

## Fun Highlights in Mount Vernon, Welcoming to All

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

**T**hroughout Mount Vernon there are neighborhoods that have a mixture of longtime residents, shorter term residents with the military, younger people that are fresh out of college starting their new careers. The area includes a full range of incomes and ethnicities. The Mount Vernon area is full of options that offer something for everyone.

In the southern part of the district, the old Lorton prison has been turned into an art center where local artists practice their trade in the old dorm buildings that are divided into art studios. The center is home to live entertainment, food, festivals and art shows as well.

If all the art touring generates a thirst for local beer, the Bunnyman Brewery opens soon, serving local craft beers. It is named for a local legend about an ax-wielding man in a bunny suit that terrorized the area years ago. Or maybe it was an escaped prisoner who was never recaptured and left a trail of dead rabbits. Is it true? Don't know, but the brewery is there to discuss the whole thing while sipping on a



Officials celebrate a new bike trail bridge over a creek in Mount Vernon.

sudsy beer.

If all that beer brings on a taste for locally made Mexican ice cream, the "Michoacan A Pedir De Boca," is full of ice cream varieties. "All is fresh," said owner Carina. They have offerings in dairy and water-based flavors so they don't leave anyone behind that may have a digestive system not suited for dairy.

She pointed at the popsicle case,

which has over a dozen flavors, with everything from pistachio to mango to cucumber with chili flavored popsicles. "We manufacture all of these," she said.

In fact, Mount Vernon is full of ice cream places. For the traditionalists, the Custard Shack in Belle Haven is open year-round and has a variety of traditional flavors, while Bruster's just opened in the

SEE FUN HIGHLIGHTS, PAGE 4



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

Actors in form at George Washington's Mount Vernon.

## Photo Journal 2023: New Countywide Strategic Plan Shapes Fairfax

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

**T**he Connection gathered photos of some recent projects and happenings since the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted its first-ever Countywide Strategic Plan on October 5, 2021. The plan charts a shared future for all, enhanced quality of life, and equitable access, driven by the vision of "One Fairfax."

A key component of the plan is the ten outcome areas, representing the issues the Fairfax County community cares about most. They were developed based on extensive community input and were reinforced repeatedly over an 18-month outreach period.

The areas include issues regarding cultural and recreational opportunities, empowerment and support for residents facing vulnerabilities, housing and neighborhood livability, mobility and transportation, the environment,

SEE PHOTO JOURNAL, PAGE 4



SCREENSHOT

**Recreational Opportunities; Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability: Lorton Community Center (2023); a 30,000 square foot facility co-located with the Lorton Library and Lorton Park. It provides space for the Lorton Senior Center and Lorton Community Action Center, plus services, programs, and activities for people of all ages and abilities.**



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE GAZETTE

**Economic Opportunity, Cultural and Recreational Opportunity: At Mount Vernon, Alexandria, the new brand, "Potomac Banks: Explore Fairfax South," creates synergy between the historical, recreational, cultural, and ecological venues in the region.**

# The Trusted Real Estate Resource for Alexandria and Beyond.



To learn more about our Associates and our firm, visit [www.WeAreAlexandria.com](http://www.WeAreAlexandria.com)



## Old Town | \$2,950,000

Nestled in the heart of Old Town, this magnificent 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath Victorian residence exudes sophistication and elegance. High ceilings, original floors, 2 wood-burning fireplaces, handsome millwork, eat-in kitchen with new stainless appliances, second level family room, sunroom, one off-street parking space, and other fine details showcase the perfect blend of old-world craftsmanship with modern conveniences. The sunny primary suite offers a private dressing room and updated bath. Expansive patio surrounded by mature plantings. 411 Prince St  
**Babs Beckwith 703.627.5421**  
[www.BabsBeckwith.com](http://www.BabsBeckwith.com)



## Del Ray | \$2,199,000

Gorgeously updated, complete renovation with designer finishes and lighting, and custom trim work. 6 bedrooms and 5 full baths, beautiful kitchen, large pantry, mudroom, spacious basement and more. ADU features a bedroom, bath & kitchen. 317 E Howell Ave  
**Jen Walker 703.675.1566**  
[www.JenWalker.com](http://www.JenWalker.com)

OPEN SAT 9/16 & SUN 9/17, 2-4PM



## Hollin Hills | \$995,000

Remodeled & expanded 2-3 bedroom, 2 bath home nestled into a half acre of enchanting multi-tiered gardens with decks, patios, seating areas, a hillside studio, and a sauna. Updated kitchen and bathrooms and many special details throughout. 7316 Rippon Rd  
**Jodie Burns 571.228.5790**  
[www.JodieBurns.com](http://www.JodieBurns.com)

OPEN SAT 9/6, 2-4pm & SUN 9/17, 1-3PM



## Old Town | \$785,000

Light-filled, 3-bedroom, 2-bath historic row home built in 1820. This charming home offers functional, versatile floor plan and preserved character. Original hardwood flooring & vintage lighting. Private brick patio and zoned for Lyles-Crouch ES. 409 S Washington Street  
**Jen Walker 703.675.1566**  
[www.JenWalker.com](http://www.JenWalker.com)



## Arlington | \$350,000

This spacious one-bedroom condo at The Grove features high ceilings, open layout, and modern finishes galore. Amenities include a gorgeous swimming pool, one garage parking spot, 24-hour gym, and clubhouse. 2055 26th Street S #5-204  
**Jillian Keck Hogan 703.901.5082**  
[www.JillianKeckHogan.com](http://www.JillianKeckHogan.com)

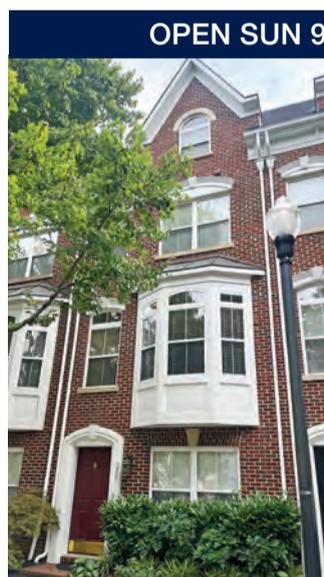
OPEN SUN 9/17, 1-4PM



## Yates Gardens | \$1,395,000

This picturesque, 3-bedroom, 3.5-bath home features an expanded kitchen, adjoining family room, and private back patio & garden. The versatile lower level includes a family room, bedroom, full bath, & kitchenette with front exterior entrance & garden access. 728 S Lee St

**Lauren Bishop 202.361.5079**  
[www.LaurenBishopHomes.com](http://www.LaurenBishopHomes.com)



## Cameron Station | \$755,000

In a coveted community west of Old Town, we present this striking, freshly-painted 4-level townhouse of sophisticated living space – sparkling wood floors, 3 bedrooms plus a den & garage. Amenities galore basketball court; swimming pool; tot lot; gym & more. 256 Cameron Station Blvd

**Ann Duff 703.965.8700**  
[www.AnnDuff.com](http://www.AnnDuff.com)

OPEN SAT 9/16, 1-4PM & SUN 9/17, 2-4PM



## Colecroft Station | \$623,000

Whether you commute or work from home, this 3-bedroom, 2-bath condo across the street from Braddock Road Metro is perfect for you! Terrific location and amazing view! 1 garage parking space included. 505 E Braddock Road #708

**Lisa Groover 703.919.4426**  
[www.LisaGroover.com](http://www.LisaGroover.com)

# NEWCOMERS & COMMUNITY GUIDE 2023

## Supervisors Share Issues



SCREENSHOT VIA FACEBOOK CAN USE HEADSHOTS INSTEAD

### The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Back row: Walter L. Alcorn, Hunter Mill; Pat Herrity, Springfield; Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon; Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay, Elected At-Large; John W. Foust, Dranesville; Rodney L. Lusk, Franconia; (front row) Kathy L. Smith, Sully; Penelope A. Gross, Mason; Dalia A. Palchik, Providence; and James R. Walkinshaw, Braddock.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

The Connection asked members of the Board of Supervisors to identify issues within their districts. No member of the Board claimed the county is utopia. While there is good news in community outcome areas, prevailing issues necessitate change. That will take time.

Comments are organized according to the ten community outcome areas listed in the Fairfax County Strategic Plan, Revised May 2023. Comments have been lightly edited for clarity and space.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

#### Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay

**Economic Opportunity**— The pandemic led to massive economic disruptions all around the globe, including here in Fairfax County. As of this year, we are happy to see that we actually have more residents employed now than we did before the onset of the pandemic. We want to continue this momentum and are doing so by working with our Economic Development Authority, county staff, and the community.

**Safety and Security**— Fairfax County was again named the safest jurisdiction of our size in the country. We have remained the safest jurisdiction by having world-class public safety agencies and a community that cares. I am proud of the work we have done together and look forward to continuing this critical work.

**Lifelong Education and Learning**— “As a board, we prioritize investing in our schools each year, and

this year is no different. Superior public schools are why businesses choose to locate here and how they can grow here with the available talent pool. It’s also a school system where all students can feel safe and heard.

#### Daniel Storck, Mount Vernon District Supervisor:

My top priorities continue to be improving the lives of our families through investments in education, housing, the environment, transportation, public safety, and the kind of economic development and jobs that ensure all have opportunities to live, learn, work, play, and grow older in the Mount Vernon District. It is also critically important that our county continue to be the safest jurisdiction of its size in the country.

One of the most pressing issues in our district continues to be the revitalization of Richmond Highway and Lorton. We have been successfully working together to re-envision Lorton and the Highway, investing in education, and delivering new parks, new public safety facilities, new housing of all types, new businesses, planned ‘The One’ Bus Rapid Transit system, pedestrian and cycling improvements, and so much more, all while making sure no one is left behind.

Another crucial issue is housing. The Mount Vernon District has a wide range, variety, and great diversity of all types of housing, including much lower-cost, substantial middle-income, and some of the most expensive housing in the DMV.

The smart growth housing and community development policies

that I helped initiate, plan, fund, and implement in 2016 have resulted in the past two years alone in building or preserving more than 1,000 units of workforce and affordable homes, while more than a thousand middle-income homes were built or started construction. Substantial future “missing middle” homes are planned as well.

#### Rodney L. Lusk, Franconia District

**Mobility and Transportation**— Continue making progress on the redevelopment of the Springfield and Richmond Highway communities.

**Lifelong Education and Learning**— We need to prepare our kids for the jobs of the future and help our residents gain marketable skills, training, and certifications that will enable them to pursue careers in innovative technology, the building trades, and medical technology. This is a foundational issue for me and a core focus of my office.

**Housing and Neighborhood Livability**— We need to continue to look at ways to provide more affordable housing options for our seniors, our first responders, teachers, and other public-facing members of our community.

#### James R. Walkinshaw, Braddock District

The three most important issues in the Braddock District are continuing to invest in our schools, improving transportation options, and protecting our local environment.

#### John W. Foust, Dranesville District

Many of the important issues in Dranesville are common across

the county, like creating affordable housing, growing the local economy to provide good jobs and revenues to support county programs and services, and making our community more resilient to the ever-worsening impacts of climate change.

**Mobility and Transportation, Safety and Security**— Making downtown McLean more vibrant and safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Eliminating the awful congestion in the neighborhoods around the

access ramp from Georgetown Pike onto the Beltway. Ensuring adequate infrastructure (including roads, trails, parks, and schools) is provided to serve the significant growth near the new Herndon and Innovation metro stations.

#### Pat Herrity, Springfield District

**Effective and Efficient Government**— The county’s unsustainable tax increases are adding to residents’ inflation concerns.

**Safety and Security Crime**— Businesses and residents suffer from unprosecuted crimes and a police staffing crisis.

**Lifelong Education and Learning**— Schools, as parents, students, and teachers struggle to close achievement gaps from lost learning. We need to focus school resources in the classroom on teachers and kids, not on administrators and political agendas.

**Healthy Communities**— Addressing panhandling and the fentanyl public health crisis are also high on residents’ lists of concerns.

