



Eva Coleman, 2, of Arlington, and Elijah Coleman, 8, of Arlington, create treat bags to go home with adopted animals at Fairfax County Animal Shelters. It was part of a day of volunteer service organized by Volunteer Fairfax.

The Arlington Connection

MILK-Day of Service For All Ages

Service Project:
Make treat bags to go home with adopted animals.

Remembering Charlie Clark
PAGE 3

Food for Neighbors Helps With Teen Hunger
PAGE 8

PHOTO/VOLUNTEER FAIRFAX OPINION, PAGE 4 ❖ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 5 ❖ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6



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	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
FRANKLIN	7964	757	SKILLET RD /RTE 757	STORY CREEK	12/29/2023
FRANKLIN	7858	635	EDWARDSVILLE RD /RTE 635	LYNVILLE CREEK	12/19/2023
ALBEMARLE	712	641	BURNLEY STATION RD	BURNLEY BRANCH	12/6/2023

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.

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.

"FLOURISHING AFTER 55"

Office of 55+ Programs
Department of Parks and Recreation
300 N. Park Dr., Arlington, VA
22203 703-228-4747

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.

Advanced care planning, presented by Kathleen Garces-Foley, Director, Coalition to Improve Advanced Care (CIAC), Wednesday, Jan. 17, 11 a.m., learn how to create an advanced directive and Wednesday, Jan. 24, 11 a.m., discuss the directive, one on one with a volunteer, Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912404-04.

Opera appreciation group to hear musical selections from "The Consul" by Gian Carlo Menotti, Wednesday, Jan. 17, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Professional commentary by George Cecchetti. Registration # 912300-05.

Matinee showing of "The Hundred-Foot Journey" (2014) (PG), Thursday, Jan. 18, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 912804-09.

Thrifting update by a group of 55+ participants who produced a list last year of the best local thrift shops, Thursday, Jan. 18, 1 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-08.

Senior fraud prevention to avoid scams and financial exploitations presented by Arlington County's Financial Crimes Unit, Thursday, Jan. 18, 11:30 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912400-11.

Global energy update from Mark Finley, an expert on energy and global oil, Rice University Baker Institute, Thursday, Jan. 18, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center, registration # 912400-13 or virtual, registration # 912400-14.

Virginia's wild mammals, presentation by Park Naturalist Bobbi Farley, Thursday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m., virtual. Learn how local species survive in the wild and urban environments. Registration # 912400-24.

History discussion led by Dwight Rodgers of Encore Learning with focus on cultural, economic and political histories, Thursday, Jan. 18, 1 p.m., virtual. Registration # 912402-09.

Just beneath the surface, Community Arts Programmer Jim Halloran will explain the context, history and techniques of famous artists, Friday, Jan. 19, 10 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912302-05.

Short story reading and discussion of "The Nine Billion Names of God" by Arthur Clarke, Monday, Jan. 22, 1 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center, registration # 912402-24 or virtual, registration # 912402-25.

Secrets revealed of famous artists' techniques, presented by Community

Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Monday, Jan. 22, 10:30 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912302-08.

Evening bunco, a fun dice game, Tuesday, Jan. 23, 6 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912600-12.

Pre-K winter bingo, assist Lubber Run Creative Preschoolers to learn shapes, numbers and colors, through bingo games, Tuesday, Jan. 23, 10 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 912600-07.

Have fun learning about Arlington's rich history, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 912402-07.

Discuss current magazine articles in popular magazines, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 11 a.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Facilitated by librarian Vicky McCaffrey. Registration # 912402-20.

Join a discussion in Spanish about current events impacting the Latino community, Wednesday, Jan. 24, 11 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 912402-17.

Introduction to basic Spanish, learn vocabulary, grammar and conversational phrases, Thursday, Jan. 25, 12:30 p.m., virtual. Taught by Lubber Run 55+ Center Director Ashley Gomez. Registration # 912650-04.

Paint and sip with Community Arts Programmers Thursday, Jan. 25, 10 a.m., virtual. Recreate artworks on display at area museums. Registration # 912303-14.

Book exchange at Lubber Run 55+ Center, Thursday, Jan. 25, 6 p.m. Please make sure books are in good condition. Registration # 912801-03.

Around the world to Iceland with Ragnhildur Arnorsdottir, cultural counselor and public diplomacy officer, With the Embassy of Iceland Thursday, Jan. 25, 3:30 p.m., virtual. Registration # 912400-16.

Managing Arlington's trees and forests, join Urban Forest Manager Vincent Verweij for a tree-top view of Arlington, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2 p.m., virtual. Registration # 912400-28.

History discussion group led by Dwight Rodgers of Encore Learning, Thursday, Jan. 25, 1 p.m., virtual. Registration # 912402-10.

Movie matinee of "Till" (2022) (PG 13), in honor of Black History Month, Friday, Jan. 26, 12:30 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 912804-06.

American vagabond, 55+ volunteer Tom Curtis will share his adventures hitchhiking around Central and South America, Friday, Jan. 26, 10:30 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-19.

