Northwest_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W12_General_News_Writing_(N3)/Third_Place_Fairfax_County_Northwest_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf)

Mike Salmon, Third Place, Health, Science & Environment Writing, Group Opposes Cinder Bed Road Bikeway; Climate Change Study Warns of Coastal Flooding in 2050; Paralyzed Cyclist Gains Freedom for Near Normal Life; Judge Comment: "Gives good details on topics familiar to readers." [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_\(N3\)/Third_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_(N3)/Third_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf)

Susan Laume, Third Place, Picture Story or Essay; Local Gardeners Can Assist Monarchs Judge Comment: "Photos really tell the story. Good job." [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Photography/P06_Picture_Story_or_Essay_\(N3\)/Third_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Photography/P06_Picture_Story_or_Essay_(N3)/Third_Place_Fairfax_County_South_Connection_3/Attachment_01.pdf)

Bonnie Hobbs, Alternate, Feature Profile Writing, Fulbright for Valerie Nguyen; Judge Comment: Nice story. Very well-written. [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W11_Feature_Profile_Writing_\(including_News_Obituaries\)__\(N3\)/Alternate_Winner_Fairfax_County_Northwest_Connection_4/Attachment_01.pdf](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Writing/W11_Feature_Profile_Writing_(including_News_Obituaries)__(N3)/Alternate_Winner_Fairfax_County_Northwest_Connection_4/Attachment_01.pdf)

Winners of the 2022 VPA News Contest were announced at the association's 2023 conference and award banquet on May 6, 2023. The Virginia Press Association has championed the common interests of Virginia newspapers and the ideals of a free press in a democratic society since 1881.



Alison Rafailan-Avelar, a recent ACHS graduate, stands with family members after receiving a \$2,500 vocational scholarship from the Alexandria Rotary Club.

Head of the Class

Rotary awards \$2,500 scholarships to area seniors.

The Alexandria Rotary Club awarded three \$2,500 vocational college scholarships to Alexandria High School students during the organization's June 6 meeting at Belle Haven Country Club.

The scholarship winners were Alison Rafailan-Avelar, Sada Seman and Sharvani Roy.

Rafailan-Avelar is a recent graduate of Alexandria City High School who will pursue a career in media studies and filmmaking at Temple University in the fall. Seman, also a recent ACHS



Sharvani Roy, a recent graduate of Edison High School, was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship from the Alexandria Rotary Club.

graduate, will pursue a career in economics and finance at the University of Virginia.

Roy, a graduate of Edison High School, will pursue a career in information technology at the University of Pittsburgh.

The students were selected from a pool of 21 applications based upon their career commitment, grades, recommendations from teachers and community activities.

- JEANNE THEISMANN



ACHS graduate Sada Seman, center, holds her certificate awarding her a \$2,500 scholarship from the Alexandria Rotary Club.

Zissios Heralded for 50-Year Career in Education



Dr. Patricia Zissios has retired as principal of Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy following a 50-year career in education.

FROM PAGE 1

of only eight of the over 2,000 Core Knowledge schools nationally and internationally to achieve this status.”

Under Zissios, LCTA has become a Core Knowledge training and visitation site for all other schools.

“We have hosted visitors from Wales, Australia, South Korea, Canada, Ukraine and many states throughout the US,” Zissios said. “We are currently helping educate nearby teams of educators from Arlington County Public Schools, adopters of the Core Knowledge Language Arts program.”

Said Palavecino, “Dr. Z is leaving behind a legacy. She brought Core Knowledge to the school and helped turn Lyles-Crouch into a nationally recognized school.”

Mayor Justin Wilson honored Zissios with a resolution from the City of Alexandria on May 4. In praising her leadership success with Lyles-Crouch, Wilson noted her many other achievements, including 10 straight years of academic achievement as the highest performing school in ACPS, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Nation.

Zissios was recognized by the General



Parents and students gather around Lyles-Crouch principal Patricia Zissios June 9 at LTCA to celebrate her retirement following 50 years as an educator.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Assembly in January with a similar resolution encompassing 50 years of service in education that included accolades for Lyles-Crouch as a National School of Character and Virginia Naturally School for Environmentally Best Practices.

“My focus for my tenure has been academic rigor through the Core Knowledge curriculum, character education, and community service and citizenship,” Zissios said. “I tell my students, take care of yourselves. Take care of each other. Take care of your community.”