#### Penny Gross, Mason District Supervisor:

Pedestrian safety; revitalization/redevelopment; affordable and attainable housing. There is a difference between affordable and attainable

#### Kathy Smith, Sully District Supervisor:

Transportation and first responders/public safety.



SCREENSHOT VIA 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The cover of the 2023 Annual Report for the first-ever Fairfax County Strategic Plan depicts the Tysons Corner skyline, featuring through the image many of the ten community outcome areas sought in the plan, such as economic opportunity, cultural and recreational opportunities, housing and neighborhood livability, mobility and transportation, and more.

## NEWCOMERS & COMMUNITY GUIDE 2023

# Fun Highlights in Mount Vernon, Welcoming to All

FROM PAGE 1

newly-blossomed Hilltop Village off Telegraph Road. This ice cream shop has roots in Pennsylvania, and three walk-up windows for those ice cream lovers that are on-the-go.

To work off all those ice cream calories, you can bike it off on the Mount Vernon Bike Trail that is a 17-mile stretch along the Potomac River. It goes past George Washington's Mansion, through Old Town, ending at Rosslyn. On the southern end, trail enhancements and a new bridge make it possible to ride all the way to Fort Belvoir.

While at Fort Belvoir, be sure to tour the Army Museum that is full of tanks, helicopters and history.

The Mount Vernon Recreation Center off Beacon Hill Road is currently being expanded and is closed until 2025. There is a nearby recreation center in Franconia with a pool and fields for team sports.



In late August, Bruster's ice cream opened their walk-up windows in Island Creek.



Homemade Mexican style popsicles at "Michoacan A Pedir De Boca" across from Cooper Road in Mount Vernon.



The new cookie place in Kingstowne is a big hit.



Workhouse musician Tom Teasley is big on hand drums and cymbals. The Workhouse Arts Center has music, artist studios and performing arts.



The Bunnyman Brewery in Lorton has brewskies and a local legend.

PHOTOS BY  
MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

## September is National Emergency Preparedness Month

All around the nation, people will be taking action to build stronger, more resilient and prepared communities during September, National Emergency Preparedness Month.

This is an opportunity to look around and find ways to prepare yourself and others in your community for disasters. Taking action to prepare for an emergency before it strikes can lead to better outcomes and provide peace of mind.

Fairfax County's Department of Emergency Management and Security has tools that are designed to aid the community in becoming more prepared for disasters. Take some time to think about ways you can make a difference during this year's Emergency Preparedness Month.

### Here are some tips:

- ❖ Prepare yourself and your family: The "Community Emergency Response Guide" (CERG) — available in multiple languages — has information on the types of threats and hazards local to Fairfax County, as well as tools to help you build an emergency plan and kit. It also has information on how to sign up for Fairfax Alerts so that you will receive alerts and warnings in the event of an emergency or disaster.

- ❖ Prepare your neighborhood: Once you have prepared yourself for an emergency, don't stop there. You can be a leader in your neighborhood and organize a group of neighbors to help plan for how your neighborhood will help each other during a disaster.

- ❖ Read and download the Community Emergency Response Guide: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cerg](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cerg)

or disaster.

- ❖ Prepare your business: Whether you own a business or work at a place you think needs an emergency plan, the "Business Disaster Resilience Guide" can help. This guide explains why it is crucial for businesses to have a continuity of operations plan and provides tools to help set the business up for success in the event it is affected by a disaster.

- ❖ Make an emergency kit: Emergency kits include basic supplies and are tailored to every person's need. We recommend every household keep three to five days worth of food, water and supplies in shelter-in-place kits for each member of the household.

- ❖ Read and download the Community Emergency Response Guide: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cerg](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cerg)

### Emergency Pet Preparedness

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/petresources/pet-preparedness>

When potentially disastrous weather is in the forecast, it's best to prepare early! It's always better to be safe than sorry, and there's no time like right now to make sure you have everything you — and your pet — need in the event of a weather-related disaster. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare:

1. Make sure your pets' microchip information is up-to-date, and that your dogs are wearing collars with identification tags. In the event that your pet is separated from you, this safety measure can ensure that whoever finds them will be able to find you, too.

2. Make sure you have the needed supplies and important documents for each of your pets. Check out our Pet Preparedness Disaster Kit Checklist for a handy list.

3. If you are evacuating, make sure the place you're going allows pets. There are pet-friendly shelters in Fairfax County, but please check to make sure they will be open. Hotels are not required to accept pets, so please plan accordingly.

4. If you absolutely need to shelter your pets while you get to safety, we will accept pets of Fairfax County residents for temporary safekeeping at the shelter and are preparing kennel space just in case. If you do need to bring your pet(s) to our shelter, PLEASE bring vaccination history and any medications they are on, and preferably a bag of whatever food they're eating as well. If you need assistance getting your pets to safety, please call Animal Protection Police at 703-691-2131.

# NEWCOMERS 2023

## Celebrate Fiesta Fairfax on Sept. 23

Fairfax City is holding a new, community celebration to observe Hispanic Heritage Month. Set for Saturday, Sept. 23, from 3:30-8 p.m., it'll be at Old Town Square, 10415 North St. The fun will include cultural performances, music, food and educational exhibits highlighting the contributions and experiences of the Hispanic, Latino and Latinx community.

The Old Town Square stage will host folkloric dance performances from various countries, as well as a salsa dance demonstration and class followed by a live band so attendees may try out their new dance moves. And Latin food vendors from the around the area will offer a variety of dishes.

Local nonprofits will also be onsite to share information about services and opportunities to work with the Latino community. With Latinos comprising about 20 percent of the City's population, the goal of Fiesta Fairfax is to bring people together to celebrate the



City's diversity.

- ❖ Entertainment Schedule
- 3:40 p.m. Mariachi Estrellas
- 4:25 p.m. Los Quetzales Mexican Dance Ensemble
- 5:00 p.m. Alma Boliviana Fraternity
- 5:25 p.m. Armonias Peruanas
- 5:45 p.m. La Decana
- 5:50 p.m. LUSA Dance Group
- 6:05 p.m. Azucar GMU
- 6:25 p.m. Dance Instruction w/ Laura Ortiz
- 6:55 p.m. Sol y Rumba Band.

— BONNIE HOBBS

### BULLETIN BOARD

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

#### FREE FALLS PREVENTION SEMINAR AND BALANCE SCREENING

Join team members from Inova's Physical Therapy Center to learn more on topics including:

- ❖ Common injury occurrences.
- ❖ Common falls prevention risk factors.

❖ Fall prevention strategies.

All registrants will also benefit from a free screening to assess strength, flexibility and balance.

Eligibility:

- ❖ All participants must be 60+.
- ❖ No recent surgeries in the past 8 weeks.
- ❖ Not currently on any restrictions of movement by a physician.

Short lecture/discussion on facts about falling followed by balance screenings performed by Physical Therapy professionals, ending with practical tips on staying safe at home.

Registration required and limited to 30 participants. E-mail [nandina.ustaris@inova.org](mailto:nandina.ustaris@inova.org), call 703-797-6900 option 4, or go to <https://forms.office.com/r/X6XGyEx9ij> to register.

#### GIRLS ON THE RUN REGISTRATION OPEN

Registration for the fall 2023 season of Girls on the Run is open! Registration will close on Friday, Sept. 15 at 11:59 p.m. Girls on the Run (GOTR) is an out-of-school program designed to help young

girls build key life skills through dynamic lessons. Teams are led by trained volunteer coaches who lead by positive example and have a passion for helping others be the best version of themselves.

Teams typically meet twice a week for 75-90 minutes and are led by volunteer coaches. The 10-week season will begin the week of September 11th and conclude at the celebratory 5K events the weekend of November 18-19.

Each practice has a corresponding lesson from the Girls on the Run research-based curriculum, which focuses on building social, emotional, and physical skills while encouraging healthy habits for life. While many teams meet at schools, GOTR NOVA also offers community teams based out of neighborhoods, community centers, and parks. If a team is not offered at your school, make sure to check out GOTR NOVA's interactive map to find a team near you!

Girls on the Run programming is specifically designed for elementary school girls starting in grade 3 while Heart & Sole programming is created for middle school girls. Visit [www.gotrnova.org](http://www.gotrnova.org).

#### REGISTRATION OPEN FOR CAR FREE DAY 2023

World Car Free Day 2023 will be held Friday, Sept. 22 in the metropolitan Washington region, and registration is now open. This annual event organized by COG's Commuter Connections program encourages residents, commuters, and students to choose a greener way to travel by going car free or

SEE HELPING, PAGE 7



### Public Notice

#### Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fall Structure Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
PATRICK	13372	699	HUGHES BROWN RD/RTE 699	WHITE MUD CREEK	8/22/2023
WYTHE	19743	671	CRIGGER RD	CRIGGER CREEK	8/10/2023
PATRICK	13337	675	FRIENDS MISSION/RTE 675	ARARAT RIVER	8/10/2023
BEDFORD	2918	804	TEASS TERRACE/RTE 804	NININGER CREEK	8/9/2023
PATRICK	13336	672	JOHNSON CR RD/RTE 672	JOHNSON CREEK	8/9/2023
PATRICK	13276	626	ABRAM PENN HWY/RTE 626	N. MAYO RIVER	8/1/2023

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth, but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact [haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov).

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.

## MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT

### Meet Your MVD TEAM!

Our office is here for you! Did you know you can contact us with any County concerns or issues, and we can connect you with the answers? Here are just a few ways we can help:

- Connecting you with County services.
- Sharing information about issues in our community.
- Communicating meetings and events happening near you.
- Answering questions about voting, property, roads, taxes, public safety, health & human services, solid waste, recycling and more!
- Bilingual staff in Spanish and Greek.

There are many ways to

### CONNECT WITH TEAM MVD!

Stop by: Mount Vernon Governmental Center  
2511 Parkers Lane, Mount Vernon, VA 22306



Keep informed! Sign up for the Mount Vernon Advisor and follow us on social media!

Visit: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/>

Call: 703-780-7518 (TTY 711)

Email: [mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Office Hours:

Monday - Friday:  
8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Thursday: 5 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Second Saturday Each Month:

Lorton Library: 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

MV District Office: 12:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Walk-ins and by appointment





SCREENSHOT 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Bryan Hill (center left) on the County Exec Trek, Fairfax.

## Year One, the 2023 Annual Report

### Steps taken to implement Fairfax County Strategic Plan.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

There was no community cake, no banners, speeches, or parades in February of this year when County Executive Bryan Hill shared the Year One Annual Report for the implementation of the first-ever Fairfax County Strategic Plan. Following the plan's development in 2019 and interruption by the pandemic, the Board of Supervisors approved the strategic plan in October 2021, believing that county leadership must look ahead to shape the future of our community.

The 2023 Annual Report detailed the steps taken to implement the plan. It summarized the county's efforts to improve the value and vitality of its 406 square miles for all residents, visitors, and employees.

Four "key drivers" energized the countywide strategic plan: equity, data integration, inclusive engagement, and ten community outcome areas, which are:

- ❖ Cultural and Recreational Opportunities
- ❖ Economic Opportunity
- ❖ Effective and Efficient Government
- ❖ Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability
- ❖ Environment and Energy
- ❖ Healthy Communities
- ❖ Housing and Neighborhood Livability



SCREENSHOT VIA FACEBOOK

Jeff McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

- ❖ Lifelong Education and Learning
- ❖ Mobility and Transportation
- ❖ Safety and Security

According to the plan, "These elements set a new foundation for the way different functions within county government must work together under a shared vision in pursuit of achieving consistent and measurable progress for the benefit of all people in Fairfax County."

Bryan J. Hill, county executive, wrote in his 2023 message sharing the Year One Annual Report, "As we look ahead, we are fully aware that we still have a long way to go to achieve our vision of becoming One Fairfax."

He added, "In Year Two, this will become an even greater focus as we strategically target the formation of infrastructure and strategy that fosters collective action around neighborhoods as the primary environments in which individuals access key opportunity structures."