Get moving with Dance Bingo, Friday, Jan. 26, 11:15 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Created by 55+ Center Director Jennifer Weber. Combines cardio dancing and the luck of the draw in Bingo. Registration #912600-05.

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REMEMBERING

Arlington says Good-bye to Charlie Clark

Journalist, storyteller, historian and above all, Arlingtonian.

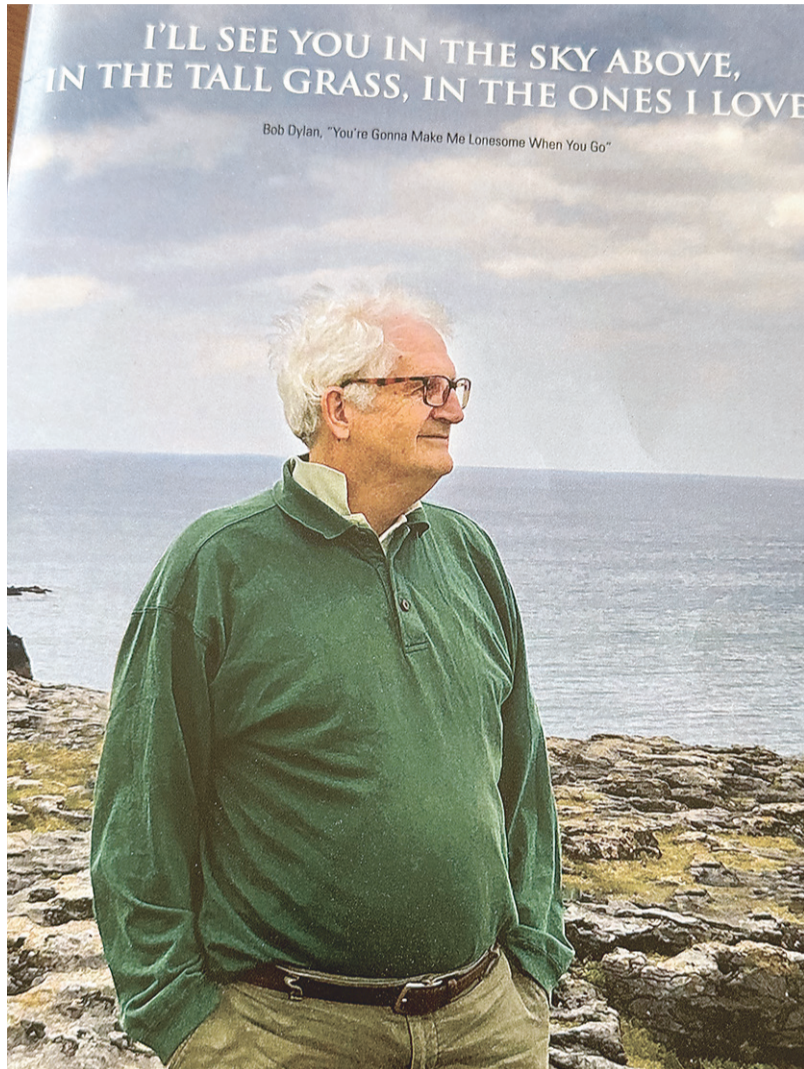
BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

I didn't know Charlie Clark well, but that didn't keep me from attending his memorial service at Yorktown High School on Dec. 16. He had died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, a rare neurodegenerative disorder that destroyed his ability to function in just a few months. He was only 70. I had read his column "Our Man in Arlington" in the Falls Church News Press and that told me a lot about the man. Then I had run into him once while reporting on Fire Station Eight, after Arlington's African-American community won the battle to keep the station they had founded in its original location. Charlie had reported on that too. He was on a first name basis with everyone in the Halls Hill community, and unlike other journalists present, he came up, introduced himself, gave me a big smile, and complimented me on my paper's coverage of the issue. He wasn't in competition with anyone, and he was just what I had imagined him to be: a really nice guy. Apparently I was not alone in thinking so. The Yorktown High auditorium was overflowing.

Clark's memorial told the story of a fun loving, steadfast friend, musician, husband and father, good listener, naturally curious and outgoing, devoted Arlingtonian. As a graduate of Yorktown, he maintained a network of alumni, often the cement that held the group together for reunions, according to those who spoke. Some of the attendees at the memorial had flown in from across the country, one a roommate from college, just to honor him. Charlie's friendship had meant a lot to all of them.