Despite being ready to retire, Zissios admitted Leaving Lyles-Crouch will be hard.

“I have done this for so long,” Zissios said. “But leaving the connection I have with this community and the feeling of belonging will be hard.”

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FAMILIES SOUGHT TO HOST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Families and individuals from the Washington, D.C.-metro region are being sought to become hosts for international students for 12 weeks, a semester, or an academic year. Exchange students represent nearly 80 countries and cultures, including Kenya, Ukraine, Egypt, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Chile, Thailand and more. AFS-USA, a leader in international high school student exchange for 75 years, is focused on providing opportunities for intercultural exchange that can help lead to a

more just and peaceful world. Those interested in hosting an AFS Exchange Student are encouraged to contact 1-800-AFS-INFO or visit www.afsusa.org for more information. You can also get involved as an AFS-USA Volunteer. Visit www.afsusa.org/volunteer to get started or learn more about opportunities to make a difference.

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.volunteeralexandria.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.volunteeralexandria.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 donaldrea@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.
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 Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org](mailto:CarlyHubicki@volunteerfairfax.org) or call RSVP at 703-403- 5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

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NEWS

Mental Health in the Workplace

FROM PAGE 3

CCNA executive director Col. James Paige (ret.) served as coordinator and host of the workshop, which focused on the importance of mental health awareness.

“Workshops like this gives us an opportunity to look more closely at this very, very tough issue in the city,” Paige said.

Mance is considered an expert on race and mental health and has published articles aimed at addressing and reducing mental health disparities. She currently partners with charter schools and community agencies in the DC area to examine chronic stress, trauma, coping, social support systems, and psychological symptoms amongst Black youth and emerging adults.

She was joined by Andrews, who currently serves as the president of the Bar Association of the District of Columbia. He also is a board member of the Thurgood Marshall Center Trust; an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and the Howard University School of Law; and the national chairman of the public policy committee of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Dr. GiShawn Mance, left, and Rawle Andrew prepare for the CCNA Mental Health Workshop June 29 at Saint Joseph's Catholic Church.

The CCNA Community Forum brings together stakeholders to enhance partnerships within the community. These forums allow key partners to discuss critical issues

and develop strategies to help inform, inspire and empower. They increase dialogue and collaboration in the community. For more information, visit www.cnalexandria.org

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ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU JULY 30

Hues Exhibit. At Torpedo Factory Art Center, Gallery 311 - Van Lindingham Gallery, 105 North Union Street, Alexandria. The Torpedo Factory Artists' Association's (TFAA) Van Lindingham Gallery presents Hues, a juried membership show featuring artworks that showcase artworks that emphasize bold and vibrant colors. The following artists are participating: Diana Papazian, Samantha Shelton, Guido Zanni, Abol Bahadori, Jon Kandel, Lynn Chadwick, Rebecca McNeely, Gregory Logan Dunn, Eileen O'Brien, and Andrea Cybyk. Artworks include original hand pulled prints, original paintings, multimedia works, photography, mosaics, and embellished digital works. Additionally, the gallery offers small gifts, art cards, block-printed totes and tee shirts, and jewelry and unframed works by Tara Barr, Ileen Shefferman, Lisa Schumaier.

NOW THRU JULY 15

Alexander D'Agostino: "A Shrine for the Forgotten" Exhibition. At the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Baltimore-based solo artist exhibition recipient, Alexander D'Agostino, presents "A Shrine for the Forgotten." The work explores queer histories and images, through performance, installation, and reclaiming material from queer archives and other cultural resources related to the historic marginalization of LGBTQ people.

NOW THRU AUGUST 31

Creative Summer Programs. At Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Creative Summer Programs is a series of workshops exploring the arts. Learn techniques in drawing, mixed media, mosaic, jewelry, watercolor, and more from local artists. Delve into creative exploration solo or with friends. For children and/or adults, free and paid programs are offered. Sign up for what inspires you! Visit the website: DelRayArtisans.org/creative-summer

NOW THRU JULY 23

Mark Drefs and Leslie Nolan Exhibit. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Mark Drefs and Leslie Nolan are presenting a vibrant body of work at the Athenaeum Gallery. Drefs and Nolan both play with bold lines and color in a way that is complementary of the other's work and style. Drefs' abstract pieces are highlighted by their layered components, and almost transparent hues that show all the details in the paintings. While Nolan shows more figurative forms that have a raw quality to the finished product through the strong paint strokes and bold gestural motions, which display the realness of the subject.