Fairfax County approved a revision of the county strategic plan in May 2023, in keeping with the intention that the framework of the plan would remain unchanged over time, but the details would be adapted as needed.

The following changes were made to the Countywide Strategic Plan in Year Two and are included in the FY

#### 2024 Advertised Budget:

Change the names of two community outcome areas to match the other eight: Health to Healthy Communities and Environment to Environment and Energy.

Reorganize proposed strategies within the Ten Community Outcome Areas according to community success indicators.

Incorporate recommendations from the Chairman's Task Force on Equity and Opportunity into the strategic plan's proposed strategies.

To reflect Fairfax County Public Schools' (FCPS) new strategic plan, revise existing language.

To reflect the identified headline metrics, update the Economic Opportunity Sample Metrics.

In the Fairfax Countywide Strategic Plan, revised in May 2023, Chairman Jeff McKay wrote, "Inequities persist, and access to opportunity can vary significantly based on one's identity and location." Such is despite the county's "enviable rankings" in key indicators of community prosperity, such as median income, school performance, and public safety.

To review the Strategic Plan or related items as a document, download the following PDFs: Countywide Strategic Plan (Current - Revised May 2023), Countywide Strategic Plan (October 2021), Two-Page Plan Highlights (Drivers and Community Outcome Areas), Alignment with One Fairfax, and Community Engagement Highlights at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zdFror-By977x-4Y1SPQE7fehAFz1mTZ-AB\\_4as4DWINY/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zdFror-By977x-4Y1SPQE7fehAFz1mTZ-AB_4as4DWINY/edit).

## Photo Journal 2023: New Countywide Strategic Plan Shapes Fairfax

FROM PAGE 1  
and others.

In 2023, the first achievements under the new strategic plan are visible throughout the county. We

hope you enjoy seeing and learning how the future of Fairfax County is unfolding as the plan helps to protect and enrich the quality of life for people and diverse communities.



SCREENSHOT

Environmental and Energy: Fairfax County launches its first all-electric trash truck at the Newington Collections Facility in Lorton.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability: Last fall, Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk helped open the Workforce Innovation and Skills Hub (W.I.S.H.), a first-of-its-kind, world-class workforce and technology development center. It is in the Hybla Valley area of Alexandria in the Franconia District. A welding class is underway.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE GAZETTE

Safety and Security: Fairfax County Valor Awards 2023.

# NEWCOMERS & COMMUNITY GUIDE 2023

## Waitlists Open for Affordable Housing

Individuals interested in applying to affordable housing waitlists have the opportunity to do so Sept. 11 through Sunday, Sept. 17, 2023, at 11:59 p.m., for select properties in the county:

The Arden: Apartments located at 2317 Huntington Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22303

Ovation at Arrowbrook: Apartments located at 1335 Fairfield Ridge Avenue, Herndon VA 20171

Madison Ridge: Apartments located at 14806 Rydell Road, Centreville, VA 20121

The Residences at North Hill: Apartments located at 7250 Nightingale Hill Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306

### How to Apply

Interested individuals can apply online via Rent Café, from 8:00 a.m. on Monday, September 11, 2023 through 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, September 17, 2023. Instructions for using Rent Café can be found here:

Individuals who need assistance can call 703-246-5100 or come to the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development office at 3700 Pender Drive in Fairfax, VA.

Those who apply via Rent Café will be randomly

placed on a waiting list for these properties. All applications received have an equal opportunity to be selected. Once a unit becomes available, the individuals on a waiting list will be contacted, screened, and determined eligible based on income level, household size, and the size of the rental unit. Households cannot currently be receiving other federal rental housing assistance to qualify.

### Housing Funds Make a Local Impact in Fairfax

These affordable housing opportunities are made available through the Project Based Voucher program which provides rental assistance to eligible households to live in specific rental units. Through a contract with the owner of the unit, the FCRHA pays a portion of the monthly rent, while the household pays their portion of the monthly rent based upon 30% to 35% of adjusted gross income. The rental assistance is attached to the specific unit and remains at the property, even if the family moves. The FCRHA uses subsidies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Project Based Voucher program.

### BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

car lite on Friday, Sept. 22. By taking the free online pledge at [carfreemetrodc.org](http://carfreemetrodc.org), participants contribute to reducing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, improve their health, and qualify for great prizes. Interested residents can simply take the pledge to reduce their single occupancy trips on Sept. 22 by choosing an alternative travel option such as public transit, bicycling, carpooling, vanpooling, scootering, walking, or simply teleworking. Each registrant will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win great prizes from this year's sponsors.

### MT. VERNON FARMERS MARKET IS NOW OPEN

A mix of new and familiar vendors will be selling local, farm-fresh produce – including strawber-

ries and asparagus – and more at the McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon Farmers Market. From 8 a.m. to noon every Wednesday (through December 20), 21 farmers and local food producers will sell fresh vegetables and fruits; meats; Chesapeake Bay seafood; breads and pastries; honey, jams and jellies; milk, cheese and eggs; herbs and plants; and more. The market is located at the Sherwood Hall Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane.

This year's vendors are:

Arnest Seafood – crab cakes, scallops, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and more  
The Big Brine – Fermented foods, pickles and pickled vegetables  
The Fermented Pig - charcuterie and gourmet bacons  
Grace's Pastries - cakes, pastries and breads, with a Caribbean touch  
Great Harvest Bread - breads and pastries  
Honeycomb Heroes – Honey and beeswax-based products  
House of Empanadas – variety of

empanadas  
King Mushrooms – variety of locally grown mushrooms  
Layla's Lebanese Restaurant – Lebanese hummus, eggplant dip, garlic sauce and more  
Linda Vista Farm - fruits and vegetables, specializing in Asian and Latin produce  
Misty Meadow Farm Creamery - milk, ice cream, cheese and eggs  
Ochoa Produce - vegetables, herbs and flowers  
Pasta Ilgatto – Fresh, handcrafted pasta and sauces  
PorkStork – Forest-raised heritage pork products, including bacon and sausages  
Salsa Las Glorias - fresh salsas, guacamole and chips  
Sharkawi Farm - herbs, spices, teas, plants and flowers  
Three Way Farms – vegetables, melons and herbs  
Traveling Shepherd Coffee Co.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 16



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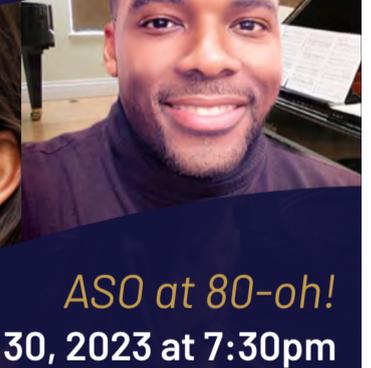


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# NEWCOMERS & COMMUNITY GUIDE 2023



The Batteries at Fort Hunt, part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway National Park.



Osprey Nest in Dyke Marsh, home to many kinds of wildlife.



The Mount Vernon Trail runs through Dyke Marsh, part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway National Park.



The Mount Vernon Trail runs through Dyke Marsh, part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway National Park.



Theodore Roosevelt Island



Boats sailing off Daingerfield Island, part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway National Park.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTOS

## Our National Park

George Washington Memorial Parkway has at least 25 species of mammals, 243 birds, six native turtles, 99 trees and 591 wildflowers.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

It doesn't have Yellowstone's spewing geysers or Denali's high peaks, but it is a national park. It's the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which stretches from Mount Vernon Estate on the south end, with a break on Alexandria's Washington Street, then to the Beltway/495 in McLean and the seven-mile Clara Barton Parkway in Maryland.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the parkway is a slow-speed thoroughfare, with 4,580 acres of parkland mostly paralleling the Potomac River. By design, it is not a multi-laned, superhighway, asphalt ribbon. The parkway is in fact a national park, with many sweeping vistas, a rich history and 25 possible stops in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D. C.

Its designers envisioned a series of changing vistas that highlight special places. There's no central visitor center, yet the parkway has approximately 7.3 million recreational visits a year and over 33 million non-recreational "visits." Most of the latter are local and commuter traffic.

### What's There?

Here are a few sites to visit:

- ❖ Fort Hunt Park, where the 1902 Battery Commander's Tower stands largely unchanged, built as part of the Spanish-American War's coastal defense, from which the commander could coordinate firings from still-standing batteries. In World War II, Fort 8



The south section of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.



Many people enjoy the vistas from overlooks and other spots along the parkway.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Hunt, known as P.O. Box 1142, was a top-secret camp used to interrogate over 3,500 German prisoners of war.

- ❖ The Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, a 480-acre, freshwater, tidal, narrow-leaved cattail wetland, one of the last along the Potomac River.

- ❖ Jones Point, home to one of the country's last riverine lighthouses, which operated from 1856 to 1926. President George Washington chose this point as the southern tip of the new 10-mile-square-mile U.S. capital district.

- ❖ Tributes to war heroes -- the U.S. Marine Corps Memorial, Arlington House, Arlington National Cemetery and the Waves

and Gulls memorial, honoring the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

- ❖ Glen Echo Park, centered by a restored, 1921 Dentzel carousel. In its heyday, bands like the Dorsey Brothers and Bill Haley and the Comets performed in the 7,500-square-foot dance hall.

- ❖ The Potomac Gorge, a 15-mile, rugged river corridor, a nationally significant natural area.

- ❖ Great Falls, a series of cataracts and falls, one of the most ecologically significant natural areas in the entire national park system. British politician Lord Bryce wrote in 1913, "No European city has so noble a cataract in its vicinity as the Great

Falls of the Potomac. . ."

- ❖ The 17-acre Lady Bird Johnson Park and LBJ Memorial Grove, with a 43-ton, Texas granite monolith, looming amid white pines, dogwoods, azaleas and rhododendrons.

- ❖ Theodore Roosevelt Island, largely a woodland that planners intended it to be "similar in character to the natural primeval forests which once covered this and others of the Potomac islands." A memorial honors the island's namesake.

- ❖ Fort Marcy, well-preserved Civil War earthwork walls, trenches, rifle pits and a parade ground.

SEE NATIONAL PARL. PAGE 9  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



At the height of summer, wetland plants like spatterdock are visible from the parkway in Dyke Marsh

FROM PAGE 8

### A Unique Road Envisioned

The Parkway's planners designed a road to preserve and enhance the Potomac River valley and honor the nation's first President, George Washington, by creating a grand gateway to his home, Mount Vernon.

They wanted to keep both banks of the river in public ownership. Lt. Col. Peter Hains, the first land surveyor, told Congress that the parkway should "have the character of a monumental structure, such as would comport with the dignity of this great nation ... and the grandeur of character of the man to whom it is dedicated .... It should be such a work as no American need feel ashamed of."

The road's designers sought to integrate the road with the natural undulating terrain and contours, winding in gentle curves and highlighting natural areas and vistas. The National Park Service has planted over 250,000 trees, shrubs and vines.

Sections between the 14th and Memorial Bridges were left open to offer sweeping views of Washington, D. C. Signs and lights are minimized and billboards are prohibited. Most of the bridges are made of reinforced concrete faced with hand-laid, rough-cut stone for a natural look.

### Built in Stages

Some local businesspeople, the Mount Vernon Avenue Association, initiated the idea in the 1880s, advocating for a national road from Washington to Mount Vernon. Officials deferred road construction in the 1890s and between 1892 and 1896, built the Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Electric Railway through Alexandria to Mount Vernon, a trolley that carried Mount Vernon visitors, locals and farm goods. A trolley station sat in today's circle at Mount Vernon.

The initial federal sponsoring agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Public Roads, wanted to demonstrate modern highway design principles like overpasses, cloverleaves, limited access, widely-spaced exits and entrances and tree-lined rights-of-way. Officials dedicated the first segment from Arlington Memorial Bridge to Mount Vernon in 1932 and hailed it as "America's Most Modern Motorway." It was built in stages from 1929 to 1970.