Jon Rintels, his childhood friend, told the crowd about how he and Clark had grown up together in Rivercrest. They were best friends all through Williamsburg Middle School and Yorktown High. They spent their days exploring the creek, what we often refer to as "Gulf Branch," and they were totally unsupervised as they did, as most children in the 50s and 60s were. They collected stamps and coins. They did the things boys did, played in a band, played football. Clark cut his teeth on the Yorktown High newspaper. He was then and remained, a loyal and constant friend, and Rintels wasn't sure how he was going to manage not having Charlie

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Charlie Clark

COVER OF MEMORIAL BOOKLET



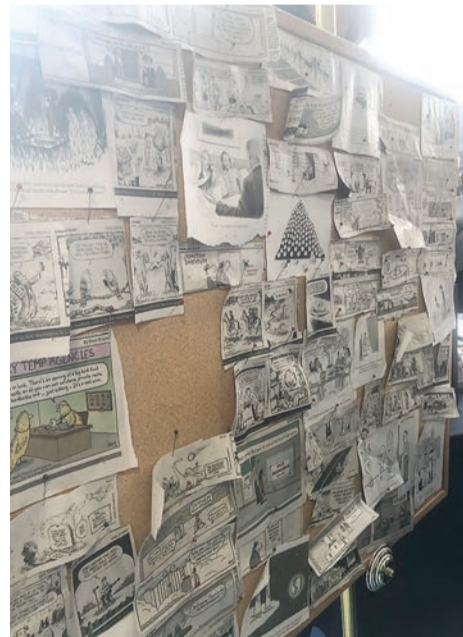
Yorktown High School's auditorium was full of people who came to honor Charlie Clark.



Attendees looked over the books Clark had written on Arlington's history and other memorabilia from a lifetime in Arlington.

around for the next few years.

Del. Patrick Hope said he had been the Clarks' delegate for 14 years. He said Clark "was one of the most interesting people I have ever known. ... He was a histori-



The newspaper cartoons Charlie Clark carefully clipped for friends every year were still in his desk drawer when he died. Guests were asked to take one with them.

an, and used his journalism skills to tell the story. He was everybody's go-to-guy," Hope reminisced.

Martha Clark Franks talked about Charlie's impromptu visits to her front porch,

often on his bike, and his ability to connect - really connect - to so many different people. He had time for people.

Other friends recounted how Clark had annually sent them clippings of cartoons he had particularly liked, making them laugh, and when he died he had a drawer full of the ones he had collected over 2023 to send to friends this Christmas. Attendees were invited to take one of those, as they were displayed outside the auditorium, a last memento of someone who had often made them laugh.

For those of us who as small town newspaper writers try to do what Clark did so well, report local news, chronicle the stories Arlington has to offer, profile the people who make Arlington special, preserve history and community in an evolving town ... he was a prolific, creative, plugged in master craftsman of his profession ... and one of those people who make Arlington very special indeed.

A fund in Charlie Clark's name has been set up at the Arlington Historical Society. To donate, see: <https://arlingtonhistorical-society.org/campaigns/donate-to-the-charlie-clark-memorial-historical-preservation-fund/>

<https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/2023/12/in-memorial-charlie-clark>

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Expanded Virginia Gambling to be Considered by General Assembly

By SENATOR ADAM P. EBBIN

Virginia's legal gaming landscape has shifted rapidly over the past five years. In decades past, legal gambling was limited to the Virginia Lottery, authorized in the early 1990s through a statewide referendum. Prior to five years ago, the only other legal form of wagering in Virginia was charitable bingo and "pull-tab" machines. Charitable gaming provides a sizable portion of funding for many of Virginia's nonprofit organizations, and is regulated by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

However, in 2018, Virginia expanded gaming when the General Assembly legalized wagering on "Historical Horse Racing" (HHR) machines at the Colonial Downs racetrack in New Kent County and six other sites, including the Town of Dumfries in Northern Virginia. The satellite locations required local approval though a local referendum before they could move forward. The HHR machines are overseen by the Virginia Racing Commission.

In 2020, the General Assembly passed legislation that authorized gambling on most professional sporting events, overseen by the Virginia Lottery. Sports betting is available online, on a cell phone, or at a Virginia-based casino and other certain locations.

In addition, the General Assembly - in 2020 - legalized casino gaming (overseen by the Virginia Lottery) at up to five locations

pending approval in a local referendum. They include Portsmouth, Bristol, Norfolk, Danville, and Richmond. Since 2020, four of those cities have passed the required referendum and opened a casino. However, Richmond voters defeated a referendum to approve a casino two times in a span of three years.

Three of the major gaming issues in 2024 are the potential legalization of "gray machines" (or "skill games"), the possible addition of casinos in Northern Virginia and Petersburg, and the legalization of slot machine-like Video Gaming Terminals (VGTs) in restaurants around the state.

As I wrote in the Richmond Times-Dispatch this past fall, I am not a fan of gray machines, primarily because they are often encountered in nontraditional gaming environments, like convenience stores where families might shop for everyday items, or restaurants. This contrasts with destination-oriented gaming sites like a casino, where a consumer has made a conscious decision to seek out gambling. For several years, the machines operated in a "gray area" that was not explicitly legal.

In my opinion, gray machines don't serve the consumer interests of Virginia's gambling public. Unfortunately, as of this writing, the bill to legalize gray machines does not contain a system that the Commonwealth could verify or audit to ensure that the Department of



Sen. Adam Ebbin

Taxation and the small business owners where the machines are located get their fair share of the proceeds. I am also concerned that some proposals to legalize gray machines do not contain protections to dissuade wagering by underage Virginians.

