

The Arlington Connection

Christine Sloan Stoddard. Her first feature film "Sirena's Gallery" has just premiered and been accepted for distribution on Amazon.

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Out Damned Spot! (What Are These?)

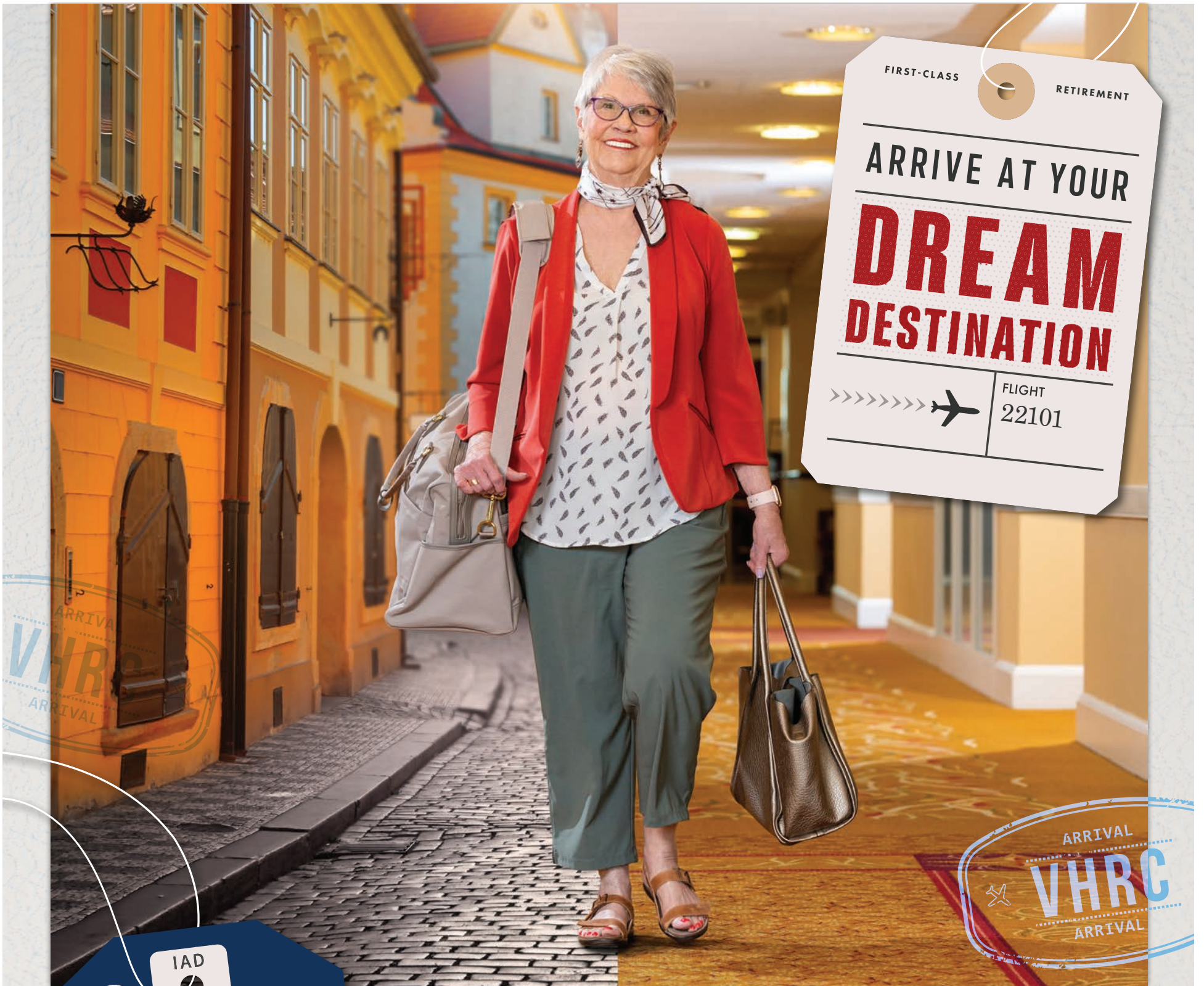
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OCTOBER 4-10, 2023

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End of Hunger Month

But not the end of Hunger in Arlington.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

It is the end of Hunger Month but not the end of hunger or of Arlington Food Assistance (AFAC) events highlighting the need for food assistance. Robin Ngo and Lus Sawicki, both first time AFAC volunteers, stand beside AFAC boxes located outside the David M. Brown Planetarium on Saturday morning, Sept. 30 for a “stuff the school bus” event.

It is two hours into the event and the school bus remains empty. Ngo says no one has shown up yet. She says, “I think these events do better when they are located right outside the Giant like the ones earlier this month so people can just

easily drop off a few things.”