Engineers designed the southern part, the Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway, for vehicles going 35 to 45 miles per hour. Its successor, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, anticipated speeds of up to 60 mph.

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PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Much of the parkway is tree lined.

Sections built after World War II have longer curves and continuous safety medians.

By the late 1940s, the road went as far north as Spout Run. Builders completed the northern part in the 1950s and 1960s, partly spurred by the Civilian Intelligence Agency's (CIA) headquarters locating at Langley. President Dwight D. Eisenhower cut the ribbon and opened the road to traffic on this part in 1959. By 1962, the parkway reached the new Beltway.

The original plans included a parkway from Fort Washington, Maryland, north to just above Great Falls, but this was never built, some say because there was no equivalent to the CIA or Dulles Airport driving its construction.

### Respecting Nature

For an urban park, the parkway is especially rich in biodiversity. For example, for species counts, the parkway has at least 25 mammals, 243 birds, six native turtles, 99 trees and 591 wildflowers. At least 81 plants and animals considered rare, threatened or endangered in Virginia or Maryland.

Visitors might watch bald eagles fighting over a fish, as a jet descends to National Airport; great blue herons feeding as an Army or Marine helicopter passes overhead; a spring wildflower "show" at Turkey Run Park; a silver-haired bat darting around at dusk; turtles sunning and wild rice billowing in the fall breeze in Dyke Marsh.

It's a special road, but not just a road, a national park.

Information: [www.nps.gov/gwmp](http://www.nps.gov/gwmp)



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# A Win For Virginia

BY: DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK



Last Wednesday, Sept. 6, the Commonwealth of Virginia took a significant step towards improving the lives of Virginians when the General Assembly returned to Richmond to vote on the final passage of the long-awaited budget deal. The clock is ticking now with the Governor having until this upcoming Friday, Sept. 15, to sign the amended budget into law. The good news is that this budget compromise represents a series of victories for the people of Virginia, as it prioritizes investments in key areas such as public education, healthcare and affordable housing, all the while providing relief for Virginia families, especially veterans and children. It is also fiscally responsible in that it recognizes that revenue growth may be subsiding and thus the focus is on one-time initiatives.

One of the most significant highlights of this budget is the substantial investment we made in Virginia's public schools. With over \$900 million allocated to public education, the budget seeks to address critical issues that have plagued the educational system. Notably, it lifts Virginia's arbitrary cap on state funding for support staff, paving the way for an additional 3,670 support staff positions to be created across the Commonwealth. This move comes in response to the findings of this summer's JLARC report on education funding, which highlighted the urgent need for investments in the state's educational system. To support school divisions like Fairfax County with large percentages of low-income students, the budget allocates over \$400 million in one-time flexible funding. This

targeted funding aims to bridge the gap in educational opportunities and create a more equitable learning environment for all Virginian students.

Virginia taxpayers will also see direct benefits from this budget. Individual taxpayers will receive one-time tax rebates of \$200, while couples filing jointly will receive \$400. That should occur sometime in the fall. The annual sales tax holiday

will now take place over the weekend of Oct. 20-22, 2023, providing further savings for Virginians. The deal also includes a provision that makes all of Virginia's military retirees eligible to exempt their retirement pay from income tax. This new exemption, phased into the tax code, will ultimately reach \$40,000 by 2025. This change will put more money into the hands of retired veterans of every rank, demonstrating our commitment to supporting those who have served our country.

In addition to these benefits, the budget also addresses the issue of rising health insurance premiums. By lowering health insurance premiums purchased through the Exchange by 15%, the budget prevents premiums from increasing by a staggering 28.4%. This measure ensures that Virginians can access affordable healthcare and prevents them from facing financial hardship due to healthcare costs.

Lastly, the budget demonstrates a commitment to fiscal responsibility by approving less than \$100 million of the Governor's proposed \$1 billion corporate tax scheme. This move rejects the most substantial tax giveaways that would primarily benefit millionaires and large corporations, instead focusing on policies that put money back into the pockets of Virginia's workers.



Gum Springs Museum and Cultural Center

In conclusion, the budget deal, which also includes strong investments in water quality, public safety, and support for 14 museums including the Gum Springs Museum and Cultural Center, approved by the General Assembly last week underlines a strong commitment to improving the lives of Virginians. By investing in education, providing one-time tax relief, and addressing healthcare challenges, this budget demonstrates a dedication to the well-being of all residents. My colleagues in the General Assembly and I are determined to put the needs of our constituents first, ensuring that no family has to make difficult choices between essential expenses, yet all the while recognizing that although we have made historic investments in education, there is even more education funding needed moving forward. That will be a battle for the next budget of 2024-25.

## Six Months Late, Finally a Budget

Raising Virginia's standard deduction from just \$3000/\$6000 to almost three times that amount causes an annual revenue loss of over \$1.1 billion.

BY DEL. VIVIAN WATTS



The General Assembly finally passed a full budget for this year. It goes into effect at midnight Friday, Sept. 15, unless the Governor wants to amend it. If he does, there will be another 30-day delay. Politically, I doubt that'll happen because it would delay taxpayers receiving a tax rebate check just before the upcoming November election of up to \$200 for individuals and \$400 for married filers.

The virtually unprecedented six-month delay in passing an updated budget, in fact, was all about taxes – just like it was the only other time a budget update wasn't passed before the start of the budget year

July 1. That was 20 years ago and was over cutting the car tax. That year, an update of the second year of Virginia's two-year budget never was passed.

This year, it was over how much we should permanently cut taxes given that tax cuts reduce Virginia's revenue available to support education. Even though Virginia is below what most states give local schools, 52% to 55% of Virginia state tax revenue goes to support education.

In July, JLARC (our independent Joint Audit and Review Commission) released an extensive report documenting that Virginia's level

of state funding far under-estimates what local schools actually cost. The state bases its share

on just \$10.7 billion, while what K-12 actually costs is much, much higher at \$17.3 billion. The report concluded it would take an annual increase of over \$3 billion in state funding support to address major areas of need it identified.

SEE WATTS, PAGE 23

### Let Us Know Your View

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A Connection Newspaper



# About Connection Newspapers in 2023

**I**N THE MIDST of the crisis which never ends, we at the Gazette still hear the call to serve our communities, with a bit of wonder that we are able to continue. We still seek to fulfill our mission by continuing to publish, even with reduced resources. It's still our mission to provide information about where to get help and how to help; to tell the stories of those who are helping, of those who are hungry. It's still our mission to tell the stories of those working for social and racial justice, and battling income inequality.

It is our mission, set out in the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution, to press local government every day for transparency, although this continues to become more difficult. Your local paper can be your window into the workings of schools, police, transportation, zoning, stormwater management, services, and a nearly infinite number of other functions. These are the things that impact our lives at home and work.

The public has a right to expect transparency from such local institutions. The founders clearly anticipated the ongoing need for the press to help in this role.

It is still our mission to deliver the local news you need, to help make sense of what is happening in your community, to advocate for community good, to provide a forum for dialogue on local concerns, and to record achievements, milestones and events in the community and people's lives. It is still our mission to cover the normal news of the local communities.

We publish photos and notes about personal milestones and community events, including births, engagements, weddings, anniversaries, awards and obituaries.

We also publish items about news and events from local businesses. Notes about openings, anniversaries and other business events and milestones are welcome.

If you are planning an event open to the public that you would like to have listed in our calendars, we appreciate getting notice at least two weeks ahead of the event, and we encourage photos.

Your community Connection newspaper is published by the independent, locally owned Local Media Connection LLC. Our flagship paper, the Alexandria Gazette Packet, is one of, perhaps the oldest continuously publishing papers in the Unit-

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ed States, beginning in 1784.

We are blessed with remarkable, award-winning staff, contributing writers and photographers who are dedicated to our mission. Most have been writing for the Gazette and Connection for years, some for more than a decade (or two, or three). Each brings areas of interest and expertise. Check the bylines. Don't miss Bonnie Hobbs, Mercia Hobson, Jeanne Theismann, Janet Barnett, Michael Pope, Mike Salmon, Susan Laume, Glenda Booth, Eden Brown, Shirley Ruhe, Hope Nelson, Marilyn Campbell and others. (Our late editor Kemal Kurspahic used to refer to pay for writers as "symbolic.")

Local newspapers, including the Connection Newspapers, are facing an existential threat from the combination of nationwide downturn in newspaper advertising that has been worsening over several years, com-

pounded by the economic crisis.

Revenue has not nearly rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, and we are going to need more help to keep going. We will renew calls for contributions and subscriptions. If you value local news and you have a budget for advertising and promotion, please endeavor to spend some of it with local newspapers including ours.

— MARY KIMM

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# Popular Entertainment Spots and Nearby Eats in South County

Interesting places to pair food and fun.



The elegant mansion of George and Ann Mason, Gunston Hall, its grounds and museum with exhibits and gift shop, is open for visitors to explore colonial history.



Gunston Hall's newly renovated gardens grow plants from a heritage seed bank of plants that would have provided for the colonial's table



Gunston Hall hosts a calendar of events including garden celebration, colonial cocktails and colonial dancing



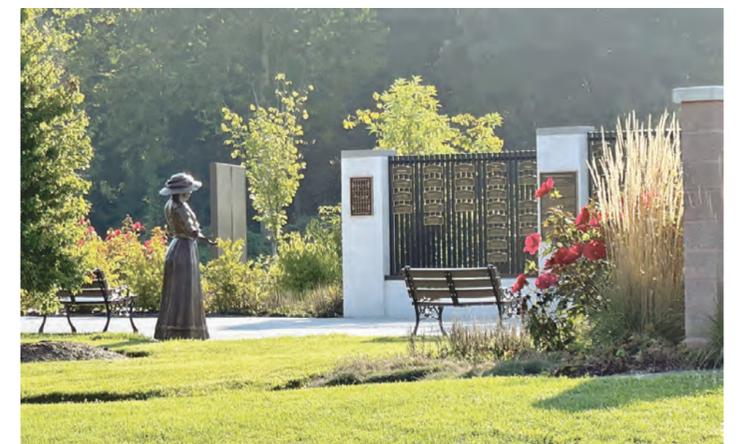
Occoquan Park embraces history with the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, and Workhouse brick kiln, while offering a modern event venue, the River View overlooking the Occoquan River



The Workhouse Art Center, under further renovation of buildings surrounding its quad, will welcome the Bunnyman Brewery in 2024



Snuggling against one side of the River View near the boat ramp, the Brickmaker's Cafe provides scenic views of the river and light breezes along with a several menu options



Steeped in history, one can easily imagine an Edwardian lady strolling the grounds which reflect on women's struggles to gain the right to vote

By SUSAN LAUME  
THE GAZETTE

The south county areas of Springfield, Lorton, Clifton, Fairfax and Fairfax Station are fortunate to have interesting attractions to enjoy for entertainment, exercise, nature and history. Here are some of our favorite fun, beautiful, natural, historic and quirky places. And because an outing often just doesn't seem perfect without enjoying some food as part of the fun, we have suggestions for food located near the attractions.

## Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Rd, Lorton

On Mason Neck, the Gunston Hall plantation, home of Founding Father George Mason and his wife Ann, showcases the 1755 manor house, gardens, grounds and a modern day visitors center and museum. Mason, who lived from 1725 to 1792, was a delegate to the 1787 U.S. Constitutional Convention, one of three who refused to sign the newly written Constitution; and also was the principal author of the Virginia Bill of Rights, the model for the U.S. Bill of Rights. The stylish home for Mason, his wife and nine children shows their wealth and prominence. Surrounded by four large plantations and forest, and tended by tenant farmers and enslaved people, the hall was mostly self-sufficient during Mason's days.

Visitors may take guided tours or explore the grounds on their own, including the kitchen yard with its dairy and laundry;

schoolhouse with tutor's quarters; slave dwellings; on-going archaeology projects; garden and its reconstruction; and the burial ground of the Mason family. Open space invites walking and a woods trail leads to Gunston Cove, off the Potomac River. Hikers can find traces of colonial wagon roads and deer park areas. The hand-built terraced overlook to the Potomac River, recently renovated, is a spot where the Masons entertained guests and may have spotted game.

