

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JULY 6, 2023



The 18th-century-style manor house, headquarters of the American Horticultural Society.



The Osage orange tree (*Maclura pomifera*) at River Farm is at least 200 years old. It is on the Virginia Big Tree Register.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

## Keeping It All Connected

### Plein Is Recharging the AHS

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

His passion for the natural world was sparked at age five in 1963 when he spent hours exploring the woods and creek behind his family home in Annandale. Scott C. Plein, chair of the Board of Directors of the American Horticultural Society (AHS), headquartered in Mount Vernon, delighted in catching frogs, toads and garter snakes. He was awed by nature's wonders when he watched a frog swimming in the creek.

At age ten he started mowing grass and as a high school senior, hired his first employee, a business that grew into a lifelong love of plants and landscaping. His interest in nature and landscaping evolved so that today he champions native plants and counts as one of his heroes, Aldo Leopold, a 20th century Wisconsin naturalist who wrote *A Sand County Almanac* published in 1949. "We must understand how the natural world interacts with human habitation," says Plein and "to survive, we need nature to be healthy and need humans to support it." He also admires the late Edward O. Wilson, a Harvard University entomologist, who wrote extensively on biodiversity, stressing the interconnection of all plants, animals and micro-organisms on earth. "We must understand how it all works together," urges Plein.

Plein founded KT Enterprises in 1976, a



AHS hosts a popular spring garden market every year and welcomes hundreds.



Gardening tools sculpture at AHS.

landscape development firm and an affiliate, Total Development Solutions, companies that service home builders, developers and commercial contractors in the Washington metropolitan area. He is the founding principal of Equinox Investments, a real estate investment firm begun in 1999. He loves to tout his cornerstone project, Villages of Piedmont, which he believes balances human needs and natural habitats. The development includes a 380-acre park with seven miles of trails, called Leopold's Preserve, protected by a conservation easement.

Plein founded the White House Farm Foundation, based in Northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. On his 270-acre White House Farm near Luray, Virginia, he grows native trees and plants on 60 acres. "We believe in striving for a healthy ecosystem, which encompasses wise use of natural and human resources," says the foundation's website.

### Why AHS?

In 2020, AHS listed River Farm for sale

for \$32.9 million, a proposal that raised the specter of developers buying and transforming the property. The listing divided the Board of Directors, spawned intense local backlash, mobilized elected officials' opposition, threatened legal action and resulted in some board member resignations. Selling River Farm was "absurd," Plein argued then. After the tumult subsided, a reconstituted board canceled the sale and began what Plein calls "re-inventing ourselves."

He joined the Board in 2021 and became

SEE KEEPING IT ALL, PAGE 7

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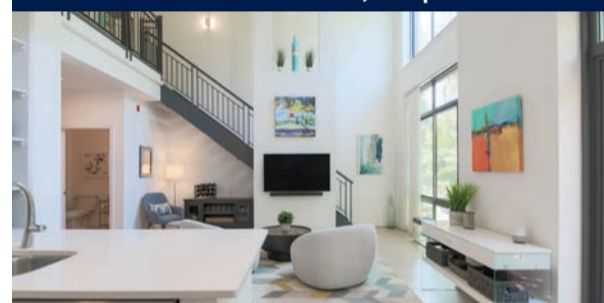
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## Fort Hunt Little League Players Fill the Stands

Field trip to Ace's Game is a learning experience.

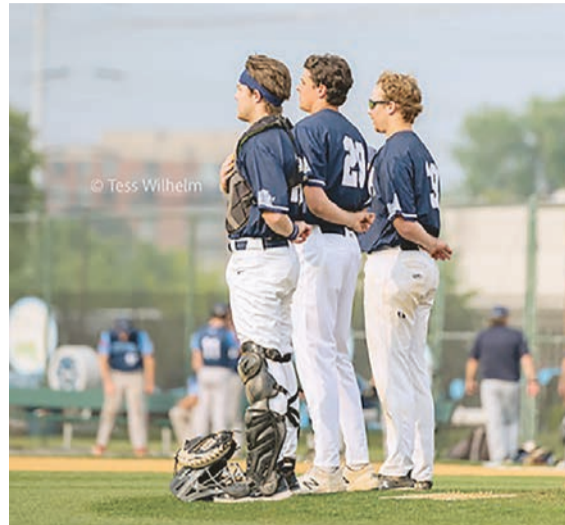
BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

Little league baseball is a part of growing up for many that teaches teamwork, responsibilities and sportsmanship while playing a sport that shares the Americana stage with hot dogs and apple pie.