NOW THRU JULY 24

"Spring Awakening." At Ainslie Arts Center, 3900 West Braddock Road, Alexandria. Monumental Theatre Company will stage Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater's Spring Awakening. Based on Frank Wedekind's 1891 play of the same name, the story follows a group of German teenagers who discover and explore their sexual identities. This alternative rock musical is a timely and timeless story that invites audience members to reclaim the narrative surrounding the often taboo subjects of sexual education, love, and acceptance. Tickets will be available online at <https://www.monumentaltheatre.org/>.

NOW THRU JULY 23

Mark Drefs and Leslie Nolan. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Artist Talk on Sunday, July 23, 2023 at 2 p.m. Drefs and Nolan both play with bold lines and color in a way that is complementary of the other's work and style. Drefs' abstract pieces are highlighted by their layered components, and almost transparent hues that show all the details in the paintings. While Nolan shows more figurative forms that have a raw quality to the finished product through the strong paint strokes and bold gestural motions, which display the realness of the subject.



The City of Alexandria celebrates its 274th birthday on Saturday, July 8, 2023.

TUESDAYS - JULY 11, 18, AND 25

Simpson Park Demonstration Garden: Tuesdays @10. 10:00 - 11:00 a.m., Simpson Park Demonstration Garden, 420 E. Monroe Ave, Alexandria. Garden challenges? Extension Master Gardeners will show you simple steps to help with your container garden or your whole yard. Free. No registration necessary.

THURSDAY/JULY 6

Authors & Appetizers. 7 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Great Publishing Company LLC in conjunction with The Athenaeum presents the 4th Authors & Appetizers, curated by KaNikki Jakarta, Inaugural Athenaeum Poet In Residence. This event will feature authors' reads/performances followed by a mini panel discussion, and an audience Q&A. Enjoy appetizers, purchase books, network with authors, and find out how these awesome writers became authors at an event perfect for book lovers, writers, readers, and aspiring authors. For ticket link email: greatpublishing@yahoo

JULY 8-9

Del Ray Artisans' Summer Art Market. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Saturday-Sunday, July 8-9. This is an indoor event featuring original creations by local artists in a variety of mediums, including ceramics, glass, jewelry, mixed media, photography, and more. Shop original work from local artists. Different artists each market day, so visit both days. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/summer-art-market-2023

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
Visit the website <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Birthday>

SUNDAY/JULY 9

The Capitol Collective Chamber Ensemble. 2 p.m. The Capitol Collective Chamber Ensemble is partnering with the Athenaeum to present an afternoon of chamber music. Consisting primarily of DC military band musicians, they seek to promote accessible chamber music throughout the DMV area. Enjoy works for strings, winds, brass, and percussion in this program featuring composers Jesse Montgomery, Ivan Trevino, Aaron Copland, and Jean Francaix.

MOUNT VERNON NIGHTS

Fridays at 7:30 p.m. at Grist Mill Park, 4710 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria

JULY

7 Kickoman (Latin/Reggae)
14 Burn the Ballroom (Alternative Rock)
21 King Teddy (Swing)
28 The HalfSmokes (WHFS Playlists/Alternative Rock)

AUGUST

4 Kadencia Orchestra (Bomba, Plena, Salsa)
11 Collaboration featuring Lori Williams (Jazz)
18 Crack The Sky (Rock)
25 Deanna Bogart (Blues, R&B)

FRANCONIA NIGHTS CONCERTS

Wednesday evenings from 7:30-8:30 p.m.
At Leonadus K. Plenty Amphitheater, 6601 Telegraph Road, Alexandria.

JULY

5 Natyabhooni School of Dance (Indian Dance and Music)
12 The Pietasters (Ska)
19 Chuck Brown Band (Go Go/Funk/Soul)
26 Silver Tones Swing Band (Swing Dance)

AUGUST

2 Pablo Perez El Alcalde de la Salsa (Salsa)
9 Alexandria Harmonizers (Chorus)
16 The Nighthawks (Blues)
23 Dave Kline Band (World Jazz Fusion)

OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT MUSIC SERIES

Free Concerts. Wednesdays from 4-7 p.m. At Old Town Alexandria waterfront. Join in the Waterfront Wednesday Music Series featuring a range



The Hues Exhibit will be held July 1-30, 2023 at the Van Lindingham Gallery at Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria.

of music genres by local musicians. Bring a chair or simply stop by to enjoy some beautiful waterside beats. Free. Weather permitting.