The riverside gardens, located between the mansion and terraces, are newly renovated with plants grown from heritage seeds. Under archeologists' spades for several years, the space has been returned to the plants and pollinator species that likely thrived there to support the Mason family table.

The Hall celebrates the garden opening with an event on Oct. 7, providing an opportunity to explore what plants are growing, and join in seed saving, crafts and flower arranging.

Exhibits at the Visitor Center trace Ma-

son's legacy of action and ideas, Revolutionary Rights; and clues to the lives of enslaved and free women of Gunston Hall, A Woman's Place.

General admission is \$10; a grounds pass is \$5. For more information, see <https://gunstonhall.org/>

## Gunston Hall Picnics

Take advantage of the beauty of the setting by picnicking on the grounds of Gunston Hall. Visitors may bring their own food or order a custom Gunston Hall "picnic box." Ordered 24 hours in advance, from caterer Amphora Catering & Bakery, picnickers have colonial themed menu options for single

meals (\$14-21; kids \$8), and for 10 guests (\$85-175). To preview the menu and order, see <http://www.amphoracatering.com/gunston-hall/>

## Occoquan Regional Park, 9751 Ox Rd, Lorton

Enjoy 350 acres of outdoor recreation at Occoquan Regional Park in Lorton. The 5k loop trail provides an opportunity for a walking tour of the park and the history it denotes. A highlight is the new Turning Point Suffragist Memorial telling the story of women's struggle for voting rights. A sole remaining brick kiln, once one of more than a dozen, harks to the area's history of prison

[www.connectionnewspapers.com](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com)

enterprise. The park offers multiple picnic shelters with grills and covered tables; kayak and paddle-board rentals; fishing from the shoreline or boat ramp for perch, bass, crappie and catfish; softball and open fields; and batting cages, with variable speed pitching machines; in addition to its open space for walking, jogging, or biking. The boat launch is open year-round with daily and annual launch passes available.

Its modern new event space, River View at the Jean R. Packard Center, lives up to its name, and seats up to 300 guests and larger gatherings when seating is not required. A foyer exhibit depicts John Smith's voyage on the Chesapeake Bay, while visitors can watch the modern day voyages of water craft just

[www.connectionnewspapers.com](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com)

outside the windows or from the vantage point of the walkway along the waterfront. The Center hosted over 100 major events last year, which included 84 times brides selected the venue for their special day. Perhaps brides appreciated the wedding party's access to a private hospitality suite and historic cottage available for preparation, or the two adjacent outdoor spaces for a natural green setting. Short term rentals of a smaller space are available when less space is needed for baby and bridal showers, celebrations of life, or any need for a pleasant room with ample nearby parking.

For large outdoor event space, The Pavilion offers picnicking for groups up to 1,500, capable of hosting large family reunions and

corporate picnics. Pavilion amenities include electricity, covered seating, with tables for up to 250, and additional field space available if needed.

For more information on Occoquan Park venues, see <https://www.novaparks.com/parks/occoquan-regional-park>

## Brickmakers Cafe

Attached to one end of the River View events center in Occoquan Park, with a separate entrance, the small cafe with seating inside and on the umbrellaed terrace, offers views of the Occoquan River and gentle breezes. The menu includes hot cafe entrees, sandwiches and salads. A small selection of beer and wine is available, with happy hour price reductions after 2 p.m. The Cafe offers carry out catering and hosts catering for functions, including business meetings, birthday and retirement parties, and rehearsal dinners. See <https://www.novaparks.com/parks/brickmakers-cafe>

## Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton

The Workhouse provides a focal point for local artists and an interesting historic venue for events. This Fall, find a series of "Learning at Lunch" programs on topics related to the historic reformatory and prison formerly located at the arts center site, presented by the Lucy Burns Museum. The center hosts monthly second Saturday art walks, and is the home of OnStage, a venue for live music and comedy, with indoor and outdoor events offered on the quad.

For those not faint of heart, this year marks the tenth annual haunted walk in October. Creepy creatures, in this year's "Haunt: Game Over", create a scary experience among the historic buildings, best undertaken in small groups with friends for fright support. On the more gentle side, one of 200 iconic "Love" signs located throughout the Commonwealth is also located on the quad. These are

SEE INTERESTING PLACES, PAGE 14

MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE ♦ SEPTEMBER 14-20, 2023 ♦ 13

# Interesting Places To Pair Food and Fun



The Center is home to the Lucy Burns Museum telling the story of suffragists incarnated at the reformatory for silent picketing at the White House.

FROM PAGE 13

an outgrowth of the very successful tourism campaign “Virginia is for Lovers,” recognized by Forbes as one of the top ten tourism marketing campaigns of all time. Following the first appearance in “Modern Bride”, March 1969, people travel from afar to collect photos with “Love” sign backgrounds, each has a unique setting and stylizing. See

<https://www.workhousearts.org/> and <https://www.workhousearts.org/lucy-burns-museum>

## Bunnyman Brewing

Coming in March 2024, Bunnyman Brewery will be on site at the Workhouse Art Center’s quad. The brewery will offer food as well as an extensive array of IPAs, beers, ales, stouts, and hard seltzers. The brewery’s new location is made possible by a \$6.3 million renovation project to a portion of the historic prison buildings on the quad. Bunnyman’s arrival will actually be a return to the reformatory grounds home of the legend from which the brewery takes its unusual name. The tall tale tells of a nearby bus crash in the 1900s, from which patients



New in 2023, LEGO Discovery Center provides a new entertainment and shopping experience

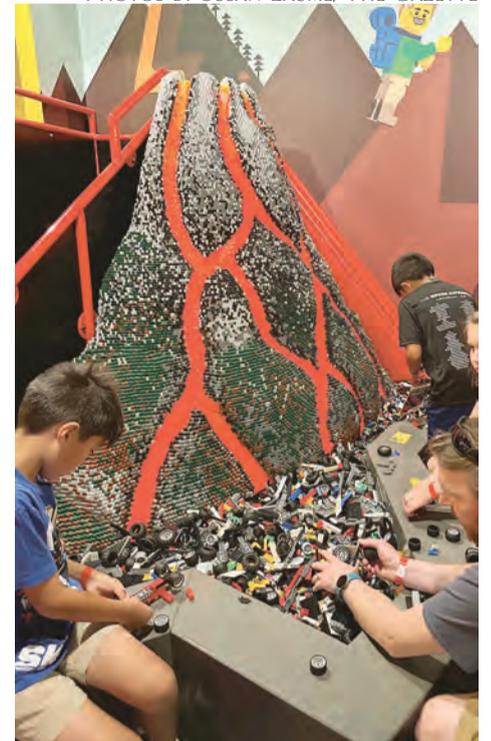
from an “insane asylum” escaped. One left a trail of gutted rabbits as the only clues to his movements. He was the only patient never found. The brewery name marks the legend perhaps best told with a stout in hand. <https://bunnymanbrewing.com/>

## LEGO Discovery Center, 6563 Springfield Mall, Springfield

A new arrival to the area’s entertainment scene, the Discovery Center is turning accommodating parents and grandparents into instant subjects of adoration from local kids lucky enough to be escorted to the fun spot.

The 32,000 square foot family entertainment attraction and store on the Springfield Towne Center’s lower level boasts several sections. Twelve zones include multiple activities: LEGO brick building areas, spaceship build, train ride with space pirates, Washington D.C. as a mini-world, 4D cinema, laser maze, and a hero zone sure to help wear out even those with the most energy to burn. Tiny critics often provide the insider’s tip that the laser maze and car race mountain are the areas they like best, of course after trying them all. Tickets start at \$28.99 <https://www.legodiscoverycenter.com/washington-dc/>

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE



One of several activities within the Discovery Center, the lava mountain car race meets approval from area kids

## Springfield Towne Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield

Have you noticed that lately “the mall” is being rediscovered as an entertainment center? Make a trip in the evening or on weekends, and find families with small children, couples, and teens making the mall a destination for having fun without having to spend much money. Play areas for tots and older children, window shopping, a food court, a multi-screen movie theater, and people watching, in a climate controlled, cheerful lighted space, with security and easy parking, makes the mall an easy choice. Some even take advantage of the controlled temperature for walking exercise.

Enclosed, centralized shopping malls saw a boom period from the late 1960s through the 2000s. In recent years, as online shopping emerged as a major competitor, malls began to go out of business. Those that have survived, such as the local Center, typically include attractions, gyms, and movie theaters. The Springfield Towne Center is anchored by Macy’s and Target, and now includes the LEGO entertainment venue. It hosts many free events and programs, often with cultural themes, for the community and families to enjoy year-round. <https://springfieldtownecenter.com/>

Springfield Towne Center Restaurants - Located mostly along the Center’s Loisdale Road side are several restaurant options, beyond the Food Court fast food options located inside. Diners have a wide range of options from ethnic foods: Maggiano’s Little Italy, Italian; Mezeh, Mediterranean; Chuy’s, Mexican; and Nando’s, South African cuisine; to more traditional American food options at Dave & Buster’s, Silver Diner, and Yard House.

For a complete list of restaurants and their locations within or near the Center, see <https://springfieldtownecenter.com/>

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)



Springfield Towne Center, with its concentration of eateries, is a destination for many seeking affordable entertainment

## NEWCOMERS GUIDE

# September Is Suicide Prevention Month

Source: Fairfax County

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/september-suicide-prevention-month](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/september-suicide-prevention-month)

September is Suicide Prevention month, but it is always time to raise awareness, strengthen the dialogue and remind individuals, friends and families about resources that are available.

Suicide is preventable and can affect anyone regardless of race, age, economic or social status.

Fairfax County offers numerous resources and support services to assist those in need.

Call or text 9-8-8, the 24/7 Suicide and Crisis Hotline.

Suicide is a serious public health matter, and prevention efforts are critical. Suicide is preventable, and there are resources and support services available throughout the year to promote mental health and increase resilience.

### Statistics:

- ❖ On average, there are 132 suicides per day.
- ❖ Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in Virginia.
- ❖ Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-14 and the 3rd leading cause of death among people aged 15-24 in the U.S.
- ❖ 59% of all suicides were by firearms.

Education and services are provided throughout Fairfax County and include community-focused workshops, campaigns to raise awareness about mental health and evidence-based suicide prevention and mental health trainings for all residents.

The Suicide Prevention Alliance of Northern Virginia provides information and opportunities for all residents to raise awareness and share resources to prevent suicide.

### Warning Signs - What to Look For

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration indicate the following behaviors as warning signs: Talking about being a burden to others. Giving belongings away. Looking for a way to kill oneself such as searching online or buying a gun. Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live. Talking about feeling trapped or unbearable pain. Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs. Acting anxious or agitated, behaving recklessly. Sleeping too little or too much. Withdrawing or feeling

isolated. Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself. Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge. Displaying extreme mood swings.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness cites risk factors that could increase an individual's likelihood to experience suicidal thoughts:

- ❖ A family history of suicide.
- ❖ Substance use: Drugs can create mental highs and lows that worsen suicidal thoughts.
- ❖ Intoxication: Analysis from the CDC indicates around 1 in 5 people who die by suicide had alcohol in their system at the time of death.
- ❖ Access to firearms.
- ❖ A serious or chronic medical illness.
- ❖ Gender: Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are four times more likely to die by suicide. Women and girls are also at risk
- ❖ A history of trauma or abuse.
- ❖ Prolonged stress.
- ❖ A recent tragedy or loss.

### How to Respond to Someone in Crisis

- ❖ Use clear language such as, "Do you have a plan for how you would kill yourself?"
- ❖ Calmly ask supportive questions like, "Can I help you call your psychiatrist?"
- ❖ Express support and concern.
- ❖ Don't raise your voice, threaten or argue.
- ❖ If you're nervous, try not to fidget or pace.
- ❖ Assess the surroundings and remove items such as guns, knives, pills or items that could be used as a weapon.
- ❖ Be patient.