A group of little leaguers from Fort Hunt went to the Alexandria Aces game in late June as a team activity to see college-aged players take the next step to the minor league and maybe onto Major League Baseball. The little leaguers wore their uniforms and interacted as a team while watching a live game on a hot summer night.

"It was great to see the Fort Hunt Little Leaguers in attendance, as we continue to grow the franchise it's important that we continue to engage with all of the youth groups in Alexandria," Alexandrian Frank Fannon, the Principle Owner of the team.

The Alexandria Aces won the Cal Ripken collegiate baseball league championship last year so the demand for attendance has



Standing tall for the National Anthem.

increased, Fannon noted. They've brought in additional seating to accommodate 250 more fans at the Alexandria ballfield.

Local baseball aficionado Jamie Sara started out in Fort Hunt Little League and played the sport for years before landing a spot on the coaching staff at West Potomac High School in Mount Vernon. When he graduated from West Potomac in 2015, Sara was drafted by the San Diego Padres but opted to go to college at William and Mary where he played college baseball before going on to the Alexandria Aces. He valued his time in



The Alexandria Aces celebrate the win.

the Fort Hunt Little League.

"Playing little league was really, really beneficial for developing athletic skills as well," he said. A bonding activity like going to the Ace's game "is a great opportunity for bringing the team together," he said.

The Alexandria Aces are a collegiate summer league baseball team entering their 15th season as members of the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League, which began in 2005 to promote the sport in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. They have 18 regular season home games at Frank E. Mann

Field at Four Mile Run Park.

A non-profit organization, the main goal of the Aces is to give back to the community and strengthen the presence of baseball in Alexandria, the Ace's information said. Having a night out with the Fort Hunt little leaguers is a good example of that.

On Friday, July 7 the Aces are playing the Bethesda Big Train at home, Frank Mann Field on 3700 Commonwealth Avenue in Alexandria, followed by another game Saturday evening against Cropdusters Baseball which is a team out of Olney, Maryland.



Ryan Osinski watches a fly ball head for the outfield.



On-the-field enthusiasm.



The Fort Hunt players and coaches under the lights.

## July 4 Holiday Featured a Ship Announcement at Mount Vernon

New Navy ship will be named for French general Marquis de Lafayette.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

The Navy recently announced a new ship they will build and introduce to the fleet will be named the USS Lafayette after the French General Marquis de Marquis de Lafayette who helped the American cause in the Revolutionary War. Who better to announce this addition than Marquis de Lafayette himself, General George Washington, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro and a handful of others on the lawn of

the Mount Vernon plantation.

"They made me a major general at the age of 19," the Marquis de Lafayette impersonator said to a crowd of dignitaries that included members of the French attaché, local military officials, the Navy band and the rest of the attendees on the hot July morning. The crowd included ambassadors from the United Kingdom, Mexico and Ukraine. Each was recognized by Del Toro.

"U.S. supports Ukraine today and will support you as long as it takes," he said. "Americans of all

SEE JULY 4, PAGE 5



The Navy band provided the seafaring soundtrack.



Washington and Lafayette by the ship's rendering at Mount Vernon.

## New Laws Now In Effect

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK



Each year, ahead of July 1st when most laws passed during each year's legislative session go into effect, the exceptional staff at the Division of Legislative Services prepare a valuable publication entitled "In Due Course." This publication highlights the new laws that are most likely to affect the daily lives of Virginia's residents. You can read the complete publication for this year as well as past years online here: [http://dls.virginia.gov/pubs\\_idc.html](http://dls.virginia.gov/pubs_idc.html). I like to provide my constituents with a similar "highlight reel" so they can be well-informed and prepared.

