

The Arlington Connection

The Ninth Street String Quartet opened the Winter Solstice concert at Saint George's with an introduction by Jennifer Wade, violinist with the quartet.

Poetry, Light, Art and Music

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Across the County & Country, Need for Assisted Living Reaches Crisis

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Free Transit for Youth

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PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

"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.

Trivia buffs challenge, Thursday, Feb. 1, 11 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912600-15.

Woodcarvers meet to pursue their craft of carving and turning wood into objects of beauty, Thursday, Feb. 1, 1-4 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Instruction and some tools available. Newcomers welcome. Drop-in.

Secret lives of famous fakers, delve into several well-known forgers in the art world and how they were caught, Thursday, Feb. 1, 8:30 a.m., virtual. Presented by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen. Registration # 912302-10.

Local underground railroad heroes, program presented by Jenny Masur, anthropologist and author who will share intimate portraits of freedom seekers and those who risked everything to help them, Thursday, Feb. 1, 3-4 p.m., virtual. Registration # 912400-31.

Arlington Spellbinders, oral storytellers who enjoy telling stories to intergenerational listeners at a variety of venues to meet Friday, Feb. 2, 9:30 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Newcomers welcome to come and learn more about the

group. Registration # 912301-14.

Crafternoon social group, experienced yarn crafters sip tea while knitting and crocheting plus a stroll around the indoor walking track, Friday, Feb. 2, 3 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Aurora Hills 55+ Center walkers will meet at the Center for a two to four mile walk, Friday, Feb. 2, 9 a.m. Call 703-228-5722 for more information. Drop-in.

Normal aging versus dementia, presented by Insight Memory Care Center, Monday, Feb. 5, 10:30 a.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 912500-06.

Wake and make, early bird art activity with Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Monday, Feb. 5, 9 a.m., virtual. Be prepared to paint and draw. Supplies not provided. Registration # 912303-20.

Movie matinee, "42" (2013) (PG-13), a biographical film about Jackie Robinson, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 1 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 912804-03.

Intro to ukulele, no experience required, taught by Sandy O'Shea,

Tuesday, Feb. 6, 4 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Limited ukuleles available. Registration # 912304-05.

Opera appreciation group will hear musical selections from "Salome" by Richard Strauss, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Professional commentary by George Cecchetti. Registration # 912300-06.

Acoustic afternoon with music performed by Arlington musicians Phil Rosen, Ed Girovasi and friends, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Event will feature classic pop, folk and blues favorites. Registration # 912301-04.

Pictionary, a fun game where players take turns sketching a randomly assigned picture, while their teammates guess what it is, Thursday, Feb. 8, 6 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Newcomers welcome. Registration # 912600-01.

Latte lounge, homemade by 55+ volunteer Ben Childers, both decaf and regular, Thursday, Feb. 8, 9:30 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912801-04.

History discussion group led

by Dwight Rodgers from Encore Learning, Thursday, Feb. 8, 1 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912402-12.

Artists cookbook, learn "recipes" for art materials using household items, Thursday, Feb. 8, 8:30 a.m., virtual. Presented by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen. Registration # 912303-10.

Beginners quilting class, create beautiful raised images from paper strips using a few basic tools, Thursday, Feb. 8, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Supplies provided. Cost \$18. Registration # 912310-03.

Bunco Bunch, a dice game of luck, no prior experience needed, Friday, Feb. 9, 1:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912600-11.

55+ Travel group will embark on an exciting excursion to Maryland Live! Casino, Hanover, MD, Saturday, Feb. 10. Cost \$11, Arlington resident; \$13, non-resident. Registration # 902402-04.

Painting demonstration by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Monday, Feb. 12, 10:30

a.m., virtual. Picture and a supply list sent prior to class. Registration # 912303-18.

Love songs by rock music legends, Tuesday, Feb. 13, 1:30 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center, registration # 912400-39 or virtual, registration # 912400-40. Live music performed by Carl Gold and Rob Sprouse.

Volleyball games for both beginners and experienced players, Tuesday, Feb. 13, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Valentine's Day afternoon soiree, enjoy sweet refreshments and listen to love songs performed by pianist

Valerie Welsh, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 1 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 912890-10.

History roundtable participants will discuss the impact of unsuccessful rebellions, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 11:15 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912402-06.