### Resources

Asking a person if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal ideation. Learn how to identify, talk to, and support someone who may be experiencing these warning signs by becoming a Mental Health First Aider and a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board.

Sign up for Mental Health First Aid and Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) trainings. Additionally, the Lock and Talk Northern Virginia safety program is a collaborative initiative of SPAN and CSB. This program offers free locking medi-

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# NEWCOMERS & COMMUNITY GUIDE 2023



INSTAGRAM

Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, engages with students in the classroom and extracurricular settings, where students typically gather.



FCPS

From left, Kristen Haynor, neurodiversity specialist; Nonye Oladimeji, twice exceptional specialist; and Rachel Rubio, dyslexia specialist; meet each week to discuss and plan their work.

## Superintendent Michelle Reid Shares FCPS's Hidden Gems

**D**id you know we have a Neurodiversity Specialist as well as a Twice Exceptional Specialist to ensure this population of students is supported? For those of you who don't know, a twice exceptional student is one that has been identified as academically gifted in one or more areas and also identified as having a disability. Without support, those challenges can often hide the student's abilities. These roles are unique to K-12 public education in the US. These staff members are such a great resource for our families and teachers. More detailed information and photos can be found here.

Kristen Haynor, Neurodiversity Special-

ist for Fairfax County Public Schools, first neurodiversity specialist in a K-12 school in the U.S. She hopes her appointment will encourage other districts to do the same. Haynor spends time in the classroom talking to students about her work.

Nonye Oladimeji began as the division's - and Virginia's - first public school - Twice Exceptional (2E) Education Specialist. Rachel Rubio serves as the new FCPS Dyslexia Specialist, a highly specialized role dedicated to the reading and writing disability that affects 20% of the population. Without teachers having the tools to recognize the signs, it can often go undiagnosed.

<https://www.fcps.edu/blog/fairfax-coun->

[ty-public-schools-welcomes-first-nation-neurodiversity-specialist-amongst-trio](https://www.fcps.edu/blog/fairfax-coun-ty-public-schools-welcomes-first-nation-neurodiversity-specialist-amongst-trio)

### What are the most significant issues specific to the FCPS?

Strategic Plan: We are excited to be implementing our FCPS Strategic plan, which will serve as our North Star in ensuring excellence, equity and opportunity for all students through 2030. This plan reflects many months of hard work and input from students, staff and families: we reviewed more than 100,000 feedback survey responses and hosted more than 65 planning team and community meetings.

Our plan includes five goals: Goal #1, a

strong start for all students, Goal #2, ensuring all feel safe, supported, included and empowered, Goal #3 reflects our commitment to academic growth and excellence, Goal #4 relies on equitable access and opportunity and Goal #5 is leading for tomorrow's innovation. We will aim to meet our plan's objectives by doing things like increasing Pre-K programs to meet community need, strong support for community literacy, boosting student participation in extracurricular and leadership activities, supporting successful completion of at least Algebra I by eighth grade, expanding availability and enrollment in advanced coursework and bolstering financial literacy among our student population.

### BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

- variety of freshly roasted coffee  
Twin Springs Orchard - fruits, vegetables, cheese and more  
Valentine's Bakery & Meats - meats and baked goods  
WeGrow - Microgreens.  
All of the items sold at the market are grown or produced by the vendors and come from within a radius of 125 miles. The McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon market is one of 10 farmers markets run by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA); for more information, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets).

#### 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](http://www.afsusa.org) for more information. You can also get involved as an AFS-USA Volunteer. Visit [www.afsusa.org/volunteer](http://www.afsusa.org/volunteer) to get started

or learn more about opportunities to make a difference.

#### FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

Interested in becoming a foster parent? There is always a need for caring foster parents looking to open their homes to foster youth. Get in touch to learn more. Visit [fcsvanow@gmail.com](mailto:fcsvanow@gmail.com) or [www.FCSVA.org](http://www.FCSVA.org). Or call 703-817-9890.

#### LOOKING FOR SOFTBALL PLAYERS

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play most Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna from May-July and

September-October. For more information, visit the web site [www.goldengirls.org](http://www.goldengirls.org).

#### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

STEM VOLUNTEERS. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) needs scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the Northern Virginia Area, during the 2016-17 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the numbers of STEM volunteers in Northern Virginia were: Fairfax County - 40, Arlington - 20, and Alexandria - one. Details of the collaboration are worked out between the teacher and the volunteer, and may involve giving demonstrations, assisting in lab experiments, lecturing on

special topics, assisting with homework, etc. The hours are flexible, and volunteers attend a one-day training in September before being assigned to schools. To see how volunteers are assisting their teachers, view the video clips at [www.seniorscientist.org](http://www.seniorscientist.org). To volunteer, contact [donaldrea@aol.com](mailto:donaldrea@aol.com). 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

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 22

# Star Search

Celebrities and athletes have called Alexandria home.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

By JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

Their faces are instantly recognizable from the world of sports and entertainment. But at one time, these notable individuals walked the streets of Alexandria, playing with childhood friends, attending Alexandria schools and performing in local theater productions.

In August of 1967, "Light My Fire" by The Doors was atop the charts with Jim Morrison having graduated only a few years earlier from George Washington High

**"I have called Alexandria home for decades. There is no place else I would rather be."**

— Television personality and salon owner Monte Durham

School. In front of a crowd estimated at more than 4,000, Morrison gave what is reported to be his only performance in his hometown when The Doors performed at the Alexandria Roller Rink on North Saint Asaph Street (now the site of the Sheraton Suites). The group would go on to sell more than 100 million records worldwide.

Willard Scott was America's  
SEE CELEBRITIES, PAGE 20



Jim Morrison, standing rear second from right, and The Doors pose with DJ Jack Alix, holding a copy of GO Magazine between his teeth, before The Doors' show at the Alexandria Roller Rink on Aug. 18, 1967. Also pictured are members of the Blades of Grass and the Jackettes Go-Go Girls. The show is believed to be the only time that Morrison, who graduated from George Washington High School, played in Alexandria.



Academy Award winner Marcia Gay Harden got her theatrical start at the Little Theatre of Alexandria.



Jim Morrison as a senior at George Washington High School.



Actor Chris Meloni of Law and Order: Special Victims Unit was the captain and quarterback of the 1978 undefeated St. Stephen's football team.



Born Ellen Naomi Cohen in Alexandria, Mama Cass Elliot, center back, was a 1961 graduate of George Washington High School. John Phillips, right, was also raised in Alexandria and the two performed together as the Mamas and the Papas. He played basketball at George Washington High School.



World champion and Olympic bronze medalist Noah Lyles began his track and field career as a student at T.C. Williams High School.



Actor Dermot Mulroney was born in Alexandria and got his acting start at the Little Theatre of Alexandria.

# Entertaining Outdoor Pursuits

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE



Bikers and walkers share the multi-use Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE GAZETTE

**E**asy Paved Bike Trails  
Especially suitable for new, young riders just learning biking skills and older riders in need of less strenuous rides than unpaved trails often require, these trails provide pleasant biking adventures for all.

**Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail**  
The 40 mile long trail runs through stream valleys and urban areas connecting many of Fairfax County's largest parks. The south section between Braddock Road and the Occoquan River is mostly paved running along Accotink Creek and Pohick Creek. It passes Laurel Hill Park, and near the Lorton Workhouse Arts Center before ending near the Occoquan Regional Park dock.

**Laurel Hill Park Central Green Loop Trail**  
A short trail through a nature area located near a new playground with climbing



The Gerry Connolly Cross County trail has many paved and level sections, and can be joined at several points along its length, offering opportunities for biking and other exercise at all levels.



Laurel Hill Park's Loop Trail and Central Green Playground offers an active adventure for young children, two-to-twelve years old, near an easy biking paved loop



The colorful horses of Burke Lake Park's carousel

## Carousels

Adventure awaits children of all ages on a galloping horse, or perhaps a unicorn, tiger or dragon, hummingbird or swan, or even an airplane or wagon, as each mount moves to the accompaniment of a special genre of music belonging to carousels. More than just a counter clockwise spin, the rider is transported to the days of 17th century

knights who competed to spear small rings hanging overhead or who paraded on horseback around a courtyard.

- Find carousels at:
- Burke Lake Park
  - Clemyjontri Park
  - Franconia Family Recreation Area
  - Frying Pan Park
  - Lake Accotink
  - Lake Fairfax



The dashing steeds at Franconia Family Recreation Area



Hummingbirds and swans join the carousel parade near Chessie's Back Yard at Franconia Family Recreation Area

jungles and a globe carousel. This loop trail is very well suited to beginning riders with a level surface and short loop. It is near to longer, more difficult, unpaved riding for intermediate riders.

### Mt Vernon Trail

An 18-mile paved multi-use trail stretches from George Washington's Mount Vernon estate to Theodore Roosevelt Island. It connects with several regional trails, winding along the Potomac River offering views of Washington, D.C.'s skyline.

### Vienna to Hunter Mill Road on W&OD Trail

Enjoy this three mile trail as a six mile round trip near Vienna. The easy route is popular for road biking and walking; a round trip takes less than two hours at a leisurely speed.

### Wakefield Park

Popular with bicyclists at all levels, this park has paved and unpaved trails suited

# NEWCOMERS & COMMUNITY GUIDE 2023

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE GAZETTE



The wide, paved Michael A. Kane trail, popular with cyclists, walkers, and joggers connects Wakefield and Accotink parks

## Outdoor Pursuits

FROM PAGE 18

to the skill level of many. The easier, wide paved Michael A. Kane Trail is named for the former Park Authority director who rose from Wakefield rec center snack bar manager to head the department. The paved trail meanders through shady woods, and past sunny meadows with a changing seasonal display of wildflowers visited by song birds and butterflies. It's paralleled by the natural surface Creek Trail, which runs along Accotink Creek to entice intermediate riders. Trails connect to Accotink Park to extend the ride.

Washington & Old Dominion Railroad

Regional Park (W&OD) - Nicknamed the skinniest park in Virginia, the 45-mile paved trail runs between Shirlinton and Purcellville. The former roadbed of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad passes through cityscapes and into the country.

\*\*Brookfield Park - This park boasts a small bicycle pump track for riders of all ages. A pump track is a continuous loop of multileveled dirt that allows cyclists to generate speed without pedaling. The pump track derived its name from the pumping motion of the upper and lower body used by cyclists for balance as they move; \*\*an adventure for those looking for a more physical biking experience.



The paved trail crosses multiple bridges adding the adventure of water crossings for young riders



Wakefield's Creek Trail offers wood scenes and, in Spring, extensive beds of the well known Virginia Bluebells along the water



Colorful kayaks for single and double paddlers, like these at Burke Lake, are rented at area parks

### Kayaking Rentals

Local parks offer an opportunity to get onto area lakes and rivers via a small boat, a kayak. Propelled by a long double bladed paddle, kayaking is quiet and gives the feel of being part of the nature you're paddling through. Simple to learn and a perfect way to explore wetland areas and see water fowl, or just get a different type of exercise outdoors.

Kayak rentals are seasonal and can be found at:

- Burke Lake Park Marina (for fishing only - reopens Spring 2024))
- Fountainhead Regional Park (March - Nov. 13)
- Lake Accotink Marina (May - August)
- Lake Fairfax Park ( May- September)
- Occoquan Regional Park (weekends thru Oct 31; reopens April)
- Pohick Bay Regional Park (weekends thru Oct 8; reopens April)
- Riverbend Park (reopens Spring 2024)



The silence of kayaking allows paddlers to become one with nature

# Celebrities and Athletes Have Called Alexandria Home



Television personality and longtime resident Monte Durham opened Salon Monte at the Alexandria waterfront.



Actress and Saturday Night Live alum Casey Wilson was born in Alexandria and is a 1998 graduate of T.C. Williams High School.



Dave Grohl of Foo Fighters fame briefly attended Bishop Ireton High School and Annandale HS before dropping out to pursue a European concert tour.