But AFAC has been active and successful all month bringing attention to the need to mobilize the public to take action on the issue of hunger including its library exhibits in five Arlington branches. In addition, there has been the volunteer opportunity to glean produce at JK Community Farm in Purcellville. Fashion Center at Pentagon City held a CANstruction canned-creation build by local DMV architectural firms with the cans of food donated to AFAC.

In addition, pets get hungry, and AFAC paired with the Animal Welfare League at Lubber Run Farmer’s Market to expand the food drive to include food for pets owned by families in need. And the Annual Golf Tournament at Army Navy Country Club, the big fundraiser of the year, was held Sept. 16.

The Hunger Museum created by MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger offered a virtual tour to educate on the last 100 years of

hunger policy in the United States.

The need is great. Charlie Meng, CEO of AFAC, points out even though Arlington has one of the highest median household incomes in the country, hunger affects vulnerable populations within the county borders. He says, “We are now serving 3,450 families each week and last year we saw a 30 percent increase.” Meng was also bracing for the might-have-been shutdown that could have come on Monday, but now has been averted until at least November.

The opportunity to contribute goes well beyond Hunger Month with AFAC food boxes located in most libraries, various businesses, county offices including the Parks Dept. and the County Building and soon in apartment building lobbies, and volunteer opportunities exist to organize your own food drive.

There are many ways to donate, including donating financially online at <https://afac.org/>



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

Lus Sawicki and Robin Ngo stand outside a school bus at an Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) “stuff the bus” event Saturday, Sept. 30.

Now You See It—Now You Don’t

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Charlie Gaylord raised \$470 for the plexiglas, plywood, nails and screws needed to build his vision of a Little Free Pantry in November 2020. Gaylord said he had seen a similar concept in Tennessee at a farmer’s market and wanted to try it in Arlington for his Eagle Scout project. It took Gaylord and several other scouts in Troop 106 six hours to construct the project but about 50 hours of planning.

His project hit smack in the middle of the pandemic which was just the right time to meet the need but made the details of the approval process and the completion of the project more difficult. The original intent of the pantry was to serve as a collection point for nonperishable contributions and to donate them to the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC). But over time the pantry has gone further than expected and come to serve its own unique population of homeless and food insecure individuals in Arlington and no longer has a connection with AFAC.

Since it was installed the pantry has been sitting right outside the back of the library next to the “Plot for Hunger” garden lining the sidewalk and growing produce for the

Arlington Food Assistance Center. Regulars to the pantry come and go, checking the shelves for the cans of beans and corn, boxes of cereal, cooking oil, bags of rice and occasional chocolate bar.

Over time the winter months have taken their toll as the doors of the pantry have been buffeted by wind, and the deadbolts holding the doors have been warped by the cold, necessitating some minor repairs. But the pantry always seemed to get back in operation.

Now on Sept. 27 during Hunger Month (and banned book week) a notice from the library appeared on the front door of the pantry announcing the pantry would be taken down Friday, Sept. 30. The notice was a surprise and gave no reason. Reactions ranged from anger to disappointment to curiosity.

The notice listed alternate sites where free food would be available and indicated there is an AFAC food collection box inside the library for those library patrons who wish to continue donating food.

The notice said, “If you are hungry there are many places in Arlington to help. To name a few: St. George’s Episcopal Church on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 12-1 pm, AFAC with varying hours Monday- Saturday and Mt.

SEE NOW YOU SEE IT, PAGE 11



The Library unexpectedly removed the Little Free Pantry on Sept. 30, 2023, leaving only the wooden stubs remaining. They had posted a sign a few days before indicating their intention.



PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

Charlie Gaylord built a Little Free Pantry for his Eagle Scout project in the midst of the pandemic in November 2020 and installed it outside the Central Library with their permission.

Sidewalk Spots and Parking Spots

Sidewalks get “Spot treatment” in Country Club Hills, car data collected from parking spots.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

What are these mystery spots sprayed onto the sidewalk in Country Club Hills? They seem random. There are about 300 of them over an 8 block area. Is this a new form of graffiti or a statement? Have the Hash House Harriers changed their M.O.? Are aliens signaling their landing area? Unique form of mosquito control? They’ve been there for months. Anyone know?

Arlington County Sidewalks phone provided the following answer: “Nope, not ours. We don’t mark anything. Ever. Must be Miss Utility.” Miss Utility said: “Must mean construction is about to happen. We only mark white with colored lines on utilities. If it’s just white, not sure what that is.”

A neighbor said: “They are redoing the sidewalks.” He knew this because he reads his mail. A letter did go out to Country Club Hills residents noting sidewalks would be fixed in the next few weeks. Cracked, uneven, or broken curbs, sidewalks, and ramps will be replaced “for better drainage” and while spots weren’t mentioned, the average education level of the Arlington resident can read between the — spots.

But what about the holes being dug in perfect rounds where cars park near Northside Social and Courthouse? They are even more worrisome looking. The contractor punching the holes in the street shrugged and said, “These are for monitoring cars that



Mystery spots on the curb.

park here. The devices we put in the holes will tell us about the vehicles that park.” For whom? Another shrug. “I just put the stuff here.”