SEE FLOURISHING, PAGE 6

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Macy's Closing in Ballston, Laying Off Staff Locally

Arlington store is one of five closing nationwide.

By MIKE SALMON
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The Ballston Quarter shopping area in Arlington is about to lose a big player retail store when Macy's closes as part of a nationwide strategy by Macy's. In the big picture, it's another blow to the retail industry.

Macy's is laying off about 3.5% of its total headcount, which amounts to roughly 2,350 employees, and the iconic department store is closing five locations "to deploy a new strategy to meet the needs of an ever-changing consumer and marketplace," they said.

The five stores to be closed are the Ballston store; plus others in San Leandro, California; Lihue, Hawaii; Simi Valley, California; and Tallahassee, Florida, according to a spokesperson for Macy's Inc. The layoffs were scheduled for Jan. 26, Macy's said.

The Macy's in Ballston Quarter is listed by the shopping center as their "anchor store," and the only department store, but officials fa-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Ballston Quarter has a parking garage and nearby Metro station.

miliar with the closing have plans in place for the space.

According to Marc McCauley, Director of Arlington Economic Development's Real Estate Development Group, it was long anticipated that the Macys would be closing this year.

"Last year the site was approved for a redevelopment of 556 residential units and a ground floor grocer that will create a new an-

chor to the Ballston Quarter project," he said. Construction on the new project will begin late summer or early fall of this year, McCauley added.

As with other retail changes in this area, it started with the pandemic a few years ago. Macy's made significant job cuts in the pandemic's early days. In February 2020, just weeks before the virus was declared a pandemic, the com-

pany announced 2,000 job cuts in its corporate office and the closure of 125 stores, Macy's said. In June 2020, Macy's laid off 3,900 corporate staffers as COVID-19 took a toll on sales, they said.

Chamber Chatter

Since the winter of 2022, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce worked with Arlington Economic Development during the pandem-

ic to assist the businesses affected by COVID-related shutdowns and other restrictions. They issued two rounds of emergency grant funding for Arlington small business community and worked with businesses as part of the ReLaunch initiative, the Chamber said. They hosted webinars to help businesses navigate pandemic changes and learn about best practices and worked with other County departments to help initiate the TOSA (Temporary Outdoor Seating Area) program to help restaurants handle capacity restrictions. That helped in Arlington during the warmer months.

Over at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the economic numbers were picking up in late 2023 but many places are reporting a shortage of workers which may add to business closings across the country.

"The economy is likely to slow in early 2024 because consumer spending is likely to slow," the chamber said. They predict that will weaken spending and growth, which could trickle down to the retail market.

In December, consumers kept spending at a strong pace, the chamber reported. Retail sales rose 0.6% in December, double the 0.3% increase in November and that could have been attributed partly to the holiday spending season.

Assisted Living Approaches Crisis Conditions

By SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Assisted living availability is a crisis according to Marta Hill Gray, President of Culpepper Garden, the only subsidized facility for low-income seniors in Arlington.

She says there are 20 seniors in need on the waiting list for the 73 spaces in assisted living at Culpepper Garden which is about a three-year wait. Gray explains that some people start out by signing up for independent living so they have a spot when they need to move to assisted living.

Gray says there are 264 seniors on the waiting list for the 273 independent living spots at Culpepper, with a 3.5 year wait for a one bedroom with walk-in shower, a 2 years wait for one bedroom with bathtub/shower and 2 years for efficiency with shower.

She estimates that probably half



FILE PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Marta Hill Gray, President Culpepper Garden.

of the applicants for independent living are unhoused and couch surfing or staying in an extended stay place. The average annual income for an independent living resident at Culpepper is \$10,000.

"People tell me all the time the

SEE ASSISTED LIVING, PAGE 4



Artist rendering of Culpepper new daffodil garden.

New Policy Targets Free Transit for Arlington Youth

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Any student in Arlington can now ride free on Arlington transit including ART bus and Metro bus routes within Arlington with an iRide SmartTrip card.

This effort began with ART half price tickets where students could ride for \$1, then in 2022 free ART tickets and in January 2024 adding metro buses within Arlington. In addition, money may be loaded to the card to pay the fare for rides on Metrorail. Claudia Pors, Transportation Communications Specialist, says “People like to see more attention paid to young people on transportation.”