Joe Namath talks with New York Jets coach Weeb Ewbank during Namath's professional NFL debut in Alexandria on Aug. 7, 1965. The Jets played their first preseason game against the Houston Oilers at what was then George Washington High School.

FROM PAGE 17

joval weatherman, entertaining viewers of the Today Show with lighthearted antics and his trademark centenarian birthday wishes. But before the world took notice, Scott was just a kid from Alexandria with an early passion for radio.

"When Willard was very young, he built a crystal radio," said Tom Hulfish, who would play with Scott near the Scott home on Commonwealth Avenue. "Every afternoon he would get on his radio and broadcast the news to the neighborhood. Mind you he was only 8 or 9 years old when he did this."

Scott parlayed his boyhood passion into a lifelong career in broadcasting, spending 65 years with NBC, first in Washington then in New York.

"I don't think anyone who knew him growing up was surprised at the success that he achieved," Hulfish said of the 1951 George Washington High School graduate and class president.

Other notable graduates of George Washington High School, now GW Middle School, include

John Philipps and Cass Elliott of the Grammy-award winning Mamas and the Papas.

Philips played basketball at George Washington High School, where he graduated in 1953, while Elliott, born Ellen Naomi Cohen, graduated in 1961.

T.C. Williams High School, now Alexandria City High School, has seen its share of graduates go on to national fame, including Chip Esten of the TV show Nashville, Casey Wilson of Saturday Night Live, and world champion and Olympic bronze medalist Noah Lyles, who delivered the commencement address for his alma mater in 2020.

Olympic boxer Troy Isley grew up in Alexandria and got his boxing start in the third grade when he joined the Alexandria Boxing Club at the Charles Houston Recreation Center.

"Even here in Alexandria, we don't all have the same advantages," said Isley during a recent visit to Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy, where he graduated in 2009. "But whatever your circumstances, if you stick to your goals and don't lose fo-

cus, it is possible to make it out."

Actor Chris Meloni of Law and Order: Special Victims Unit was the captain and quarterback of the 1978 undefeated St. Stephen's football team while NFL Hall of Famer Joe Namath made his pro football debut on Aug. 7, 1965, in Alexandria.

Namath and the New York Jets took on the Houston Oilers in a preseason game at what was then George Washington High School. Namath had just signed the richest contract in pro football history and as the Alexandria Gazette reported at the time, "the eyes of the sports world will be focused on Alexandria to see just how he fares against the play-for-pay boys."

Sports history was made when Earl Lloyd, who grew up in a segregated Alexandria, became the first African American to play in the NBA when he took to the court for the Washington Capitols on Oct. 31, 1950, in Rochester, N.Y.

In the arts, Academy award winner Marci Gay Harden and actor Dermot Mulroney both graced the stage at the Little Theatre of Alexandria early in their careers while television personality Monte Durham, a longtime Alexandria resident, opened Salon Monte at



Actor and 1983 T.C. Williams graduate Chip Esten returned to Alexandria to perform a benefit concert for the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria.



Television personality Willard Scott, left, was born in Alexandria and graduated from George Washington High School in 1951.



Local boxer Troy Isley, center, represented the U.S. in the Tokyo Olympics.



Alexandria's Earl Lloyd (11), playing in an NBA championship game in 1955, made history as the first African American to play in the NBA when he took to the court for the Washington Capitols on Oct. 31, 1950, in Rochester, N.Y.

# ENTERTAINMENT

## ALEXANDRIA COLONIAL TOURS' GHOST & GRAVEYARD TOUR

Wednesdays through Sundays in September at 7:30 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30, 8:30 and 9 p.m. Nightly in October at 7:30 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30, 8:30 and 9 p.m. Admission: \$15 for adults; \$10 for children; free for children under 6 years old. Tours meet at the Alexandria Visitor Center, 221 King Street, Alexandria. Walk your way through the charming streets of historic Old Town Alexandria. Follow a colonial-costumed guide by lantern light for an engaging history tour on Alexandria's original Ghost and Graveyard Tour. During this entertaining tour, you'll hear ghost stories, legends, folklore, unsolved mysteries, tales of romance and angry ghosts looking for revenge. Visit alexcolonialtours.com.

## WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

**Tours Aboard Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner Maritime Heritage Center.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Alexandria's Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Guests of all ages are recruited into the Continental Navy aboard Tall Ship Providence with legendary Captain John Paul Jones. Recruits are assigned jobs on the ship, learn where they will work and live, how to load a cannon, etc... Tours conclude in the Naval History Theatre with a film about the ship. The Heritage center is a floating museum on the Alexandria waterfront. Visit <https://tallshipprovidence.org/>

## JULY 25-SEPT. 17

**Captured: Plants and Places.** 1-4 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens Center, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Step into the world of plants across the region and in still life at a season-spanning photography exhibit July 25 to Sept. 17 at Green Spring Gardens Horticultural Center. The lyrical collection "Captured: Plants and Places" features botanical imagery drawn from the Washington area to Maine, including studio photos, intimate outdoor vignettes and landscape scenes. The photographers' varying visions and styles in color and black-and-white invite viewers to explore the wonder of wild and horticultural lands. An opening reception with the artists is July 30 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the Atrium at Green Springs Gardens Horticultural Center.

## SEPT. 1-30

**The "Farther Afield" Exhibit.** At Del Ray Artisans gallery 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Featuring art by local artists that takes the viewer on a journey, whether that is someplace an hour away from Alexandria or halfway across the world. Opening Reception: Friday, September 1, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed on October 1). Details: [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

## SEPT. 2-30

**Perspectives Exhibit.** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Van Landingham Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, Gallery 311, 105 North Union Street, Alexandria. The Torpedo Factory Artists' Association's (TFAA) Van Landingham Gallery presents Per-

spectives, a juried membership show featuring artworks that showcase the talent and creativity of the TFAA. Artworks include original hand pulled prints, original paintings, jewelry, works on paper, sculpture, and more. The following artists are featured in the main exhibit: Diana Papazian, Samantha Shelton, Guido Zanni, Helen Power, Karen Waltermire, Nancy Ramsey, Ann Barbieri, Tara Barr, and Lynn Chadwick.

## SEPT. 7 TO OCT. 15

**Every Rock Has a Story – Anne Stine.** At The Athenaeum Gallery, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Artist's Reception is Sunday, Oct. 1, from 4-6 p.m. Award-winning painter Anne Stine debuts her latest collection of encaustic works titled, Every Rock Has a Story, in September, at the Athenaeum Gallery. Her collection of 20 geological paintings explores the interconnection between Earth and humanity through representational and abstract imagery. "Every rock has a story", a popular geological phrase, meaning history is captured within the Earth's formations from the majestic mountains to the tiniest pebbles that reside beneath our feet.

## SATURDAY/SEPT. 16

**Ecology Walk.** 10:00 a.m. At Dyke Marsh, Alexandria. Join naturalist and biologist Charles Smith on an ecology walk and learn all about tidal marsh ecology, vegetative communities, system stressors, seasonality of vegetation and wildlife and ecosystems' importance. To register, email [info@fodm.org](mailto:info@fodm.org) and put "September Ecology Walk" in the subject box. Meet at the Haul Road trail entrance. Bring water, wear sturdy shoes and sun protection. Hosted by the Friends of Dyke Marsh.

## SATURDAY/SEPT. 16

**Classic Car Show.** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Alexandria History Museum at the Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria. Free Come to a classic car show featuring a variety of Packards and other "orphan" vehicles. This show will bring together cars that are no longer manufactured – hence the term "orphans." The show is co-sponsored by Packards Virginia and the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. This year's show will feature, among other vehicles, at least three Packards – a 1927 Packard Phaeton, a 1940 Packard Club Sedan, and a 1933 Packard Coupe Roadster; as well as at least two Hudsons — a 1954 Hudson Hornet, a 1934 Hudson Terraplane Coupe. Other cars scheduled to participate include a 1961 Nash Metropolitan, a 1967 Pontiac GTO, a 1988 Volga GAZ. 24-10, and a 1955 MG ZA Magnette.

## SEPT. 16-17

**Colonial Market & Fair.** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, Mount Vernon. Step back in time at Colonial Market & Fair, featuring food and



A Classic Car Show featuring "orphan" vehicles will be held on Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023 at The Alexandria History Museum at the Lyceum in Alexandria

wares made by Colonial artisans. Attend the Luke Adams Glass Art Signing on Sept. 17. Renowned Massachusetts glassblower returns to sign hand-blown glass pumpkins and other one-of-a-kind pieces.

## TUESDAYS/SEPT. 19, 26, Simpson Park Demonstration Gardens, Tuesdays @ 10.10 - 11:30 a.m., Simpson Demonstration Gardens, 420 E. Monroe Ave, Alexandria.

Meet and talk with Extension Master Gardeners in the Simpson Demonstration Gardens to learn about lawn alternatives suitable for our climate and your growing conditions. Free.

## THURSDAY/SEPT. 21

**Taste of Old Town North.** 4-8 p.m. At Montgomery Park, 901 North Royal Street, Alexandria. The Taste of Old Town North is a free, family-and pet-friendly event where you can shop at the farmers market, create 'art in the park,' taste gourmet dishes and wines from local restaurants and businesses, taste cider from Lost Boy Cider, participate in instructor-led wellness demos and listen to music from two local bands. Participating restaurants include Julia's on the Potomac, St. Elmo's, Yunnan by Potomac, and Hank's Oyster Bar. The Taste will feature a reading by City of Alexandria Poet Laureate Zeina Azzam of the three winning haiku from the Haiku Project. Visitors to the Taste can also learn more about the great work of ALIVE!, a local non-profit dedicated to fighting poverty and hunger and helping neighbors in need. The rain date for the Taste of Old Town North is September 28, 4:00 - 8:00 pm.

## THURSDAY/SEPT. 21

**Taste of Old Town North.** 4-8 p.m. At Montgomery Park, 901 N. Royal St., Alexandria. Head to Montgomery Park for a celebration of greater Old Town North featuring local businesses including restaurants like Julia's on the Potomac, Hank's Oyster Bar, St. Elmo's and Yunnan by Potomac Noodle House. Plus, enjoy music from New Breed Soul

Consortium, formerly Three Man Soul Machine, and Sally and the Mander. Rain date is September 28. Visit [Oldtownnorth.org](http://Oldtownnorth.org).

## SATURDAY/SEPT. 23

**Fall Garden Festival.** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. This free event celebrates a world of unique plants, captivating garden accessories, live music that sets the perfect ambiance and delectable food options to satisfy your cravings. It's not just any garden gathering -- it's a vibrant celebration of all things green and gorgeous. The Fall Garden Festival is your one-stop destination for gardening inspiration and unique finds. Gather your friends and family and join us for a day filled with nature's beauty and the joy of the gardening community.

## SATURDAY/SEPT. 23

**The HalloWEIRD Art Market.** 10 a.m.-4 p.m. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features a variety of artwork from local artisans celebrating the spooky and playful sides of the fall season and aerial performances by Monarca in Flight. Join us for lots of fun at this outdoor, family-friendly, rain-or-shine event. HalloWEIRD takes place at corner of Commonwealth and Mount Vernon Avenues). Details at [DelRayArtisans.org/halloween-2023](http://DelRayArtisans.org/halloween-2023)

## SATURDAY/SEPT. 23

**81st Annual Historic Alexandria Homes Tour.** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At various locations throughout Old Town Alexandria. Admission: \$45/person. The Twig, The Junior Auxiliary of Inova Alexandria Hospital, proudly announces the 81st Annual Historic Alexandria Homes Tour to be held on Saturday, September 23. New this year, a digital tour book guiding participants through the homes will be accessible to ticket holders via their mobile device. Hard copies of the tour book are available for purchase, in advance, for \$5 each. Please note that this event sold out last year, so early ticket purchase is

recommended. Visit [thetwig.org/homes-tour](http://thetwig.org/homes-tour).