A quick survey of the media indicated that this is a pilot program initiated by the County. “The pilot will use in-ground sensors to provide real-time occupancy information for each of the parking spaces included in the project area.

The sensors can detect the presence or absence of a vehicle, and duration-of-stay can be calculated. No camera technology is being used, and no personally-identifying information can be collected by the system. Once initial occupancy data has been gathered, the project team anticipates applying the pricing tools to the pilot project corridors on a quarterly basis, changing prices up or down across the 4,500 parking spaces included in the pilot to meet the goals of the pilot project.”

The County’s website explains it’s for a good purpose: “Arlington’s Performance Parking Pilot Project seeks to improve the user experience by making metered parking spaces more available more often, sharing useful information about parking options in real time, reducing the negative impacts associated with the search for metered parking (cruising, double parking, going somewhere else to do business, etc.) It’s all part of a VDOT grant.

For more information, see: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Transportation/Parking/Performance-Parking-Pilots>

PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION



The data collector under your car.



Round disks under cars are collecting data on the parked car.



Contractor punching holes in the parking spots near Northside Social.

Urban Agriculture Month

Urban Agriculture Month shines a spotlight on the significant role urban agriculture plays in our regional and local food system. This event will feature discussions on maximizing food

production in an urban setting, demonstration sessions, and a reading of a proclamation naming October Urban Agriculture Month in Arlington County. We hope you'll get inspired to garden and get involved.

- 6 Oct. 10-11:30 am** VCE – Putting Your Garden to Bed (Zoom)
- 10 Oct. 7:30 am-11 am** Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger. Log in to sign up.
- 13 Oct. 10-11:30 am** VCE – Soil Building for Healthier, Happier Gardens (Zoom)
- 13 Oct. 1-3 pm** VCE Partners of the Americas Caribbean Conservation Conversation
- 15 Oct.** – Area 2 Open House
- 17 Oct. 7:30 am-11 am** Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger. Log in to sign up.
- 20 Oct 10-11:30 am** VCE – Succulents and Cacti 101 (Zoom)
- 22 Oct.** Ribbon Cutting at new Plot Against Hunger garden with NVCT
- 24 Oct. 7:30 am-11 am** Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger. Log in to sign up.
- 24 Oct.** Causes & Cocktails with Volunteer Arlington
- 25 Oct.** Charity night at Sushi Zen
- 27 Oct. 10-11:30 am** VCE – Science & Mythos: Plant Names & the Science Behind Them (Zoom)
- 31 Oct. 7:30 am-11 am** Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger. Log in to sign up

The Plot Against Hunger program collects fresh produce from gardens at homes, faith-based organizations, schools, and community gardens, and gleans produce at local farms to donate to local food pantries for our neighbors in need of supplemental groceries. Our

Produce Bagging Center accepts your garden produce, prepares it for food pantry clients, and delivers the same day. Plot Against Hunger cultivates a community of gardeners, supporting gardeners with seeds and seedlings and technical assistance.

Thursdays in October

Honoring Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Mark your calendars! Each Thursday during the month of October, Project PEACE will be hosting a free virtual series of lunch and learns. The series will cover:

- Session #1**, October 5: Supporting helping professionals seeking to learn ways to intervene
- Session #2**, October 12: Increasing community understanding about why people use violence/cause harm

- Session #3**, October 19: Strategies for supporting culturally specific populations (South Asian and Immigrant)
- Session #4**, October 26: Supporting the creation of safer homes for children that may be exposed to and/or experience domestic violence

ART Offers Free Fares for Fall

Arlington's bus transit system, ART, will provide free rides during weekday rush hours in morning and evening peak directions starting Monday, Oct. 2, 2023, and going through Dec. 25, 2023.

As part of Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)'s Commuter Choice grant program, ART is encouraging commuters to choose public transit instead of driving in an effort to reduce congestion on I-66. Arlington County is supporting the additional free routes outside the I-66 corridor.

Riding Free: Passengers boarding ART buses in the direction with highest demand during morning and evening rush hours will find the fare boxes covered.

For example, there will be no charge on ART 45 toward Rosslyn during morning rush. In late afternoon/early evening, passengers will ride ART 45 free in the direction of Arlington Mill.

The full schedule for each route's peak direction during morning and evening rush hours is available on the ART Fare Free Rush webpage.

Arlington has long been recognized as a leader in sustainability, offering residents, visitors, and businesses a multi-faceted "Car-Free Diet" approach to travel across the County and Capital region.

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Arlington's Ballston Wetland Opens

No beavers, but green and speckled frogs plus trash seen.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

There was something endearing about the Ballston Pond when the beavers arrived there to set up a lodge and play havoc with the drainage system. For some residents, it was a sign of enduring nature in an increasingly built up town. One hopes the wildlife the beavers generated — egrets, muskrats, and herons — will be back even if the beaver baffles put in place by the creators of the new Ballston Wetland Park will almost certainly guarantee the beavers won't be.