Swanson Middle School was a big benefactor from this new policy. She explains that even if a school is served by an ART route, it doesn’t mean it serves all students who may live on arterial streets.

In addition, Hors explains the student may live too close for a school bus stop but along a dangerous route to walk or may live in an alternative school district and as an example attends the career center.

Pors says this effort is part of a county-wide plan to expand transportation options to a variety of different segments of the community. In 2022 they funded a short-term initiative to make more transportation options available to clients of the Department of Human Services.

“The iRide SmartTrip card will provide young people with great-



Any student in Arlington can now ride free on Arlington transit including ART bus and Metro bus routes.

iRide Eligible Routes

1A,1B/2A/3Y/4B/7A/10A,
10B/16A,C,E,M/22A,22F/
23A,23B23T/25B/26A/28
A/38B/MW1

In 2023 Arlington Transit experienced an average of 10,000 student riders a month with ART routes 41, 45 and 75 the most heavily used with 3,200, 1,600 and 1,500 riders respectively.

er access to safe, environmentally friendly transit options to go to

school or other destinations.” Pors says buses and biking are good

safe options to get kids around, a place to not worry about the stress-

on the road—have a good time in a comfortable atmosphere. And at the same time it reduces emissions from personal vehicles.

Pors said, “We’ve seen an increase of rides taking place outside of school commute hours and weekends, which tells us that kids are going to all sorts of places beyond school, like jobs, extracurricular activities, shopping, social events and other destinations that are important to them.”

She says in 2023 Arlington Transit experienced an average of 10,000 student riders a month with ART routes 41, 45 and 75 the most heavily used with 3,200, 1,600 and 1,500 riders respectively. These routes service Wilson Boulevard/Clarendon Boulevard, Columbia Pike, Glebe Road and Carlyn Springs.

Pors indicates data will be collected monthly on student ridership on Metrobus routes which will provide a pattern of ridership by the summer of 2024.

The iRide SmartTrip card is available for every student enrolled in Arlington schools from kindergarten through high school. It may be purchased at any Commuter Store in Arlington or through the school’s Transportation Coordinator.

The agreement between Arlington County and WMATA to include Metrobuses on iRide cards was approved by the Arlington County Board in July 2023.

The FY 2024 budget includes \$360,000 in the County’s WMATA budget to reimburse Metrobus for student rides.

Assisted Living Approaches Crisis Conditions

FROM PAGE 3

need to get their spouse, parent or loved one into Culpepper, and I tell them they should have started two years ago.” Gray says that often people are in a more expensive living residence and they run out of money and need to move to a less expensive place they can afford. Or they may live 10 years longer than they had planned or a spouse may use up all of the savings.

“We do have a danger at all levels of people outliving their means,” she said. “More and more people will need affordable housing.”

Culpepper Garden was the first low income senior housing residence in the country to receive HUD rental subsidies. Gray says everyone in the assisted living part of Culpepper must qualify for rental subsidies. The average income for an assisted living applicant is \$27,158 a year. Gray says, “they can’t go out and get a part time job. Whatever they have, they have.”

While all of the residents in assisted living receive rental subsidies, only 36 of the 73 residents receive assistance to pay for their care as well. These care subsidies are provided by Culpepper Garden raised from community donations, assistance from Arlington County or donors. “We don’t get any state or Federal funding.”

Gray says that a number of the residents have early dementia “and we have to find a place for them to go because we have no memory care at Culpepper. We have no subsidy to support it.” She said a recent Washington Post article pointed out that the recent growth in the industry has been driven in large part by demand for secure housing for people with dementia.

Gray points out the problems in assisted living go beyond availability, including oversight and neglect of residents in facilities across the nation. These issues were highlighted on Jan. 25 when the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging held a hearing focused

on the abuses and neglect in assisted living facilities nationwide, spurred by the Washington Post Article titled “Dozens of Assisted Living Residents Died After Wandering Away Unnoticed.”

Their research found that patients with memory problems walk away from assisted living facilities just about every day in America — some to be hit by cars, die in freezing conditions outside or by drowning nearby. Unlike nursing homes, which are regulated by the Federal government, assisted living facilities are regulated by the states, few of which have adopted strong staffing and training requirements.