## SUNDAY/SEPT. 24

**Made in ALX Fall Makers' Market.** 12-5 p.m. At Port City Brewing Co., 3950 Wheeler Ave., Alexandria. This is the fall's most fun sip-and-shop, featuring craft beer from the award-winning Port City Brewing Co. along with food, shopping and activities. The kid-friendly and pet-friendly event will feature more than 30 artists from Alexandria and nearby with a wide variety of crafts and items. Several vendors will be new to the Made in ALX Fall Makers' Market this year! This year's market will include:

a scavenger hunt with prizes from Made in ALX and Port City Brewing Co. the National Breast Center Foundation Angel Wings photo station oracle readings with Alexandria's Blonde Spiritual

Millennial Sarah Locke new crafts and artworks from the region's best artists, creators and makers.

Food vendors will include Rockland's BBQ, Kam and 46 Hawaiian and Filipino Food Truck, Watts Popcorn, Pickles & Cures, and Scuttlebutt Bakeshop.

## OCT. 7, 2023

**Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane.** Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

## THE BIRCHMERE

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

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Fri. 15: The Jayhawks w/ Freedy Johnston \$49.50 SOLD OUT!  
Sat. 16: Tommy Emmanuel, CGP with Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams \$59.50 SOLD OUT!  
Sun. 17: Tommy Emmanuel, CGP with Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams \$59.50  
Mon. 18: Patty Griffin w/ Scott Miller \$65.00 SOLD OUT!  
Tue. 19: Joshua Radin w/ Maddie Poppe \$45.00  
Wed. 20: Robert Earl Keen (Solo) \$65.00 SOLD OUT!  
Thu. 21: Robert Earl Keen (Solo) \$65.00 SOLD OUT!  
Fri. 22: Patton Oswalt: Effervescent \$65.00 SOLD OUT!  
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**NEWCOMERS**

# Suicide Prevention Month

FROM PAGE 15

cation boxes and gun safety locks that fit a wide variety of firearms. If you or someone you care about may be at risk of suicide, don't hesitate to reach out for help right away. These resources are available 24/7:

Call or text 9-8-8, the 24/7 Suicide and Crisis Hotline

Call the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Emergency Services at 703-573-5679.

Text "CONNECT" to 855-11 to contact PRS CrisisLink.

Lifeline Chat: [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org/chat](http://SuicidePreventionLifeline.org/chat)

Call PRS CrisisLink at 703-527-4077.

In an immediate, life-threatening situation, call 911.

If you are concerned, SPAN offers a Confidential Online Screening.

You can also come directly to the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board's Emergency Services office, which is open 24/7.

Sharon Bulova Center for Community Health  
8221 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive, Fairfax  
703-573-5679, TTY 711

Deciding when to help someone who may be at risk for suicide can be scary, but taking one step to reach out for support could save a life.

**BULLETIN BOARD**

FROM PAGE 16

community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

United Community (formerly UCM), 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, seeks volunteers for Food Pantry assistance, Early Learning Center teacher aides, basic needs counselors, youth tutors and mentors, office administration/data entry, and community outreach. Flexible hours and schedules. Opportunities for all ages to serve, including community service hours. More info at [ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities) or email [volunteer@ucmagency.org](mailto:volunteer@ucmagency.org).

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil ([Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov)) at 703-324-4547.

Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia based 501(c)(3) organization

# OPINION

## Watts

FROM PAGE 10

That JLARC report shifted the budget discussion towards a harder look at total tax relief. We had already cut state taxes over \$4 billion last year by removing the sales tax on food, raising the standard deduction, and giving one-time rebates of up to \$250/\$500. Given the almost \$3 billion in permanent tax relief in last year's cuts, plus documented education under-funding and mounting concern about a federal government shutdown that would affect 30% of Virginia's economy, the budget compromise we just passed only put an additional \$280 million into permanent tax cuts while over \$900 million will go back to taxpayers through the one-time \$200/\$400 rebate.

Over \$96 million of the permanent tax cut will go to continuing the challenge of closing the large gap between the standard deduction Virginia taxpayers can take when they figure their state income tax and what they get on their federal income tax. Five years ago, Virginia's standard deduction was only \$3000 for a single filer and \$6000 for joint filers. It had been 15 years since it had been raised. Meanwhile, the federal standard deduction had grown to \$12,000/\$24,000 pushed by annual increases for inflation and the 2017 federal tax reform. Annual inflation adjustments, since, have increased it to \$13,850/\$27,700.

Such a large gap is especially unfair to Virginia taxpayers because Virginia's tax law requires that if you choose the federal standard deduction, you can't choose to itemize

deductions when you file your Virginia tax. Why? Virginia has chosen not to fund the bureaucracy it would take to audit itemized deductions and has always piggy-backed on federal tax audits.

Therefore, in 2018, we increased Virginia's standard deduction to \$4500/\$9000 resulting in an ongoing, annual tax savings for approximately 80% of Virginia taxpayers. The 20% that don't benefit are those who itemize to pay less in federal taxes and tend to be businesses or persons in the top 5% of income. Last year, we again increased the standard deduction making it \$8,000/\$16,000. Now, we've increased Virginia's standard deduction to \$8,500/\$17,000.

This constant push to lower taxes for most taxpayers by raising the standard deduction has resulted in Virginia's income tax being more progressive. In sharp contrast, the original proposal to lower the highest tax rate from 5.75 to 5.5 would have given most of the tax cut to the top 5% of income. They would have gotten thousands of dollars while the majority of taxpayers got less than \$50 and many would get no tax relief.

However, the total effect of our raising the standard deduction from just \$3000/\$6000 to almost three times that amount is an annual revenue loss of over \$1.1 billion. That cost in the face of documented under-funding schools and the mental health crisis was why the General Assembly finally came to agreement that the bulk of the remaining current budget surplus needed to be returned to taxpayers as a one-time rebate and not as an even greater permanent tax cut.

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 22

- seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See [www.ophrescue.org](http://www.ophrescue.org) for information and all volunteer opportunities.
- RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at [chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org](mailto:chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org) or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit [www.rsvpnova.org](http://www.rsvpnova.org).
- Line Dance Instructor needed for the Gum Springs Senior Program once a week on either Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Volunteer Solutions, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711.
- Volunteer Fairfax makes it easy for individuals and families, youth and seniors, corporate groups and civic clubs to volunteer. Fulfill hours, give back, or pay it forward through a variety of service options. Visit [www.volunteerfairfax.org](http://www.volunteerfairfax.org) or call 703-246-3460.
- Fairfax County's Community Services Board is seeking volunteer office assistants. Volunteers are needed to assist CSB staff with greeting guests, making reminder phone calls, data entry, filing, shredding, stocking shelves, and other duties as needed. Hours are flexible, but would be during normal business hours. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm) for more.
- Yoga Teachers are needed. Help improve

- a person's well-being by teaching yoga classes to adults who are staying in a residential facility. The day/time is flexible, but would be during the week. Prior yoga instruction is required. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm) for more.
- The Northern Virginia Long Term Care Ombudsman Program needs volunteer advocates for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Contact Lisa Callahan at 703-324-5861, TTY 711 or email [Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov).
- Respite Care volunteers give family caregivers of a frail older adult a break so they can go shopping, attend a doctor's appointment or just have coffee with a friend. Volunteers visit and oversee the safety of the older adult for a few hours each month. Support and training are provided. Contact Kristin Martin at 703-324-7577, TTY 711, or [Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov).
- Fairfax County needs volunteers to drive older adults to medical appointments and wellness programs. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.
- The Gum Springs Senior Program in Alexandria is looking for a Line Dance Instructor. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.
- The Advisory Board of the Joe and Fredona Gartlan Center for mental health is looking for volunteers. The board meets the second Tuesday of the month from 9-11 a.m. at Gartlan Center 8119 Holland Road.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## Debit This!



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I don't know if what I'm about to write comes under the heading of a rant, a pet peeve (drivers backing into parking spaces is my "numero" uno irrational preoccupation), or a logical and reasonable request/solution for an ever-increasing, almost mandatory facet of our respective lives: using a credit card reader when paying in-person with a credit/debit card. I have been in businesses where cash is not accepted (covid notwithstanding).

Apparently, cash is no longer king. More and more as we pay our way around our face-to-face transactions, cash is further down the line in the payment pecking order. Cash might as well be Green Stamps or the "red-headed stepchild," given how little respect and appreciation payees receive for the receipt of paper money rather than plastic.

As for accessing cash from an ATM; though they are not 100% identical, they seem familiar enough from one to the next. All I ask, other than for a cure for cancer (let's be realistic as to what really matters), is some uncharacteristic but much needed government intervention into the private sector to facilitate the shopping/buying experience in person and "uniformalize" the debit-card readers. I would imagine helping/encouraging consumers to consume in the easiest and most efficient manner would certainly be good for the GDP in addition to all our buying/paying experiences. It seems logical, prudent even, that installing some kind system-wide organization/design of the debit keys would benefit an aging population in specific, and society in general where everything everywhere requires a piece of plastic to finalize a purchase.

A few examples: computer keyboards, telephones, cash registers, radio dials, bingo cards, among so many other devices. All meant to simplify our lives.

And yet the similarities/dare I say adherence to some sort of governmental mandate has not stifled the private sector from being able to think about their businesses independently enough to thrive in a highly competitive Western World. Moreover, given that capitalism wants to incentivize its citizens to not only think about growing rich but to act as well on those instincts, it seems sensible to assist the process in any way possible -short of command and control, which enables said business to attract a profitable market share and additionally, rewards the customer for their patronage.

Wouldn't an enjoyable, relatively hassle-free consumer experience enhance a business's profile? If the last thing a consumer does - after they've selected their merchandise/product and taken it to the register to pay, is to have a quick and simple payment system/process to finalize their purchase/selection; wouldn't that encourage, almost instinctively, for the consumer to revisit the establishment that made their transaction so easy?

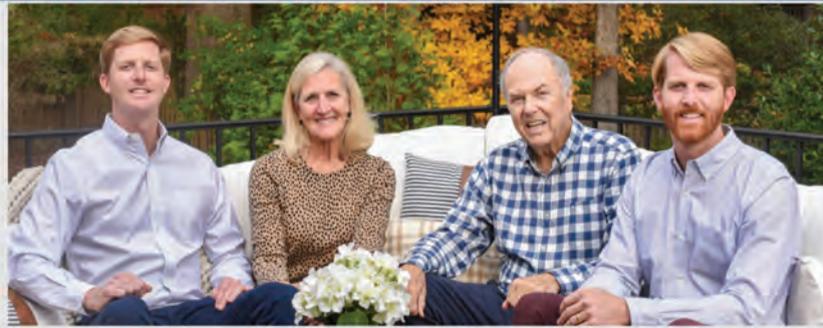
And given that part of a business's success is measured by repeat business/how sales compare to the previous year, retaining that clientele by providing a pleasant buying experience from start to finish, would seem a reasonable path to pursue/provide. Certainly, I know very little about business to what I know as compared to my years as an independent salesman - selling insurance and newspaper advertising, but I've been a consumer my whole life, and after bad experiences, you rarely return to where you had that bad experience. And since there are so many choices, both in person and online, it would behoove a business to be as attractive as it can be to prospective buyers. Not that consumers are always right, but as customers, they warrant respect and accommodation. Paying customers and especially repeat customers don't grow on trees. As the business, you must grow on them.

Why don't we all work together in a sort of private-public-type partnership?

One where, as Spock from Star Trek: the original has said many times; "The good of the many outweigh the good of the few." Streamlining a system that is pretty much our daily consuming bread that would enable the masses ("Hoi Polloi," as The Three Stooges titled one of their many two-reel comedy shorts, referred to them/us) to have fewer hurdles to completing their consuming transactions would benefit everybody. And capitalism thrives when more are merrier.

If businesses/government ever want to make a deposit on the future, they should make an investment in the present. Help all us consumers to consume more and feel stupid less. Make debit machines exactly alike in look, feel and touch, please? Thank you from the bottom of my wallet.

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



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