The Ballston Wetland Park, which opened Tuesday, Sept. 26 with a ribbon cutting by County Board Chair Dorsey, expands control systems and capacity for what was known as Ballston Pond, originally built in 1980

“And remember, please don't smoke in our parks.”

to hold storm runoff from the newly built I-66. The tiny park is now cleared of sediment that had built up in the pond, and is capable of taking excess rainwater from 450 surrounding acres. The retrofitted wetland system improves stormwater flow and filtering, as well as capturing trash, while also serving as a wildlife refuge for some, if not all, urban critters.



One of the plaques designed to show visitors what they might see in the park includes educational information on how the park is helping water quality and why “only rain goes in the storm drain.”

Lubber Run flows through the wetland on its way to Four Mile Run.

The park expands the county's ability to meet state Chesapeake Bay Watershed regulations: native plants have replaced invasives, at least for a while, and there is a short metal walkway with signs indicating what might be seen in the park. Wildlife, including the beavers, were encouraged to leave the area when it was drained for the \$4 million project. One wonders what became of the beavers.

Although the idea of a “pastoral commons within an urban village setting” sounds good, the park was a bit of a disappointment

to one visitor who had hoped to see beavers, and get a little peace and quiet. It was 4 p.m. and the sun was reflecting off the water, making it almost impossible to see what was going on in the wetland, except for the sparkling plastic water bottles and trash that had accumulated, as designed, at the north end of the wetland.

The overwhelming noise of Route 66 traffic thrashing its way west, even on a Sunday afternoon, detracted from the wetlands scene, a dab of impressionist green in an abstract cityscape of traffic. It didn't help that a smoker left a pack of Kool cigarettes under one of the benches as they finished smoking,

and another visitor tossed his plastic beverage cup right into the storm drain along the adjacent road. It would seem more people need to read the helpful advice on the newly installed visitor plaques: “Only rain goes in the storm drain.”

The park's website adds: “Learn Park Rules and Regulations. And remember, please don't smoke in our parks.”

If you go, free parking does not exist along the park or nearby, it is best reached on foot or bike. See: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/Parks-Recreation/Locations/Parks/Ballston-Wetland-Park>

PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION



Six green and speckled frogs sat, not on a log, but on a specially designed sunning platform.



Someone wrote “Bring Beavers Back” at the beginning of the pathway after the park had only been open a few days.



A pair of ducks is happy to paddle along the grassy wetland park.



A barrier at the north end of the wetland keeps trash from continuing down the flow of Lubber Run.

"FLOURISHING AFTER 55"

Office of 55+ Programs
Department of Parks and Recreation
300 N. Park Dr.,
Arlington, VA 22203

55+ Programs are in person at 55+ Centers, unless otherwise noted. A 55+ Pass is required to participate (starting at a \$20 annual fee). To join or register, go to registration.arlingtonva.us or call 703-228-4747.

The U.S. Army and the Trail of Tears, history of relocating the Cherokee Nation to Oklahoma and its lasting impact, Thursday, Oct. 5, 1:30 p.m., virtual. Presented by Jen Dubina, National Museum of the U.S. Army. Registration # 911400-21.

How to assess retirement preparedness, Thursday, Oct. 5, 6 p.m. Presented by Sallie Wiley, certified federal coach and career counselor. Registration # 911404-03. Repeated Friday, Oct. 6, 10:30 a.m., registration # 911404-04. Both at Lubber Run 55+ Center.

Learn how to use your phone or personal device to identify music heard in real time, Friday, Oct. 6, 11:30 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Both iPhones and Androids will be discussed with Jennifer Weber, 55+ Center Director. Registration # 911403-04.

Step-by-step painting demonstration with Community Arts Programmers, Monday, Oct. 9, 10:30 a.m.,

virtual. Picture and supply list sent prior to class. Registration # 911303-15.

While Medicare can be complicated and confusing, Dr. Salama Freed, assistant professor of Health Policy and Management at George Washington University, will break it down, Tuesday, Oct. 10, 1 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 911503-01.

History roundtable participants to discuss the impact of mandatory school systems, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 11:15 a.m., virtual. Registration # 911402-08.

Energy Bingo in English and Spanish, presented by Virginia Cooperative Extension Energy Masters, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 1 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Celebrate Energy Awareness Month and get tips on reducing energy and water bills. Registration # 911401-05.

The roles of executors, agents and trustees defined by Elder Law Attorney Ed Zetlin, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 11 a.m., virtual. Registration # 911404-05.

Introduction to the ins and outs of PayPal, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 12 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Presented by 55+ Center Director Ashley Gomez Figueredo. Registration # 911403-08.

Calico Cloggers will perform Wednesday,

Oct. 11, 1:30 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Repertoire includes traditional and modern clogging plus Irish and Canadian step dancing and more. Registration # 911301-01.