Gray says:

“I welcome the Senate Special Committee on Aging’s hearing on assisted living options for older Americans. As the number of older Americans continues to grow, we need a national strategy to support assisted-living facilities, train caregivers, and ensure equitable access to high-quality care for at-risk

older adults.

“Mental health and memory care are often the first components to be compromised when assisted-living facilities are underfunded and understaffed. We need standards to determine when an older adult should be transferred to a memory care facility with the appropriate resources and staff to care for them.”

“As the first assisted living facility in the country to receive rental subsidies from HUD, we’ve seen firsthand the impact public support can have on older adults’ quality of life.

These subsidies not only allow us to provide a safe environment for older adults living on fixed incomes but also serve as a critical lifeline for older adults who would otherwise end up unhoused and/or without care.”

Gray says this is truly approaching crisis proportions as the need for affordable housing only continues to grow.

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Combating Animal Cruelty

BY SENATOR
ADAM EBBIN



Adam Ebbin

During the summer and fall, I heard from constituents who believe that there should be stiffer penalties for those who hurt household pets. We have seen examples of this in our community. Last summer, someone left sausages with fish hooks on Duke Street in Alexandria outside for animals to eat. Thankfully, no pets were harmed in this instance, but experts said that if an animal were to have eaten one of the sausages, it could have caused severe injury. But because no pet was hurt, the assailant could only be charged with a misdemeanor under current law. In another instance, in the Del Ray neighborhood, a man was annoyed by his neighbor's dog barking, so he combined rat poison with meat and

threw it into his neighbor's yard. Thankfully, the dog's owner noticed the poisoned meat before the dog did and reported the incident. The perpetrator was arrested and charged with a class 1 misdemeanor for the offense despite the clear intent to cause harm to his neighbor's dog. That's why I introduced Senate Bill 369 to increase the penalty for harming a companion animal.

Under current Virginia law, it is a Class 5 felony for any person to maliciously wound a farm animal, which is punishable by up to 10 years in jail or a fine of up to \$2,500.

My bill would add household pets to that category, making the malicious wounding of a companion animal also punishable by a Class 5 felony. Current law provides a Class 1 misdemeanor for a first offense, which includes up

to one year in jail or a fine of up to \$2,500. SB 369 has received unanimous approval by two Senate committees and the full Senate before it moves to the House of Delegates for its consideration.

On other legislation related to animal welfare, Sen. Barbara Favola (D-Arlington) introduced Senate Bill 11. This bill would allow a judge to ban someone convicted of felony cruelty to animals from possessing animals for life, and ban a person convicted of misdemeanor cruelty to animals from possessing animals for a period of up to five years. Senators Jennifer Boyko (D-Herndon) and Bill Stanley (R-Franklin) have also introduced Senate Bill 93, which would give any locality in the Commonwealth the authority to establish an animal cruelty registry on their website or their local police department's website.

Senate Pages from District 39
This year there are not one but

two pages from the 39th Senate District. Sydney Robasson and Jada Ashun are stellar students at Francis C. Hammond Middle School and are very impressive young women both in and out of the classroom. Both Jada and Sydney were amazing applicants. I am thankful that there was room in the Senate Page Class of 2024 so that both Jada and Sydney could participate. During the legislative session, Senate Pages are tasked with helping visitors find meeting rooms, taking recycling from member's offices, delivering items to the Senate Chamber, and many other administrative tasks. I am very proud of both Jada and Sydney and their work this session.

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

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

Equality Arlington General Assembly Legislative Priorities

Dear Senator Ebbin, Senator Favola, Delegate Hope, Delegate Lopez, and Delegate McClure,

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and extended (LGBTQ+) community members are under legislative attack throughout the United States. Equality Arlington, a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of the LGBTQ+ community in Arlington, Virginia, has identified legislation proposed during the 2024 Virginia General Assembly session that supports the health, safety, and rights of LGBTQ+ residents and legislation that would do great harm to these residents.

Accordingly, we strongly encourage you to SUPPORT the following bills:

❖ HB174 — Rozia Henson (D) — Prevents discrimination in marriage on the basis of the sex, gender, or race of the parties.

❖ HB224 — Rozia Henson (D) — Requires public schools to teach an age-appropriate program of instruction on suicide prevention and awareness.