### Public Safety

Expanding the "Move Over" law passed in 2019, which requires motorists to slow down or change lanes for emergency vehicles, it is now mandatory for drivers to switch lanes or slow down when they see any vehicle pulled over on the side of the road with flashing hazards. This law comes at the perfect time, with the July 4th holiday this week and millions of Americans hitting the road.

There is now a stricter penalty for making false 9-1-1 calls or texts. These false reports not only waste time and resources for first responders but also create dangerous situations that can result in injury or death for innocent Virginians.

### Consumers:

Have you ever signed up for a free trial of a product or streaming service online and then forgotten to cancel it before being charged? Now, any business offering a free trial lasting more than 30 days must notify consumers of

their option to cancel within 30 days of the free trial's end.

### Healthcare:

A new law on hospital price transparency is now in effect. Every hospital is now required to make information about standard charges for items and services available on their website. After the passage of federal legislation in 2021 requiring hospital price transparency, fewer than 15% of hospitals had complied as of 2022. This bill creates additional accountability and enforcement on the state level to ensure hospitals comply so that patients no longer have to wonder what treatment will cost.

### Labor:

This year, the General Assembly introduced protections for living organ donors. Under this legislation, Virginia employers with 50 or more employees must provide at least 60 business days of unpaid leave to eligible workers who donate one or more of their organs. Additionally, employees who donate bone marrow must receive at least 30 business days of unpaid leave. To be eligible, employees must have been employed at their current job for at least a year and worked at least 1,250 hours during the previous year. This law safeguards donors and encourages more Virginians to give life-saving gifts to those in need.

"The Silenced No More Act," expands the prohibition of the use of confidentiality clauses related to claims of sexual assault in employment agreements to also cover claims of sexual harassment. This law renders any confidentiality agreements that would prevent discussion of past workplace conduct, work events, or em-

ployee-employer null and void.

Virginia employers are now prohibited from using an employee's social security number (or any part of it, such as the last four digits) on any identification badge or access card. This measure protects workers who were at higher risk of identity theft due to this practice.

Virginia has implemented a universal license recognition law, allowing workers in professions requiring licenses or certifications, such as barbers, electricians, and tattoo artists, to utilize an out-of-state license. This is applicable if they have held the license for at least three years, it is up to date, and passing an exam was necessary to obtain the license.

### Landlord/Tenant:

A process now exists for tenants to terminate a lease and receive a refund of all rents and deposits paid if the property is uninhabitable at the time of possession due to fire hazards or serious threats to the life, health, or safety of tenants or occupants, such as rodent infestation, lack of heat, absence of running water (hot or cold), electricity, or adequate sewage disposal facilities.

Also in effect is a new rent increase notification. Landlords owning more than four rental dwelling units in Virginia, or having a more than 10% interest in more than four dwelling units, must provide written notice to tenants who have the option to renew a lease or have a lease with an automatic renewal provision of any increase in rent during the subsequent term. This notice must be given at least 60 days prior to the end of the rental term.

SEE KRIZEK, PAGE 11

## Fund Public Schools and Virginia Budget Impasse

BY DEL. VIVIAN WATTS



Funding public schools is central to the Virginia state budget impasse. While there are other issues – particularly mental health and tax fairness – our public schools are facing serious challenges. The pandemic drove uneven learning losses and classroom discipline lapses, but teacher shortages and lack of essential funding are long-standing.

In the last 15 years, Virginia hasn't kept up with other states. Before the 2008 recession, we had managed to increase state/local per pupil spending to just above the national average. However, since 2008, other states increased total per pupil spending by over 8% on average while Virginia's

K-12 funding per pupil (adjusted for inflation) has fallen.

Raising teacher salaries, funding counselors and other support personnel, and correcting the error made in covering the end of the state food tax are the big ticket items. I spoke to other

critical needs in these remarks on the House floor:

"I went to a poor rural school, Maple Grove, through the 8th grade. We had a grade and half in each classroom of 35 or so kids. I had it pretty good in the house my father built. But for Pat Wright, the most awesome slugger on our girl's baseball team, it was different. Pat went home to a shack lit with kerosene lanterns and cardboard on the walls for insulation.