I also expect that bills to establish casinos in the Tysons area of Northern Virginia, along with a conference center, and in the City of Petersburg, will generate much attention. As Chairman of the General Laws and Technology Committee, I have appointed a Gaming Subcommittee so that the numerous, and complex gambling bills can be compared and considered, with the exception of one bill that was considered by the Commerce and Labor Committee.

I also serve on the Joint Subcommittee to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a Virginia Gaming Commission to provide a more unified governance of the various forms of gambling in Virginia. As described above, the current landscape for Virginia gaming involves the Virginia Racing Commission, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Virginia Lottery. I believe that one single entity overseeing what is now a regulatory patchwork would better serve the public.

39th Senate District Town Hall - Sunday, Jan. 21

This Sunday, Jan. 21, from 1 pm

to 3 pm, at Alexandria City High School, please join me and Delegates Charniele Herring, Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Alfonso Lopez, and Adele McClure for a 39th Senate District Town Hall. The event will be moderated by Virginia public radio reporter Michael Lee Pope, who will pose questions pre-submitted online or at the event. If you would like to RSVP, or pre-submit a question, visit www.adamebbin.com/townhallrsvp

Stay in the Know

You can stay on top of General Assembly events through the Virginia Legislative Information System (LIS) website. On that site, you can find many helpful links, including:

All legislation introduced, including the bills that I am putting forward;

You can find listings of all members of the General Assembly, as well as the committees that hear legislation, and the regularly-updated meetings calendar that lists when committee meetings and other events are taking place;

You can find a live feed of the State Senate, and any meetings of Senate committees here, as well as archived footage of recent State Senate hearings and floor proceedings.

My new legislative email address is SenatorEbbin@senate.virginia.gov. You can also reach us at our new Richmond phone number 804-698-7539.

It is my continued honor to represent the people of the 39th Senate District.

LETTER FROM GAZA

Living Nightmare From Which There is No Escape

Residents of Gaza have spent years unable to move freely.

By NAJLA DROOBY
THE CONNECTION

Editor's Note: Najla Drooby is a McLean resident who has written for the Connection before. Her former co-worker, Khaled, worked for her as a software engineer in Abu Dhabi when she was an IT project manager.

er, building a cadastre system for the UAE. He has called her several times in the past year asking if she knows a way to get out of Gaza. Khaled is stuck in Gaza with his little children of 4 and 6, and his terrified family. Full names have been omitted to protect him from reprisals. He wrote this letter to Najla to describe the continued bombing, his fear that he will not survive, and his utter disbelief at the lack of international response.

Hi Najla, alive here. I wrote this during the blackout. See if it's any good:

[Internal dialog]

"Open your eyes Khaled, open your eyes, it's just another nightmare."

Khaled: Have I gone mad? My eyes are wide open, I am well awake, this is reality.

Mind: but this is also how it feels when you are having a bad dream, it feels so real, yet the sigh when you open your eyes, and the racing heartbeats, realizing that it was just a bad dream, remember the feeling? Let's try again: "Open your eyes."

Khaled: I am trying.

Mind: This can't be real. Look at your kids, they are running for their lives, the building next to you

will be bombarded. Look at their faces, they were frightened before; this is something else, Khaled, there is no coming back from this moment, for them and for you. It's a turning point. Let's try again "Open your eyes"

Khaled: I am awake.

Mind: You can't be. Look at your mother. She aged 10 years in one day. Look at your wife. She is silent, in complete shock. You have been to wars before, they were frightened before, but this is something else. You know better than this, the sound of bombardments

SEE LIVING NIGHTMARE. PAGE 7

ENTERTAINMENT

JAN. 3-26

Arlington Artists Alliance Board: Above & Beyond. At Gallery Underground, Arlington. Gallery Underground presents Arlington Artists Alliance Board: Above & Beyond, a group show in appreciation of our hard-working Board members. The Alliance Board members will include their favorite artworks and/or pieces that best exemplify their varied styles and medium. They often work tirelessly behind the scenes, so this group show will highlight their efforts and showcase their artistic talents. The opening reception and awards ceremony will be on Friday, January 5th from 5-7 p.m.



Watch "Claybourne Elder: If the Stars Were Mine" on Monday, Jan. 29, 2024 at Signature Theatre in Arlington.

FRIDAY/JAN. 19

Tips, Tricks, and Tools. 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., Online. Ever wonder what Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) know that you don't? In this talk, you'll learn some of what EMGs have learned either through training or hard experience. EMG Alyssa Ford Morel has gathered helpful tidbits from her colleagues with the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia and compiled them in this presentation. Free. RSVP at <http://mgvn.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/> to receive a link to participate.

SATURDAY/JAN. 20

Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington, 1669 - 1865. 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at Lubber Run Community Center, 300 N. Park Drive, Arlington. Presented by Arlington AAUW. Speaker is Jessica Kaplan, Arlington Historical Society, Member Board of Directors and Editor, Arlington Historical Magazine.