July 12 - Melissa Quinn Fox
July 19 - Vaughn Ambrose and the SJE
July 26 - Amafujo's Moodswings
August 2 - Chris Barrick Vibes and Organ Trio
August 9 - Sol Roots
August 16 - Delta Spur

SUNDAY SOUNDS ON THE PROMENADE

Free Concerts. 11:30-1:30 p.m. At 7 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Yellow Door Music Concert Series presents a musical lineup of artists on select Sundays.

July 30 - Vaughn Ambrose Jazz Trio
Aug. 27 - Trifilio Tango Music
On Aug. 27, in honor of National Dog Day that weekend, Robinson Landing encourages individuals to bring their dog out for a yappy social for play and fun for your furry ones. The full event schedule of Robinson Landing programming is located at www.Robinson-Landing.com/WaterfrontEvents.

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

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‘Wedding Belles’

Aldersgate Church Community Theater comedy runs July 7-23.



EDDING BELLES - Joyce Tischer (Glendine), Victoria Rose (Ima Jean), Tricia Politte (Laura Lee), Anne Hilleary (Bobrita), and Carole Preston (Violet) star in the comedy “Wedding Belles,” playing July 7-23 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater. www.acctonline.org.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

It’s the summer of 1942 in the mythical small town of Eufaula Springs, Texas. The members of the local garden club—happily married Bobrita (Ann Hilleary), happily many-times-married Glendine (Joyce Tischer), spinster Violet (Carole Preston), and widowed Laura Lee (Tricia Politte) — are filling their time with gossip when their meeting is interrupted by the arrival of a stranger.

Ima Jean (Victoria Rose) is a frazzled 18-year-old who has just stumbled off the bus with plans to marry her infantryman fiancé before he ships off for World War II. Despite that said fiancé is nowhere to be found at the moment, the women impulsively decide to throw the couple an elaborate wedding, and their lives and friendships are thrown into turmoil as they race to accomplish the nuptials in one frenzied afternoon.

Directed by Bob Sams, the 90-minute comedy by Alan Bailey and Ronnie Claire Edwards first premiered off-Broadway in 2009.

“What first drew me to this play is that it is funny,” said Sams. “It is touching without being maudlin. It is about people who when faced with a choice always choose to help rather than ignore a problem, not because it is ‘what they ought to do’ but because it is their natural way of behaving.”

Set against the backdrop of WWII, “Wedding Belles” is a lighthearted play showcasing a “Golden Girls” comedy cast of friendships.

“I hope that the audience will laugh and enjoy themselves watching these characters fuss about,” said Politte. “But I also hope the audience takes away that when bad things happen, sometimes we just have to accept that we can’t change them, but if we adjust, we can still find joy in our lives. And it’s a gift to have friends who are willing to help

you.” Added producer Marg Soroos, “This is a story of relationships and the interactions of women who have known each other for many years. They still hold back and need to resolve inner conflicts and turmoil.”

The entire play takes place on a veranda, which posed a challenge for Soroos.

“The biggest challenge that I had as a producer was the set,” Soroos said. “We literally built a clapboard house board by board. It was a real challenge and we are very proud of the results.”

The cast of characters includes Laura Lee as a take-charge woman who hides behind busyness — hosting the annual garden club gala and collecting for the war effort. Glendine is the often-married romantic who keeps relying on love as her way to happiness. Bobrita is the slightly shrill older sister with an eye for others’ flaws and Violet is the frail younger sister who has never quite taken charge of her own life.

“A major challenge is found in the structure of the play,” Sams said. “It has many elements of farce which require a rapid pace while still allowing the audience to keep up with what’s happening. The play also has some rather emotional scenes which must be handled with care to give them the honesty they deserve.”

The show opens on July 7 and closes on July 23. Tickets can be purchased online at www.acctonline.org.

“Besides having good laughs and enjoying the play, I wish every individual watching the play thinks of and appreciates the presence of their friends in their lives,” Tischer said. “Sometimes we take friends for granted not realizing how much those friendships enhance our lives.”

Wedding Belles, July 7-23, Aldersgate Church Community Theater, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA 22308 www.acctonline.org

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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.

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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.