❖ HB502 — Laura Jane Cohen (D) — Requires that state forms include nonbinary sex or gender option in addition to male and female.

❖ HB536 — Joshua Cole (D) — Adjusts the definition of bullying in public education to specify that a power imbalance between the aggressor and victim includes a power imbalance on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and other real or perceived characteristics.

❖ HB587 — Adele McClure (D) — Establishes a work group to study the implementation of an unaccompanied minor housing program.

❖ HJR9 — Mark Sickles (D) — Repeals the constitutional provision defining marriage as only a union between one man and one woman.

❖ SB101 — Adam Ebbin (D) — Prevents discrimination in marriage on the basis of the sex, gender, or race of the parties.

❖ SJR11 — Adam Ebbin (D) — Repeals the constitutional provision defining marriage as only a union between one man and one woman.

Taken together, these bills would move equality forward and improve the lives of LGBTQ+ residents in Arlington and across the Commonwealth of Virginia. We urge you to vote in support of these bills.

Conversely, there continues to be onslaught of legislative attacks on members of the LGBTQ+ community across the country, including right here in Virginia. Propo-

nents of hate against the LGBTQ+ community are

implementing a strategy of packaging anti-LGBTQ+ bills as "common sense" to trick Democrats into voting in favor. We implore you to carefully read any bills that come across this way.

Accordingly, we strongly encourage you to OPPOSE the following bills:

❖ HB670 — Nicholas Freitas (R) — Requires public schools to forcibly out transgender, nonbinary, or gender questioning students to parents and requires parental consent for supportive counseling.

❖ SB37 — John McGuire (R) — Requires public schools to forcibly out transgender, nonbinary, or gender questioning students to parents and requires parental consent for supportive counseling.

❖ HB1120 — Delores Oates (R) — Bans transgender athletes from participating on a K-12 or higher education team or sport that is expressly designated for females.

❖ HB1229 — Geary Higgins (R) — Bans transgender athletes from participating on a K-12 or higher education team or sport that is expressly designated for females and from using certain restrooms.

❖ SB68 — Mark Peake (R) — Bans transgender athletes from participating on a K-12 team or sport that is expressly designated for females.

❖ HB8 — R. Lee Ware (R) — Al-

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The Connection to Your Community
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"FLOURISHING AFTER 55"

FROM PAGE 2

Discussion of current events in Spanish impacting the Latino community, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 11 a.m., Lubber

Run 55+ Center. Led by 55+ Center Director Ashley Gomez. Registration # 912402-17. Must have at least intermediate knowledge of Spanish.

The study of words, the history of English and languages as a whole, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 100 a.m., Lubber

Run 55+ Center, registration # 912402-32 or virtual, registration # 912402-33.

Avoiding guardianship and conservatorship, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 11 a.m., virtual. Presented by Elder Law

Attorney Ed Zetlin. Registration # 912404-05.

Open art studio for artists who work at their own pace in a collaborative space, Wednesday, Feb. 14 and Friday, Feb. 16, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Drop-in

Records and root beer floats, bring favorite music on vinyls or just show up to listen, Thursday, Feb. 15, 6 p.m., Lubber Run 5+ Center. Registration # 912801-02.

Canasta, easy to learn card game, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 10 a.m. -12 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Prepare for hiking and camping, join outdoor enthusiast Carmen Shippy for important tips, Thursday, Feb. 15, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-20.

How to grow fruit trees in Arlington, presented by Urban Forest Manager Vincent Verweij, Thursday, Feb. 15, 2 p.m. virtual. Registration # 912400-29.

Tips for capturing great video, presented by Video Production Manager Jeremy Carpel, Thursday, Feb. 15, 11 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center, registration # 912403-06 or virtual, registration # 912403-07.

Acoustic hour at Aurora Hills 55+ Center featuring the Rock-in' Chairs Band, Friday, Feb. 16, 1 p.m. Registration # 912301-03.

ENTERTAINMENT

ONGOING

MoCA Arlington's Innovation Studio + Store is now Open. At 525 14th Street South, Arlington. MoCA Arlington's Innovation Studio + Store is the museum's second location and is designed to connect visitors with contemporary art and artists! At this 1,500 sq. ft. retail space, you can shop, attend special programs and drop-in sessions, meet the artist-in-residence working within the studio, and make art of your own! The space complements the work of the flagship museum and will inspire you, while you experience contemporary art in an interactive setting. Visit anytime Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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.