FRIDAY/JAN. 26

Art of the Garden Journal. 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., Online. Reading this, you might be saying to yourself, "I am not an artist. I can't even draw a stick figure." If that's the case, you're not alone. You might also be wondering why being able to make art of any sort would be an important skill for a gardener to employ. Join Mary Jennings, professional artist, instructor, and, certified Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalist, to learn about the value behind creating a Garden Journal filled with citizen science, data, field notes and yes, notable artwork created with your own unique mark making skills. In this presentation, you will understand the basics of color theory and how to compose your journal to serve you best. Your work might even result in the a right plant in the right place! Free. RSVP at <http://mgvn.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/>

tion-classes/ to receive a link to participate.

MONDAY/JAN. 29

Claybourne Elder: If the Stars Were Mine. 9:30 p.m. At Signature Theatre, Arlington. Seen at Signature in Sunday in the Park with George and Passion, Broadway's gay ex-Mormon dad Claybourne Elder, star of Company, Sunday in the Park..., and HBO's "The Gilded Age," presents If the Stars Were Mine, a hilarious evening that's part cabaret and part stand-up. Using his favorite music from Sondheim, the Great American Songbook, Whitney Houston, and beyond, Clay explores sex, fatherhood, and what exactly happens when you eat the body of Christ.

JAN. 30 TO FEB. 23

Wish You Were Here: A Solo Show by Medina Roberts. At Gallery Underground, Arlington. In a series of large-scale paintings depicting D.C.'s City Center, are included the words "Wish You Were Here" — painted in dedication to Syd Barrett, the original front man of Pink Floyd, who, in 1968, left the group after his mental and physical health struggles due to heavy drug use. The artist will donate a portion of her sales from this show to the Addiction Policy and Practice Program at the Georgetown University Master of Science department.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

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 amazing experience features comedy from the D.C. area's finest comics. The

headliner for February's show is the hilarious Shelley Kim. Visit capitalcityshowcase.com

SUNDAY/FEB. 11

Empty Bowls. 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; and 12:45 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. At St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane, Arlington. Empty Bowls is a community fundraising event and luncheon featuring hot soups donated by local restaurants and served in hand-thrown bowls created by local artists. Each \$55 ticket will include a hand-made bowl as a gift to take home. Also your choice of delicious soups, bread, dessert and more.

THURSDAY/FEB. 15

Rock Spring Garden Club Meeting: Beyond Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme: Learn to Grow and Use a Dozen Unusual Culinary Herbs with Peg Riccio. At Little Falls Presbyterian Church, Lower Level Friendship Hall, 6025 Little Falls Road, Arlington. Learn how to grow a dozen unusual culinary herbs. For each herb, discover the best time and method to start, cultural requirements, harvesting and preserving techniques, and methods for using them in the kitchen. Visit <https://rockspringgardenclub.com/>

FEB. 16 TO MARCH 24

"Romeo & Juliet." At Synetic Theater, 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington. Set amidst the whirring gears of a giant clock, Shakespeare's timeless tale of star-crossed lovers unfolds as a bitter family feud sends the pair on a race against an ill-fated destiny. With masterful physicality and choreography, Synetic Theater's Romeo and Juliet presents a unique and stunningly visual interpretation of a classic story, capturing emotion with every movement. Visit www.synetictheater.org.

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.

DONATIONS NEEDED

Pet Food Bank. AWLA has established a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to

afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYWdZm4tPw2.

Donations Needed. Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 2700 South 19th St., is seeking to replenish its food pantry. Particularly needed are rice (large bags appreciated,

the pantry will rebag), dry beans, canned vegetables, soup, small jars of peanut butter, small jars of jelly, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations are collected during Mass each Sunday. Visit www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org for more.

ONGOING

Online Salary Negotiation Workshop. AAUW (American Association of University Women) SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 8

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Arlington Property Values See Overall 2.5% Increase

Residential property values increased 3.2 percent, with the average single-family property value increasing from \$798,500 to \$824,700.

Arlington's overall property tax base grew from 2023 following continued residential growth and new construction, while total commercial values showed a slight increase.

The total assessed value of all residential and commercial property in Arlington increased 2.5 percent in calendar year 2024, compared to 3.7 percent growth in 2023. Residential property values increased 3.2 percent while commercial property values increased 1.6 percent. New construction contributed to 1.7 percent of the 2.5 percent tax base growth.

"The increase in residential property values for this year shows the continued attractiveness of our Arlington community, even as we adapt to changing realities," said County Manager Mark Schwartz. "The investment we make in our community from real estate tax revenue helps us to fund the County's high-quality programs and public services for our residents, visitors, and businesses."

Notice of Assessments were mailed to Arlington property owners beginning Jan. 12, 2024.

Look up your 2024 property assessment <https://propertysearch.arlingtonva.us/>

Real estate taxes provide almost 60 percent of total County revenues. The County's real estate tax base is split between residential (55 percent) and commercial (45 percent) property assessments.

Commercial property values increased by 1.6 percent from the previous year. Existing office property values decreased by 11 percent due to continued pressure of office vacancy rates and changing demand for office space, but were partially offset by new construction.