Beginner quilting class, Thursday, Oct. 12, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Learn how to create beautiful, raised images from paper coils. Supplies provided. Cost \$18. Registration # 911310-05.

New, Spanish discussion group led by Ashley Gomez Figueredo, Lubber Run 55+ Center Director, Thursday, Oct. 12, 2 p.m. Participants must have an intermediate knowledge of Spanish. Discuss food, travel, current events and more. Registration # 911650-02.

Favorite music on vinyl records plus root beer floats, Thursday, Oct. 12, 6 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 911801-02. Bring records to share or just come to listen.

Movie matinee showing of "Living" (2022) (PG-13), Thursday, Oct. 12, 2 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 911804-13.

Why get an appraisal of personal property is answered by experienced retired appraiser Jean Jackson, Thursday, Oct. 12, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 911400-12.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

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

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

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

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is

an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

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

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

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy

flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

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

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

SUPPORT GROUPS

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

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Christine Sloan Stoddard. Her first feature film “Sirena’s Gallery” has just premiered and been accepted for distribution on Amazon.



Christine Sloan Stoddard creates her first feature film in isolation during Covid in an art gallery in Richmond.

Arlington Native’s First Feature Film Premieres on Amazon

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Christine Sloan Stoddard remembers back to kindergarten at Jamestown Elementary in Arlington when her drawing won the contest for the cover of the literary magazine. Now 29 years later she has had her first feature film, “Sirena’s Gallery,” accepted for distribution on Amazon, Hoopla and Vudu among others. The film debuted Aug. 27 at the Byrd Theatre in Richmond.

In addition to being a filmmaker, Stoddard is an author with a book of plays as well as an artist working in watercolor, mixed media collage and sculpture with a juried show at the Howard County Center for the Arts in Maryland.

“I owe a lot to Arlington schools,” she said.

Stoddard said “Sirena’s Gallery” grew out of a college assignment to produce a short 8-minute film script. She always wanted to use that trial as a stepping stone to a feature film. She had a lot of ideas and questions about the power structure in art galleries and when the opportunity actually came, she had a good sense of what she wanted to do. When she was awarded a two-week residency at 1708 Gallery in Richmond, she used the time to make the film.

“It was during Covid-19 so I had the gallery all to myself in May 2020 when we weren’t exactly sure where the pandemic was going. I had envisioned conversations with gallery patrons but because of the pandemic, I had to do everything over Zoom.” As a result Stoddard

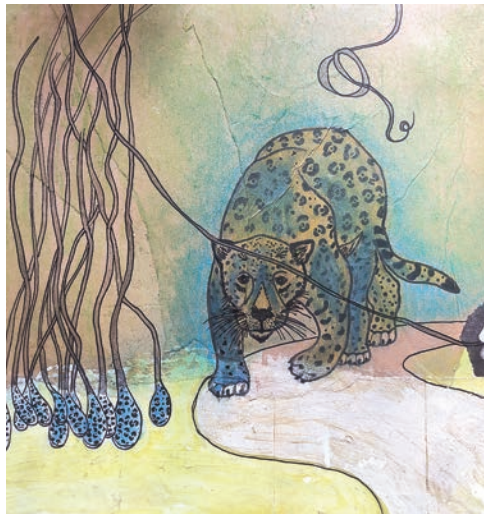
wrote, produced and was the only actor in her film. “Sirena’s Gallery” is about a Salvadoran-American woman’s struggle as an art gallery owner during the pandemic as she adapted to isolation while grieving the recent loss of her husband.

Stoddard says the film is very loosely inspired by her life. “She is Salvadoran-American like me. The protagonist runs a gallery. It is inspired by my experiences in the gallery world. But it is definitely a work of fiction.”

Stoddard says she waited until March 2021 to edit the film. “When I returned to Brooklyn it was right after George Floyd, and many stores were ruined. It was frightening to think what would have happened if I’d been there at the time. There was a lot of chaos in the city.” That was also the time she was moving apartments. “It also took me a lot of resettling and rethinking my life during the pandemic.

“It’s also a project to edit a whole film by yourself. It took me one and a half months to finish. The film was largely shot in the gallery. I also made use of the outdoors.” She explains the work was entirely digital. “At one point I had two different laptops; I had so many different clips and had to scan in some paintings.” She also had archival footage of a trip she had made to San Salvador for a residency when she was 29-years-old, her first trip to the country where her mother had been born, had left and never wanted to return. “I spent hours watching the footage; it wasn’t unusual to watch dozens of times.”

She finished the editing in May



Christine Sloan Stoddard is also a multimedia artist with a degree in fine arts.



2021 and then started submitting the film to distributors. “It’s difficult to get on a platform as an independent.” She said it is also difficult to secure funding. The government doesn’t provide much funding for non-profits so you have to rely a lot on independent funding from philanthropists. Then in September 2021 Summer House said “we want it.”