"I also had it pretty good, when I started thinking about boys. I

didn't have to feel self-conscious about being tall because Max and Gary had flunked a grade or two. Max dropped out as soon as he turned 16. Gary died in a drunk driving accident. I was the first in my family to graduate college.

"I know my childhood reality is shared by others in this Chamber – urban and rural. If you came from that kind of background and you are here, you survived. Why? A big reason I survived was Mrs. Persich, my teacher for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Yes, all 3 years and she taught every subject, even though all she really knew was how to diagram sentences. I survived because even though Mrs. Persich didn't know math, she came to know me.

"We have the opportunity to reach kids like those in Maple Grove – kids floundering in circumstances beyond their control, circumstances they were born into. The most crucial opportunity we

have before us is negotiating the Budget.

"Our Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) provided a strong assessment of how to begin to fix failing schools: Hire instructional assistants to '(i) help teachers provide small group and individualized instruction necessitated by widening academic needs within classrooms, (ii) help teachers manage challenging student behaviors within classrooms, and (iii) reduce teacher workloads.' In other words, give teachers time to know their students, like Mrs. Persich got to know me. Give our teachers time to use their professional training to awaken the potential for learning that is there but that must be recognized, if there's any hope that it can be touched.

"The House budget only helps schools if they've fallen below five

SEE WATTS, PAGE 11

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A Connection Newspaper



# NEWS

## July 4 Holiday Featured A Ship Announcement at Mount Vernon

FROM PAGE 3  
walks of life have supported our freedom," he added.

Del Toro is originally from Cuba and was brought here by his parents when he was a baby in the early 1960s and bounced that off the history of this country when the original settlers arrived back in the 1600s. "Many citizens like myself left other countries to seek a better life," he said.

In 2002, Congress posthumously made Lafayette an honorary U.S. citizen.

### Bon Voyage

The ship is currently in the planning stages. It will be built in a Wisconsin shipyard and is packed with high-tech equipment and will have multi-mission capability to conduct air warfare, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare, electronic warfare, and information operations. In Navy talk, this includes air surveillance radar, Baseline Ten Aegis combat system,

a Mk 41 vertical launch system, communications systems, Mk 57 gun weapon system countermeasures, and added capability in electronic warfare and information operations with design flexibility for future growth.

The ship would weigh 7,291 tons when fully loaded and have a 25-year service life, according to the technical drawing poster that was displayed at the ceremony. USS Lafayette, the fourth of the Navy's new Constellation-class frigates, is scheduled to commission in 2029. The other ships in the class are USS Constellation (FFG 62), USS Congress (FFG 63), and USS Chesapeake (FFG 64), the Navy said.

The historical portrayers of George Washington and Marquis de Lafayette stayed in character the whole ceremony and were tight-lipped with their true identities. Washington's wife "Kelly," said they lived in California and returned sporadically when duty called. "He feels honored to play George Washington," she said.



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# Local Writers Win Virginia Press Association Awards

Connection and Gazette garner awards for work published in 2022.

BY MARY KIMM  
THE GAZETTE

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/Writing/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/Writing/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/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 Val-



**Ashley Simpson**



**Bonnie Hobbs**



**Eden Brown**



**Glenda Booth**



**Janet Barnett**



**Jeanne Theismann**



**Laurence Foong**

## 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/Writing/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/Writing/W15_Health_Science_and_Environmental_Writing_(N4)/Third_Place_Mount_Vernon_Gazette_3/Attachment_01.pdf)



**Michael Lee Pope**



**Mike Salmon**



**Shirley Ruhe**



**Susan Laume**

# CONNECTION

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**Susan Laume won first place for General News Writing for extensive coverage of how local people here and overseas are helping in Ukraine. The judge said: "Awesome way to tie compelling local coverage with an international news story"**

or Survivors mark Iwo Jima 77th anniversary" Judge Comment: "Nicely done. Love the history." See [http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022\\_VPA\\_News\\_and\\_Advertising\\_Contest/Writing/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/Writing/W10_Feature_Story_Writing_(excluding_Obituaries)__(N4)/Third_Place_Alexandria_Gazette_Packet_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/Writing/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/Writing/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\\_](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Design_and_Presentation/M01_Combination_Picture_and_Story_)