Significant investments in the Crystal City area, among others, bolstered the decreasing overall office market with new construction value added to the tax base. As a result, the overall tax base for the office market was reduced by 8.5 percent.

The average single-family property value increased from

SEE ARLINGTON, PAGE 7
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LETTER

Living Nightmare

is like nothing before, the screams on the streets, does this sound real to you? I am telling you it's not one of my tricks. You need to "Open your eyes"

"13 Oct, 0200 hrs, IDF: Everybody has to move from north and Gaza governorates to south Wadi Gaza. The implementation should start with the first sunlight."

Mind: OPEN YOUR EYES, IT'S JUST ANOTHER NIGHTMARE, NOW.

Khaled: What is this? Is this another Nakba? Is this real? Shall we leave? Are we going to come back if we left? My home that my father built - it has his presence still, his portraits on the walls, What should we take with us? Should we go? Look at the walls, hug them, kiss the tiles on the floor, just in case, pack the air, pack the memories, pack your father's soul that's still there in his old possessions. Pack your kids' childhood here, their first steps, their first words, the laughs, the birthdays, the cries, the tantrums, pack your wife's love, the first days, all the days, the fights that only brought you closer, the moments when you entertained your friends, the Ramadans and the Eids, the Christmases and the New Years, the Classics, and the movie nights, pack your successes, and your failures, pack it all.

Mind: I promise you, if you open your eyes, all of this will be gone, and you will go back to your normal life, now "Open your eyes", but to be safe let's move to the south.

Khaled: Water is running out quickly, there are too many people here, we need to cut back on water consumption, food is scarce, let's cut back on that too, here is our ration, let's work on making that last for the longest time, if we have to go out in search for food, the odds are we will not come back, and if the children are hungry. We give them our share, but what if they are thirsty? This is a good moment to open my eyes.

Mind: "Open your eyes Khaled, open your eyes, it's just another nightmare"

News flash: Baptist hospital bombarded, 1300 people, most of which are children, are killed

Mind: See, humanity can't fail you this



SCREENSHOT FROM VIDEO RESIDENT OF GAZA

The author of this "Letter from Gaza" walked around his bombed neighborhood and took video on Nov. 10, 2023.

much already.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES.

Gaza is wiped out.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES.

Children are killed.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES

The world is watching.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES

A house is destroyed.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES

The world is concerned.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES

His family is gone.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES

A ceasefire is vetoed.

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES

Her entire family is under the rubble

OPEN YOUR EYES.. OPEN YOUR EYES

"We regret to announce a complete cessation of all communications and internet services with the #Gaza Strip in light of the ongoing aggression."

Khaled: how much battery do I have?

Let's go through the photos folder and clean them, look at the girls on the beach, and those dresses on Eid, and here they are on their first day at school. L is really into this horseback riding, H and her beads, the accessories she makes with them are pieces of art. I remember this day, brother was telling the funniest joke, those boring Shisha Thursdays, that day at work was long, still we found time to eat a lot, Mom was over the moon holding the little one, and R looks stunning here... oh, I totally forgot about this day, my sister-in-law's wedding was the talk of the town - for all the wrong reasons. That boring conference, this crazy new year's eve party, and this... I don't need to see this, delete... delete... delete... I didn't realize how happy we were, and how beautiful this city was...

Mind: "See - maybe this is where you are now, open your eyes Khaled, open your eyes."

Khaled: My eyes are wide open, and I am well awake, the nightmare is the reality for us to face, but let the world close their eyes, and let the humanity fail us over and over again, and remember that as humanity failed here, it failed everywhere."

* Note by Drooby about Khaled: "When he worked for me, Khaled never missed a beat at work despite the fact that his family was in Gaza under continuous Israeli bombardment, one of many previous attacks on Gaza. He could not go home over the holidays because it took too long to get through the bureaucracy and Israeli checkpoints. When the contract ended, he chose to forego a successful IT career in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to go back to his family and his ancestral home. He married a few years ago and spent quality time with his father before his father passed away. The last time Gaza was bombed heavily, he begged me to help him get out but the State department would not consider taking in any Palestinians as refugees because Israel's operation was not a war. This time, Israel declared it a war, yet he can't get on an evacuation list even though he works for UNICEF which managed to get its own international staff to safety."

Arlington Property Values See Overall 2.5% Increase

FROM PAGE 6

\$798,500 to \$824,700.

For 2024, approximately 70 percent of residential property owners saw their assessed value increase while the rest remained unchanged or declined. Residential properties include condominiums, townhouses and detached homes.

The apartment sector experienced strong growth, up almost 9.5 percent, boosted by significant new construction. General commercial (malls, retail stores, gas stations, commercial condos, etc.) property values showed slight declines in value, decreasing 2.4 percent, while hotel/motel properties increased 1.7 percent as their business has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Pressures for the Upcoming County Budget

The growth in expenses is outpacing the growth in revenue, creating challenges in the FY 2025 budget. The commercial office market's high vacancy rate continues to im-

pact revenue, while expense pressures include increasing costs, higher interest rates and wage growth.