SUNDAY/FEB. 4

League of Women Voters Day of Action. 2-4 p.m. At Walter Reed Community Center 2909 16th Street South, Arlington. The League of Women Voters of Arlington and Alexandria City (LWVAAC) is a non-partisan non-profit grassroots organization working to protect and expand voting rights and ensure everyone is represented in our democracy. They empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy. For more information email: LWVArlingtonva@gmail.com

WEEKEND OF FEB. 9

Valentine Sweetheart Deals. McLean Art Society will host a February art show and sale, with "Sweetheart Deals" featuring original art under \$150 by its talented artists the weekend of Feb. 9 at Walker Chapel in Arlington. It promises to offer a great opportunity to find a special, one-of-a-kind gift for your loved ones or yourself. Admission is free and open to the public. Hours are Feb. 9, 5-8 p.m., including a Reception and refreshments, Sat., Feb. 10, 10-4 p.m. and Sun., Feb. 11, 10-2 p.m.

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.



McLean Art Society hosts "Sweetheart Deals" the weekend of Feb. 9, 2024 at Walker Chapel in Arlington.

Visit capitalcityshowcase.com

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

National Concert Ensemble's Valentine Concert. 7:30 p.m. At Gunston Arts Center - Theater 1, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington. This event will showcase the brilliant Argentinian music of the Tango, featuring Astor Piazzolla's "Four Seasons In Buenos Aires," among other masterpieces. The guest host for the evening will be Michelle Isabelle-Stark, Head of Arlington Cultural Affairs. Michelle will guide you through an extraordinary musical journey performed by three virtuoso musicians - violinist Leo Sushansky, cellist Stephen Honigberg, and pianist Carlos Cesar Rodriguez. Program/Ticket info: 703-685-7590.

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.

MONDAY/FEB. 12

"Cheers to l'Amour." 6-8 p.m. At Lyon Hall, 3100 Washington Blvd., Arlington. The Reims Committee of the Arlington Sister City Association

invites you to "Cheers to l'Amour". Guests will enjoy sparkling wines and light hors d'oeuvres. Tickets are \$55/\$60 at door.

TUESDAY/FEB. 13

Bayou Gras Mardi Pardi - Fat Tuesday. 6 p.m. At Bayou Bakery, 1515 N. Courthouse Road, Arlington. A true New Orleans experience for 13 years. NOLA native musician Nick Adde will be Jazzing It Up in the eatery. Chef David Guas and the team in the kitchen will be serving authentic parade food.

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.

SUNDAY/FEB. 18

Free Pop Up Shop. Washington-Liberty High School cafeteria, 2-5 p.m. Help your closet and the climate by getting free, gently used clothes. Arlington Students for Climate Action and other community organizations will host a Free Pop Up Shop of lightly used clothing. All are welcome. The event is designed to make clothing more sustainable by recycling clothing that is no longer needed. To contribute clothes, drop off washed, clean, gently used clothes of any size at Wakefield, H-B Woodlawn, Yorktown, Arlington Career Center, and Washington-Liberty, or Casual Adventure before Feb. 17.

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

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 DC area's finest comics. The headliner for March's show is the hilarious Jay Agbon. Visit capitalcityshowcase.com

Much Ado About Something



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

That 'something' being the off-hand reference (use of the "R" word/"remission") from my oncologist explaining why we need to focus on my kidney health at the expense of restarting my cancer treatment (a pill a day). It came in an email response to my question about my cancer status/treatment timetable based on recent lab work especially ordered for this reason. It's the first time I've heard that r-word in a decade. Moreover, it wasn't a word I heard a month or so ago when I had my first in-person, post-PET scan appointment with my oncologist in over two years. Seems like that would have been an appropriate time. But no. Let's be realistic: using the "R" word to a cancer patient is akin to waving a red cape in front of a bull. We may not exactly charge but you'll certainly get our attention.