**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\\_](http://vpagallery.com/2022/2022_VPA_News_and_Advertising_Contest/Design_and_Presentation/M01_Combination_Picture_and_Story_)

SEE CONNECTION, PAGE 8  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

# Keeping It All Connected

FROM PAGE 1

chairman in 2022, he says, “because I believe in this place. It’s an iconic property and it should be saved and open to the public.” River Farm can “exemplify good gardening,” he contends, by nurturing both traditional landscaping and landscaping with native plants. Pointing to the wooded area, he insists that the property “can be a good example” of blending traditional landscaping with ecologically-friendly gardening and stewardship.

He hopes to “help AHS find its place” and “influence where horticulture goes,” to especially involve more young people in gardening and conservation. “We’re the national horticultural society, so our number one priority is to be the best at representing every aspect of horticulture and continuing to encourage all Americans to discover the benefits and joy of gardening,” he told *The American Gardener* magazine in January.

Plein invites the local community to “get involved, to help make it great.” Though AHS is a national organization, he sees River Farm as “part of the neighborhood, a special asset for the community.” Noting that visitors pay no entrance fee, locals can always help financially and build community and political support for River Farm, he notes.

Among Plein’s many civic activities, filling two single-spaced pages of his resume, are serving on the board of the Potomac Riverkeeper Network and Mason Housing. He has been involved with the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association, National As-



In his role as Chair of the Board of Directors of the American Horticultural Society, Scott Plein provides strategic direction and oversight of the nonprofit and its River Farm headquarters.

sociation of Industrial Office Parks, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. He’s a member of Ducks Unlimited and the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Plein lives in Falls Church. He has two adult sons, one daughter and two grandchildren. He’s very glad he “fell in love” with River Farm.

## River Farm

River Farm, at 7931 East Boulevard Drive, Alexandria 22308, is on the Potomac River. Its 18th-century-style manor house has offices and event spaces. The property was the northernmost of George Washington’s five farms and once home to Tobias Lear, Washington’s secretary.

Founded in 1922, AHS moved its national headquarters to the site in 1973. The 25-acre property has formal and natural gardens, woodlands, a meadow and a children’s garden.

The gardens are free and open to the public. Visit <https://ahsgardening.org/>.

## Sept. 23 Gala

AHS will celebrate its 50 years at River Farm with cocktails, dinner and dancing at a gala on Sept. 23. This year’s theme is “Simple Pleasures of the Garden,” featuring renowned interior and garden designer Charlotte Moss. Visit [www.ahsgala2023.org](http://www.ahsgala2023.org) for sponsorship and ticket information.

PHOTO BY LINDA ZHENG

## 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 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



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

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.



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



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## NEWS

# Connection and Gazette Win Awards in 2022

FROM PAGE 6

(N3)/Third Place Arlington Connection\_3/Attachment\_01.pdf

**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 near 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.

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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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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 Natyabhoomi 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.RobinsonLanding.com/WaterfrontEvents](http://www.RobinsonLanding.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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**NEWS**

**Death Investigation**

**D**etectives from FCPD Major Crimes Bureau are conducting a death investigation of 51-year-old Todd Matthew Gleason.

On June 17, Gleason was arrested for an outstanding warrant for petit larceny and failure to appear on a felony offense by Mount Vernon District patrol officers, according to police. There was no force used during Gleason's arrest. Following his arrest, Gleason requested to be taken to the hospital for a preexisting injury. Officers facilitated his request, and he was medically cleared by hospital staff the same day. Gleason was then taken to the Adult Detention Center (ADC) where he remained held.

On the morning of July 3, Fairfax County Sheriff's Office deputies requested an ambulance to transport Gleason from the ADC to the hospital after he complained of pain to his stomach and leg. At 9:22 pm on July 3, a magistrate released Gleason from custody on his recognizance. Gleason remained in hospital care and died during the morning of July 4. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will conduct an autopsy.