In December 2023, the County Board directed the County Manager to propose a balanced budget with multiple options including:

- ❖ Service and program "efficiencies," including options for service delivery reductions and eliminating activities that are no longer priorities along with the possibility of an increase to the real estate tax rate, providing it meets with certain County Board parameters;

- ❖ Funding WMATA operations at the legislatively allowed maximums, provided that no tax increase or program reductions should fund amounts above these levels;

- ❖ Prudent use of one-time funding;

- ❖ Full funding of the collective bargaining agreements;

- ❖ Funding affordable housing priorities, including eviction prevention, housing

grants, and maintaining level ongoing funding for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund;

- ❖ Provide funding and/or program options to help address emergency food assistance;

- ❖ Funding Arlington Public Schools consistent with the Principles of Revenue Sharing.

The County Manager will present his proposed budget to the Board in February 2024.

About Real Estate Assessments

Real estate assessments are the County's opinion of fair market value for each parcel of real property in Arlington. Assessments are made annually using accepted methods, standards and techniques of the real estate appraisal and assessment profession. For more information, visit the County webpages on real estate assessments. <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Topics/Real-Estate/Assessments>.

Nothing Much to Say



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Given that it's Mon., Jan. 1st and the Connection is in the middle of a two-week hiatus from publishing, I am nonetheless attempting to write a relatively time-sensitive column ahead of its Jan. 17th publication date, as a column for Jan. 10 has previously been submitted. Which as you regular readers know is part of what I try to do weekly, so you all are current, to the degree my "currency" matters that is. And writing something current on Jan. 1st for publication on Jan. 17th is hardly likely to be current.

Moreover, considering the 24/7 news cycle, especially as it relates to cancer patients, two-plus weeks is an eternity and is the very definition of stale. Yet here I sit, pen in hand, trying to write something that will still be fresh - and interesting, in 16 days or so. Here goes:

For the moment (more like two weeks going on three; not sure if the end is in sight), I am off my cancer medicine. Unfortunately, for the wrong reasons: side effects negatively impacting a major organ. I have always feared that my cancer treatment might have to be adjusted/stopped because the side effects were causing other problems. (I saw this happen to my mother-in-law as she finally succumbed to the cancer in her liver.) My other problems have mostly involved my kidneys. Problems caused by the introduction of chemotherapy (an extremely harsh chemical at its worst) into my body. A treatment which while effective at killing cancer cells, is also killing other cells, and as it happens, is filtered through the kidneys as it exits the body. Chemotherapy (not all), but the ones selected for my lung cancer, are hard on the kidneys. Aside from many of the side effects with which most people are familiar: hair loss, fatigue, loss of appetite, to name a few, the less obvious - to the naked eye/casual observer, is what the chemotherapy is doing internally to the patient's major organs. And for the doctor to keep tabs on these effects, regular lab work is required. And it's this lab work which tells the tale initially about your internal affairs. Affairs which might not manifest in any tangible way. The way you find out is the doctor tells you. My tale has been mostly about my creatinine level, a measure of kidney function. Recently my potassium level likewise rang the bell, so its measure has now become as important as my creatinine, and 'important' meaning, how it adversely affects other organs.

So much so that a nephrologist is now on the team (and part of my lab work includes orders from her). I'm grateful for the attention but fearful of the consequences. Consequences which don't likely bode well. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Nevertheless, I am now entering uncharted territory: a cancer patient who, due to complications/side effects of the medicine used to treat the cancer tumors, is no longer on that or any other anti-cancer medication - for the first time in 14-plus years (and not because I'm in remission; conversely, I may be in trouble though). But since my next lab work is not for another week (Jan. 8), what I know now (actually don't know) is as current as the subject matter is going to be. Therefore, in my mind, this waiting period/period of relative inactivity means that all the medical news - about me, that's fit to print, is mostly what I've written about today. There will be nothing new until Jan. 9-ish (too late for the Jan. 10 edition), so the update will have to wait until Jan. 17th. And therein lies my writing dilemma: what can I write about now that won't be old news when it ultimately appears in print? Not that I'm going to be penalized for submitting material that on the day it's made public might be mostly irrelevant, it's more that it might be a waste of your time to read it. But given the timing/timetable, I can only try to write an inevitable wrong by advising you all of the facts when I knew them - weeks ahead of when this column is printed, and let the chips fall where they may.

Chips which very well may change the course of my history. A history which semi baffles the medical professionals entrusted with my care. In short, I've lived longer that originally "prognosed," and my body (including those pesky 'major' organs) have endured the rigors of chemotherapy well. Until now, that might be. And now I may have crossed the Rubicon. The party, such as it's been, may be over. Granted this is all preliminary and simply the musings of a cancer patient dealing with the little information being in the wrong hands: mine, but with nothing to know/learn for two weeks, all I can do is "muse" - and try not to make myself miserable in the interim. Perhaps there's a plan "B" and only time, as they say, will determine whether the content of this column is simply a moment in time, or whether it's a turning point that will change my future/present when all the medical data is reviewed. If you're interested, as Rachel Maddow says: "Watch this space."