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Grateful for “The Dead,” But ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Because of circumstances with which I am totally in control — unlike the old black and white television set from the mid-60s when I watched “The Outer Limits,” I am writing this column weeks in advance of its publication. And I must confess, as an active cancer patient still undergoing treatment — for an incurable stage of papillary thyroid cancer, I hesitate to make too many commitments for the future, given that my present is not altogether predictable. But a week’s vacation in mid-July with my step father-in-law and his wife compels me to write in advance so that I can maintain my presence in the newspaper for the week I’m away and for the week when I return.

The presumptive content now being explained, let me try to balance the known with what I know now that might resonate/be mildly amusing weeks ahead of its public consumption. That’s not an insurmountable task as it’s hardly brain surgery; nevertheless, since I take my avocation seriously, I will proceed to write something that will stand the test of time and not embarrass me when it finally sees the light of day — in early July (it is now barely mid-June). So, what do I feel now that I will still feel in a month?

I will still be missing my brother, Richard, as I’m sure you regular readers know, but I believe I’ve subjected you all to my emotional challenges surrounding his death often enough lately so I will refrain from going down that road feeling bad (invoking “The Grateful Dead.”). Speaking of “The Dead,” I recently saw them live on June 3rd from Jiffy Lube Live (though not actually in person but online with Nugs.com). Nugs is a streaming service where one can buy access to various types of entertainment; at a not-unreasonable price, given the soaring price of attending rock concerts these days. Between the drive, the parking, the cost of the ticket of course — plus all those service fees, the less-than-ideal location of my seat — given how amazingly quick the good seats at fair price are sold, and the traffic exiting the venue, not to mention the hour-long drive home, I thought I would try something I only recently discovered even existed.

Therefore, from the comfort of my home, while avoiding all the inconveniences I’ve mentioned, I watched “The Dead” in concert while streaming their performance. (As Curly from “The Three Stooges” would say: “What an experience.”) Though watching on the computer hardly compared to being present and accounted for, I was able to see more clearly all the performers, and of course, “refresh” myself as often as I liked, and more importantly, visit the bathroom at as many intervals as necessary without any adieu. But I couldn’t control the songs (set list performed by the band, 75% of which was great (especially “Cumberland Blues,” an all-time favorite of mine). Unfortunately, 25% of their material was boring and disappointing to me, sorry.

This is “The Dead’s” final tour after 50-plus years. We’re lucky to have any opportunity to see them (Mickey Hart, the drummer is almost 80) and listen to their music live. And it’s certainly their prerogative to present their material however they want; they’re more than entitled after all these decades. But during the second set (the first set lived up to expectations), I didn’t enjoy the 15-minute-plus drum interlude, nor did I enjoy the guitar interlude that followed for another 10 or 15 minutes (presumably to allow band members to rest and recover after nearly two hours performing), and I especially didn’t enjoy the Bob Weir cover of “Milestones,” a Miles Davis song, another 10 or 15 minutes. I would much rather have heard the songs they’re most famous for. A few examples: “Me and My Uncle,” “Big River,” “Cold, Rain and Snow,” “The Music Never Stopped,” “Samson and Delilah,” “Mexicali Blues,” and “China Cat Sunflower,” among so many others. But they didn’t. They played to their heart’s delight, I’m sure. But not completely to mine. Of course, there are few guarantees in life, especially for a terminally ill cancer patient. I certainly understood and understand the miscellaneous things for which I have zero control, cancer being the most prominent. But I still haven’t given up hope for a semi normal life. Seeing “The Dead,” was but one example. Regardless of the outcome, the evening we shared together, so to speak, was a testament to that hope and will remain a super-positive memory, part of that second set notwithstanding. It was an evening I’ll not soon forget, and it will forever bring a smile to my face for as long as I hear their music (Sirius channel #23). I consider myself a “deadhead,” and am proud to recount when it all started. It was in the spring of 1973. I pray it continues for many more years yet to come. In fact, I can still hear John Mayer singing “Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodleoo” as I complete this column.

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

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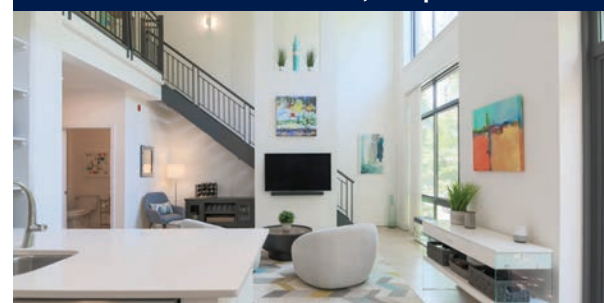
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