“I was very excited. Then I had to wait two years for the distributor to put it on Amazon.” She adds, “That’s actually very fast; 5-7 years is not unusual. “Theatre attendance is down. People are watching at home now so the process of getting it picked up is condensed. But you have to come up with all the marketing, pitch it.” She says it was held off because the film is Covid-related and many people needed distance from that period.

“I was lucky the distributor kept the project. I was afraid they

would change their mind.”

She says filmmaking is a cut-throat business but all of the creative industry is like that. “Part of it is that we get to use our creative talents to express ourselves, and it doesn’t have a commercial value in our society like the sciences for instance.” She adds, “There is a lot of competition to be seen, known, recognized.”

A lot of things coincided to bring Stoddard to where she is today. Her father was a native New Yorker who worked as a documentary filmmaker for NBC. Her education in Arlington centered on creative writing and visual arts; and she still remembers Mr. Russell, her Jamestown teacher. By the time she was at Williamsburg Middle School she says she ran a wonderful weekly arts club with her sister “where we would hang out and draw.”

In high school she remembers another incredible art teacher and

became associated with “Teen,” a national arts magazine and got to interview Laura Bush at the White House.

She headed off to Grinnell College in Iowa on a scholarship for a year and then graduated in arts at VCU after which she received her MFA at City College of New York. Now she is an MA Oral History candidate at Columbia University. Stoddard always has projects in different phases and is continually looking for different partnerships and grants.

Her short film “Uncontested” just premiered, she is preparing a talk at William & Mary. Her play “Tank” is just entering its fourth week at a small theatre close to Penn Station with the idea to pitch it to a larger theatre.

She says New York City is the place to be. “New York It is a place for artists with a more independent artistic feel. It really has all of the creative interests.”

ENTERTAINMENT

MONTH OF OCTOBER

Urban Agriculture Month Activities.

1-3 p.m. At Arlington Central Library, Arlington. Urban Agriculture Month shines a spotlight on the significant role urban agriculture plays in our regional and local food system. This event will feature discussions on maximizing food production in an urban setting, demonstration sessions, and a reading of a proclamation naming October Urban Agriculture Month in Arlington County. We hope you'll get inspired to garden and get involved!

Program Schedule:

Arlington County Urban Agriculture Month Proclamation
Northern Virginia Conservation Trust & new Plot Against Hunger garden School Gardens
Garden spotlight – Walter Reed Garden
Indoor Farming Update: Headwinds Developing
Announcements

After the program ends, you can visit and chat with partner organizations at educational tables, pick up some free seeds and seedlings, and check out other giveaways and activities. Register for free here. <https://tinyurl.com/4bxwvtbx>

DATES AND TIMES

- 4 Oct. 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Harvest and garden work day at Franciscan Monastery Garden Guild (DC). Produce will be donated to Plot Against Hunger.
- 6 Oct. 10:00-11:30 a.m. VCE – Putting Your Garden to Bed (Zoom)
- 10 Oct. 7:30 a.m.-11 a.m. Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger.
- 13 Oct. 10:00-11:30 a.m. VCE – Soil Building for Healthier, Happier Gardens (Zoom)
- 13 Oct. 1-3 p.m. VCE Partners of the Americas Caribbean Conservation Conversation
- 15 Oct. – Area 2 Open House
- 17 Oct. 7:30 a.m.-11 a.m. Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger.
- 20 Oct. 10:00-11:30 a.m. VCE – Succulents and Cacti 101 (Zoom)
- 22 Oct. Ribbon Cutting at new Plot Against Hunger garden with NVCT
- 24 Oct. 7:30 a.m.-11 a.m. Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger.
- 24 Oct. Causes and Cocktails with Volunteer Arlington
- 25 Oct. Charity night at Sushi Zen
- 27 Oct. 10:00-11:30 a.m. VCE – Science & Mythos: Plant Names & the Science Behind Them (Zoom)
- 31 Oct. 7:30 a.m.-11 a.m. Gleaning at area farms with Plot Against Hunger.

MONTH OF OCTOBER

"The Pluviophile" Exhibit. At Gallery Underground, 2100 Crystal Drive, Crystal City, Arlington. Artist Barry Barnett Keith's art exhibit in honor of his older sister's recent passing. Keith is a graduate of Alexandria City School (T.C. Williams) and a native Alexandrian with a good following in the area. He is an educator and mentor (21 years teaching art and design) in Prince George's County Schools. A reception will be held Oct. 6 from 5-7 p.m.

CHECK OUT THE PLANT CLINICS!

The Arlington Central Library Plant Clinic at 1015 N Quincy St, Arlington operates on Wednesdays from 6:00 - 7:45 pm. The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St,

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Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7:00 - 9:30 am. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N 14th and N Courthouse Roads operates on Saturdays from 8:00 - 11:00 am. The Del Ray Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 - 11:00 am. The Fairlington Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at 3308 S Stafford St, Arlington, operates on Sundays from 9:00 - 11:00 am.