**How Not to Buy a Car: Men Arrested after Assault, Robbery**

**T**wo men have been arrested for robbery after arranging to sell a car online.

On June 25 police responded to an armed robbery in the 4300 block of Americana Drive in Annandale. Police found the victim who had sustained multiple lacerations on her head. Officers determined the victim had agreed to meet the suspects in-person via Instagram to purchase a car for cash. The victim was picked-up by a ride-share and driven to the location of the vehicle for the sale.

When she arrived, one of the suspects produced a handgun and repeatedly struck the victim in the head with it. The other suspect assisted in grabbing the victim's purse before both suspects fled in a vehicle. Preliminarily, it is believed that the ride-share driver was not involved. The victim was transported to the hospital and treated

SEE HOW NOT, PAGE 11

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Watts

FROM PAGE 4

mental health problems, Tiered Support was also recommended by the Behavioral Health Commission. It has the capability to reach far more students with positive interven-

tion – but not with token funding. JLARC underscored pleas from teachers throughout Virginia: ‘The Covid aftermath on student behavior is real. We need help.’

‘Finally, Tiered Support from outside has to be backed up with ongoing support inside school walls. I hope we will be able to vote for a final budget that provides the funding – totally absent in the House budget – to provide a counselor support position for every 1000 students using social workers, psychologists, nurses, or other health and behavioral licensed workers.

‘I had the blessing of stability growing up – many, many of today’s students do not. If their needs aren’t timely identified, problems will get out of control. I hope we will be able to vote for a final budget focused on quality public education for today’s Max and Pat and Gary and for the potential of me and of you that is in them. I hope we will be able to show teachers like Mrs Persich who cared about us that we care about them.’

Krizek

FROM PAGE 4

❖ A new law mandates the Virginia Supreme Court to create plain English instructions that explain to defendants how to interpret the Summons for Unlawful Detainer.

Taxes:

❖ The General Assembly simplified the process for disabled veterans or surviving spouses applying for a tax exemption on real property. Before, an applicant had to apply with the locality once they had already purchased a property. Now, a veteran or spouse can apply for the tax exemption prior to purchasing a qualifying dwelling by filing the required documentation along with documentation of the purchase agreement. Essentially, this bill allows a disabled veteran or surviving

spouse to begin the application process while they are still under contract, rather than having to wait until after settlement.

Virginians can now receive a \$300 tax credit when they purchase a lockable firearm storage device, incentivizing safe storage and responsible gun ownership.

❖ Lastly, the General Assembly also designates various emblems that are unique or symbolic of Virginia heritage and culture, like the state folk dance (square dancing) or the state spirit, George Washington’s rye whiskey produced locally at Mount Vernon. This year, we recognized the Chincoteague Pony as the new official state pony! If you have an opportunity this summer, go visit them on Virginia’s Eastern Shore.

How Not to Buy a Car: Men Arrested after Assault, Robbery

FROM PAGE 10

for injuries to her head.

Through their investigation, detectives identified and charged a 20-year-old man from Woodbridge, who was charged with robbery, malicious wounding, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, and conspiracy to commit robbery. He is being held on no bond. A 23-year-old man from Oakton was also arrested and charged with robbery, malicious wounding, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony and conspiracy to commit robbery. He is also being held with no bond. Detectives from the Fugitive Track and Apprehension Squad tracked the two to a location in Lorton. Detectives took both men into custody. Subsequent to the arrests, detectives recovered multiple handguns and additional evidence of the robbery.

Safety Tips When Buying or Selling

❖ Do not go to a transaction alone. If

you do go alone, make sure a friend or family member is aware of the transaction details.

- ❖ Whenever possible, complete the transaction during daylight hours.
❖ Be extra cautious when buying or selling valuable items such as collectible shoes, jewelry and vehicles.
❖ Insist on meeting in a public area like a safe exchange zone or, at minimum, use a well-lit public parking lot with video surveillance.
❖ Do not carry large amounts of cash when making a transaction.
❖ Several FCPD district stations have safe exchange zones for online purchases.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 5. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

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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 s 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 Toodleo’ as I complete this column.

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



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