If the reason not to restart my cancer treatment is the potential damage (irreparable) to my kidneys (as indicated in the kidney function/creatinine level in my recent "chem 7" lab work), I can certainly understand and appreciate that. If you're going to mention that my thyroid cancer is in remission as a reason to stop treatment and avoid further (irreparable) harm to my kidney — potentially leading to dialysis, I'm happily on board and grateful for this preemptive strike. However, you can't bury the lead: "REMISSION." Since when, and why am I hearing about now in an email no less? This is the kind of news/characterization that cancer patients dream about. And if it's at all applicable to me — or any cancer patient for that matter, given the stress and preoccupation with our disease and life expectancy that dominates our daily lives, tell me more. If you have an ounce of above-average-sounding news, please, as I said when I was about to receive bad news (initial Team Lourie meeting in Feb.'09 when I was first diagnosed and "prognosed"), give it to me straight. I can take it. And if I can take that, I can certainly take this: "Remission." Elaborate. Don't just drop that word in the middle of a paragraph and offer no additional context or suggestion that perhaps we should talk because of this relative bombshell of amazing but unexpected — and so far, not really corroborated news of my health.

For 14 and half years, I've lived with that original "13 month to two years" prognosis hanging over my head — like the sword of Damocles, permeating my brain and affecting every decision I make. You must know that the use of this word is not going to fall on deaf ears — or blind eyes. It's the word all of us cancer patients have been straining to see on any correspondence that we receive from our oncologists. To use it in this context, without any further explanation concerning its legitimacy/relevance to my life as an excuse no less for what we're now not doing (continuing my cancer medicine/treatment: chemotherapy/targeted therapy, pills and of course infusions galore, going on almost 15 years), deserves more than just a passing glance. Granted, I LOVE the sound/look of it but without further ado/additional information/clarification, I am no closer to a good night's sleep. It's not exactly a chicken-little situation, but for a cancer patient whose sky fell years ago, we're very susceptible and inclined to exaggerate good news. We've been waiting our whole lives (it only seems that way) since our original diagnosis for it. News or a reference of this significance/substance must be treated very carefully. Giving us/our health an inch will lead to a mile of unfounded and unrealistic, and possibly inaccurate information. And if us cancer patients need anything, it's precise and exact information so we can live what's left of our lives with clarity of purpose and dignity. Maybe even hope if there's some substance to his use of this word.

Because ambiguity is unhelpful. Considering that many cancer patients are enduring treatment with no guarantee of survival, the lines of communication — in person, and especially in print must be unequivocal with no basis for misunderstanding. And the misuse of a word, or in this case, the context in which the word "remission" is used, a word all of us cancer patients have dreamed of hearing/seeing, is unfair and dare I say insensitive.

We're all clinging to life here, emotionally certainly, and physically it varies. Make no mistake: being diagnosed with cancer or surviving cancer leaves a mark. My late mother used to quote Bette Davis: "No one gets out of this life alive." For cancer patients, life is not a given. Due to the cancer, it's more a taken.. All your decisions/considerations will be made with this underlying, overriding harsh bit of reality. And in that reality, we're all looking for morsels/cornels of positive sounding anything to give us hope. Don't presume that we can take it all in stride. In fact, I wonder if the longer I survive, the shorter distance I'll have to travel.

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

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.

ARLINGTON STUDENTS CAN NOW GET FREE METROBUS RIDES

Starting now, students can now use an iRide SmarTrip card to ride Metrobus for free in Arlington. This new collaboration between the County and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) aims to provide young people with greater access to safe, environmentally friendly transit options to go to school and other destinations. In 2022, the County began subsidizing free rides for students with iRide cards, and in 2023 student ridership totaled 108,365 people between January and September, compared to 61,060 during the same period in 2022. This expansion provides connectivity to more destinations,

including schools not currently served by ART routes, such as Swanson Middle School. Students will now have free access to Metrobus' greater range of service and hours. Any student enrolled in kindergarten to 12th grade who lives in Arlington County can get a free iRide SmarTrip at any Commuter Store in Arlington or through Arlington Public Schools. For information on the iRide SmarTrip card and to see which Metrobus routes are eligible for free student rides, visit the Arlington Transit page.

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.