SEPT. 29 TO NOV. 5

"The Tell-Tale Heart." At Synetic Theater, Arlington. Step into the eerie world of Edgar Allan Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart, where madness takes hold and the boundaries of sanity blur. In this twisted tale, an eccentric old man and his caretaker embark on a lethal dance that spirals into madness and murder. With dark humor and a haunting atmosphere, Synetic invites you to question: who is the crazy one? Visit www.synetictheater.org for dates and showtimes.

FRIDAY/OCT. 6

Putting Your Garden to Bed. 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., ONLINE. It may be autumn, but it's not time to abandon the garden! This class offers easy tips for onsite composting, providing winter habitat and food for wildlife, and end-of-season care of tools and equipment. Did you know that fall is the ideal time to plant trees, shrubs, and perennials? We'll help you identify opportunities to learn from this year's successes and failures (we all have them) to lay the groundwork for next year. Speakers are Extension Master Gardeners Joan McIntyre, who leads the VCE-MGNV Neighborhood Champions program that supports Extension Master Gardeners as they offer gardening expertise to their neighborhoods, and Molly Newling, who excels at teaching the fine points of pruning. Free. RSVP at <http://mgmv.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/> to receive a link to participate.

SATURDAY/OCT. 7

Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show. 7:30 p.m. At Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle. Hosted by Christian Hunt, this experience features comedy from the DC area's finest comics. The headliner for October's show is the hilarious Dom Grayer.

SATURDAY/OCT. 7

Arlington Civitans Open Air Flea Market. 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. At 4001 15th Street North, Arlington. The Civitan Open Air Flea Market, one of Northern Virginia's largest and oldest public flea markets, is located in the I-66 garage in North Arlington adjacent to Washington-Lee high school and the Arlington Planetarium at 15th and North Quincy Streets, in Arlington. Here you'll find over 150 vendors selling a variety of goods ranging from books, clothes, furniture, garden tools, household goods, jewelry, shoes, toys, records, and so much more. One man's junk is another man's treasure so you are guaranteed to find something to tickle your fancy and save you money at the same time.

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Now You See It— Now You Don't

FROM PAGE 3

Olivet United Methodist Church on the second Saturday of every month.

But the regulars say it's just not the same as being able to stop by the Little Free Pantry whenever you want to pick up some supplementary food. "You could go every day if you want. You could go at midnight or four in the afternoon. What if you're hungry on Thursday? There were no restrictions. And what are we supposed to do finding out at the last minute when we couldn't plan and we have no transportation to go somewhere else."

The Connection was unable to reach Diane Kresh, Director of Libraries, for comment but Anneliesa Alprin, Communications Manager for the Public Library, released this explanation. She says since the Little Free Food Pantry was built and installed it has been maintained and stocked by community members, the Friends of the Arlington Public Library and library staff.

"Post-COVID the Library can no longer support the Little Free Food Pantry. Several factors contributed to making this difficult decision. The Library's inability to monitor the Pantry to ensure its structural stability, food safety of its contents, public health standards in keeping it rodent and pest free and appropriate usage.

"The library does not have the staff capacity, expertise or knowledge necessary to maintain an effective food pantry program that meets best practices and is sustainable."

Alprin says, "The County Board and the County Manager were made

aware of this decision as well as leadership at the Department of Human Services and AFAC. The Library Director also notified the family of the scout whose generosity of spirit and concern for the welfare of others led to the Pantry's creation. Libraries was involved due to the fact that the Director, Diane Kresh, was one of the leaders addressing food insecurity during the pandemic."

In addition, she explains that the Food Security Strategic Plan for Arlington adopted in October of 2020 didn't identify the immediate area surrounding the Central Library as a neighborhood with unmet needs that would need increased food access.



AFAC collection boxes are located inside the Central library and most branches as well as businesses and county offices. AFAC also posted Hunger Month information inside five library branches.

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

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Certain About Burton



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

The little dog, affectionately referred to as, recently celebrated his first birthday. And as I anticipated when I wrote my initial column about him/me having gotten a puppy for the first time in 28 years or so: "Burton For Certain," he has been everything a dog owner could want. He's a sweet and loving golden retriever (it's rare that the breed is anything else) who still believes - at almost 75 pounds, that he's a lapdog. Have you ever tried eating off a snack table with a big dog sitting on your lap and sniffing your plate/fork? It's not easy. Part of what brings me joy about Burton is the story of how and why he was christened, so to speak, with his name. I'm always interested in pet names and their stories, if any, which people are only too happy to share about their pet's given name. And Burton, as with Brandy and Bailey before him (both liquor-related), has a good backstory which I will now share.