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



Dranesville District Supervisor Jimmy Bierman joins Herndon Area Leadership Team members in tackling teen food insecurity. Pictured from left to right are Karen Kucik, Supervisor Bierman, Pabla Ayala, and Fiona Gonsalvez.



Dranesville District Supervisor Jimmy Bierman enthusiastically helps to receive and sort over 3,000 pounds of food and toiletries at Herndon Middle School. Across all of its sorting sites, Food For Neighbors collected over 25,000 pounds of donations.



Kristin Simons (center) and her bartaco team regularly help during Food For Neighbors Red Bag Events.

Food For Neighbors Kicks Off 2024 with New School Partners, Record Food Collection

In Fairfax, Arlington and Loudoun counties, on Saturday, Jan. 13, over 800 Northern Virginia residents braved the cold to collect, sort, and deliver a record-breaking 25,000+ pounds of food and toiletries to 45 schools partnering with Food For Neighbors to tackle teen food insecurity.

Spirits were high as car after car arrived with donations from 1,956 households and food drives from a number of organizations. Such generosity and community spirit has enabled Food For Neighbors to expand its programming every year, with January's Red Bag food and toiletry collection including three new partnering schools — Cedar Lane School in Vienna, Riverside High School in Leesburg, and Washington-Liberty High School in Arlington.

"We're thrilled to add these three new school partners to our Food For Neighbors family," shared Anne O'Flaherty, Food For Neighbors' Director of Operations. "We thank our Red Bag donors and volunteers for making it possible to provide supplemental nutrition to more students in need."

Among Saturday's volunteers was Dranesville District Supervisor Jimmy Bierman, who rolled up his sleeves to help unload and sort over 3,000 pounds of donations at Herndon Middle School.

"I had such a great time volunteering with Food For Neighbors," Bierman said. "Efficient and or-



At Luther Jackson Middle School, volunteers brave the cold to sort food and toiletries for students attending five nearby schools, including Cedar Lane School, one of three new Food For Neighbors partners.

ganized, but most importantly impactful. Thank you to Food For Neighbors for all the work they do to support our students in Fairfax County and beyond."

Other volunteers sorting donations at Herndon Middle School included teams from the Young Men's Service League, Navy Federal Credit Union, and bartaco. Kristin Simons, General Manager of bartaco reston, noted that bartaco encourages community outreach and empowers restaurants to select nonprofits to support. When she started talking to her staff about possibly partnering with Food For

Neighbors, she grasped the reality that food insecurity has touched most everyone in some way.

"The children that my family fosters have relied on programs like these in the past, and I know how impactful it can be to simply not have to worry about your next meal," shared Simons, who was inspired by how her staff rallied around the cause.

Also rallying to address teen food insecurity are Food For Neighbors' 45 partnering schools. There, school staff identify students in need of help and connect them with supplemental food, toi-



Neighbors' popular Red Bag Program. In just one morning, community members throughout the Food For Neighbors operating area collected and sorted over 25,000 pounds of donations generously provided by 1,956 households.

letries, and/or grocery store gift cards.

Family Liaison Samantha Upson-Smith noted, "Riverside High School's new partnership with Food For Neighbors has been an incredible hit. Students are excited and relieved to be able to take home food for the weekends and have snacks during the school day."

Equally excited is Dr. Cheronda Farrish, Principal of Cedar Lane School in Vienna. "The new partnership between Food for Neighbors and Cedar Lane School is making a dynamic impact on our school community," said Dr. Far-

rish. "They are truly a testament to the power of community organizations supporting schools to help students reach their full potential, regardless of their background or circumstances."

Food For Neighbors greatly values its donors, volunteers, and partners. With their help, the nonprofit will be rolling out services to even more schools as the spring approaches. To learn how you can make a difference in the lives of nearby students, visit the Food For Neighbors website or send an email to getinvolved@foodforneighbors.org

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

Work Smart is free online for anyone looking to learn how to negotiate a salary increase or promotion. Why is negotiation so important? AAUW's research on the gender pay gap shows

that, one year out of college, women are already paid significantly less than men. Visit salary.aauw.org. Create a Wildlife Sanctuary. The Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary certification program assists homeowners in restoring their

home's natural habitat by providing information on sustainable gardening practices. These practices include using native plants, removing invasive species, reducing use of pesticides and fertilizers, and creating space for native flora and

fauna. Visit audubonva.org/audubon-at-home-1/ for more. Helmsmen Toastmasters meet Thursdays, 7:30-8:45 a.m. at Pentagon Library and Conference Center. Toastmasters is an international organization that helps everyone speak, think, lead

and listen better. Most clubs are meeting online at this time. Contact Carl Sabath carl.e.sabath.civ@mail.mil or 703-695-2804 or Elizabeth Femrite elizabeth.femrite.civ@mail.mil or 571-256-8674.