Winter Solstice Concert is a Sublime Celebration of Arts

Ninth Street Quartet Offers a rare moment for retreat and reflection.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The Ninth Street Quartet promised something really different, and even though it was right before Christmas, holiday shopping wasn't done, decorations were still in boxes, and the party season was in full swing, I recklessly left it all behind to attend the Winter Solstice Concert on Dec. 20, at Saint George's Episcopal in search of a few quiet moments in a music-filled church. The Quartet never disappoints.

Jennifer Wade introduced the concert saying, "This is the kind of tradition I long for as the year draws to a close. I'm not religious, but I still want a sacred experience. I want to feel like I'm a part of the winding down that's happening in the natural world around me." Wade, violinist of 9th Street Quartet and founder of Lifescape Visionary, took a risk in sharing her vision of a concert which combined poetry, color, art, photography and music. "This program is the evolution of a private event I started running several years ago. With the help of my 9th Street colleagues and friends, and Saint George's beautiful space, I'm

"Saint George's is thrilled to partner with 9th Street Chamber Music in their mission to offer high quality, innovative programming and instruction. As our Artists in Residence, together we share a strong belief that music's beauty can change people's lives for the better. This culminates in the exquisite performances they offer in our beautiful space which is known for its resonant acoustics and allows us to experience music in a way that more deeply touches the heart."

—Ben Keseley, Minister of Music at Saint George's Episcopal



PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION
The Ninth Street String Quartet opened the concert at Saint George's with an introduction by Jennifer Wade, violinist with the quartet and Lifescape coach, who brought the idea of a calming, sacred, reflective concert combining poetry, light, art, and music to the pre-Christmas concert.

delighted to share the beauty and reflective mood of this season with a much wider audience."

The music, the readings, and the lighting, conjured up a sense that the moment had come to reflect, move from frenetic activity to one in which snow, birds, silence, stars, and rest were more important than crossing another thing off the list. Themes of Celebration, Perspective, Winter, Darkness, Hibernation, Liminal Space and Expecta-

tion, and Hope.

Starting with less somber pieces from The Danish Quartet, like "Staedelil," a jaunty tune, the quartet moved into "Tenebrae" by

Oswaldo Golijov. Despite its jarring short bow strokes and almost "Psycho" like crescendos, "Tenebrae" also then entered another world: a walk on a starry night, a sleigh ride



The blue deepened as the concert progressed, like winter turning icy and dark.

floating over the snow, nostalgic, romantic, emotional. I was moved to tears.

"Plan and Elevation" by Caroline Shaw, was equally provocative and beautiful. In Steven Snowden's "Bird Catching From Above," Wade had told the audience to listen carefully as somewhere in the concert we might hear sounds reflective of the environment, and one did indeed hear the birds in the sky, the seagull and the trickle of the stream. It's amazing what string instruments can do.

"Saint George's is thrilled to partner with 9th Street Chamber Music in their mission to offer high quality, innovative programming and instruction," said Ben Keseley, Minister of Music at Saint George's Episcopal. "As our Artists in Residence, together we share a strong belief that music's beauty can change people's lives for the better. This culminates in the exquisite performances they offer in our beautiful space which is known for its resonant acoustics and allows us to experience music in a way that more deeply touches the heart."

The quartet was helped in its delivery of this sublime concert by Finn Bernuy, Suzie Bousquet, and Cecilia Berger, who read poems and readings from a diverse set of writers — Billy Collins, Maria Popova, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Susan Cooper, to name just a few. Guest musicians, former students of the Ninth Street Quartet program, were: Ethan Hemmings, Sarah Russell-Hunter, Elfa Hassan, Arista Wilson, Sophia Urbom, and Chris Fox. Although I didn't see the accompanying digital program until later, it was full of lovely art and photographs reflecting the season.

It's as though Jennifer Wade and the Ninth Street Quartet were channeling a color rich work of art at the Renwick Gallery right now, "1.8 Renwick" by Janet Echelman, in which she "uses fiber and colored light to examine the complex interconnections between humankind and our physical world. Echelman's knotted meditation explores the contrast between the "forces we can understand and control and those we cannot..." as did this moving tribute to the winter season.

To learn more about Lifescape Visionary, founded in 2017 by Wade, see: www.lifescapevisionary.com.

To find out what the Ninth Street Quartet is doing next, see: www.9thstreetquartet.org.

More about concerts at Saint George's

<https://saintgeorgesmusic.org/concerts>

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