My wife, Dina surprised me with puppy-Burton on a Saturday morning in early October one year ago. Dina was helping a neighbor, or so I was told, that morning, when she got up at 6 am to drive four hours to Lexington, Va. What little did I know?: As Sergeant Schultz said so often on "Hogan's' Heroes" so too did "I know nothing." Of course, I didn't have a dog name at the ready since I was clueless what Dina had started planning three months earlier in June when she first met the breeder in Harper's Ferry on a Saturday when we took a day trip with some friends. Fast forward, when she arrived home later that afternoon, puppy in tow, with the associated puppy paraphernalia, some of which had been spread around the neighborhood - to maintain the surprise, I was nearly speechless at the sight of him. He was adorable and lovable. Dina placed him in my arms, and I very nearly started to cry. I really hadn't thought much about a puppy. Ever since I was diagnosed with cancer, I had always thought that with the indeterminate issues with my health and life expectancy, especially factoring in the side effects - and demands of chemotherapy, that adding to the family when we might be subtracting from it was a risky proposition. Nevertheless, here I was back in the dog business for the first time in 14 years. Having not considered a canine addition, given the cancer diagnosis and the five cats we already had in house, I was not thinking expansion. As such, I was totally unprepared for Burton emotionally (physically I could mostly manage, although occasionally a little challenging on some days when I felt the effects of 14 years of chemotherapy), and since I had no inkling as to what Dina was planning, I certainly didn't know what to call him.

For the next day, we struggled to give him a proper name. We did agree that his name should begin with the letter "B," given the names of our two previous goldens, but other than that, we were stuck. The only name we could produce was "Buddy," but other than the "B" part, we weren't all that enamored, particularly Dina. I can still see her sitting on our living room couch that morning, cellphone in hand, scrolling pet name lists on the internet, as we tried to resolve this pet-naming dilemma. Frustrated by the choices we were considering; we were temporarily at a loss. Then, out of the blue, as I'm sitting in a wingchair perpendicular to the couch, I get a text from Dina's father in New York - who rarely texts. He knew about the puppy surprise but had no idea that we were focused on finding a name at that moment or were as stuck as we were, struggling to find a suitable name and beginning quite frankly to get a bit frustrated. Granted, it was barely a day, and we hadn't had much time to get our arms - and head around the changes to our life (me more so than Dina obviously since she was the "surpriser"), but we wanted to call him something other than "puppy." And until we had a name, it's almost as if the surprise wasn't quite finished and therefore, we couldn't move on and/or plan for our new future as dog owners once again.

Then I hear my phone-text ring, look down on my lap, and see a text out of the blue/unsolicited, from Dina's father. I click on his name and read the message. I immediately smile and look over to the Dina on the couch, still scrolling/researching names. I snicker and say, "Dina, your father has just come up with the dog's name: Burton." And since we live in Burtonsville and live in the Isaac Burton House and the name begins with "B," we had found/been given Burton's name. And when I said so, Dina smiled back at me and chuckled: "Perfect," and so he was officially named. Soon thereafter, his AKC registration confirmed it: "Sir Isaac Burton of Burtonsville."

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

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUIHE/THE CONNECTION

Paws on The Pike

Yapping and barking mingle with the sound of DJ Edward Daniels at Penrose Square Outdoor Plaza on Saturday for the annual Paws on the Pike from 1-5 p.m. Photographer Alex Sakes is on site to take professional free dog portraits, and is booked solid all afternoon. A few dogs and some owners wander the grounds dressed in costumes for the contest to take place at 4 pm. Booths crowd the

square including Clarendon Animal Care, Animal Welfare League, Arlington Public Library (early voting has begun), Gimmemore, VCA Animal Hospitals, and Wiggly Pooche. Bowls of water line the entrance and dog treats are available at many of the tables with information on animal control, sale of fancy harnesses, handmade dog nutty butter bites, pet hospitals and dog adoption. The event is sponsored by the Columbia Pike Partnership.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



It takes whistling, cajoling and exasperation but finally the Shih Tzu “Apple” and the Chihuahua “Koko” decide to smile along with their owner Kien Vuong for their pet portrait at Paws on the Pike Saturday, Sept. 30. Alex Sakes, freelance photographer hired for the event, says he is booked solid from 1-5 pm with appointments.



“Everyone look at the camera. Oh well.” Ian Crostian and Anna Posada bring their Labrador retriever Scooby and their Yorkie Mylo to Paws on the Pike.



Taline Dilanian displays her homemade dog treats at Paws on the Pike. “The nutty butter bites with peanut butter and local honey to help with allergies is the most popular along with the chicken treats made without salt and with vegetarian chicken.” Her display also includes specialties like beef esophagus \$3 for medium and bully slices (buffalo muscle). Dilanian started Gimmemore two years ago and markets her online business at farmers’ markets and festivals like today.



Clarendon Animal Hospital attracted children as well as their dogs with its spinning wheel and prizes for correct answers. “What is the most popular pet?” The answer comes back “dogs” (for after all this is a dog event.) “Oh no, the answer is cats. Want to play again?” This time the player wins a ball or maybe her dog wins the tennis ball?