

THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ♦ Chantilly ♦ Great Falls ♦ Herndon ♦ McLean ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Oakton
Reston ♦ Vienna ♦ Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station ♦ Lorton ♦ Clifton

Artists Jenn Griffith and Karen Bateman, members of the Great Falls Studios, capture the final days of the doomed Southern Red Oak growing along Georgetown Pike.

This Old Oak

PAGE 6

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ♦ OPINION, PAGE 14

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Tyson's Casino Bill Held for 2025

PAGE 3

\$100K for Children's Books from Reston

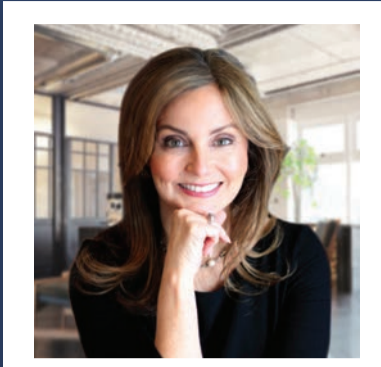
PAGE 6

Money Growing for Trees

PAGE 9

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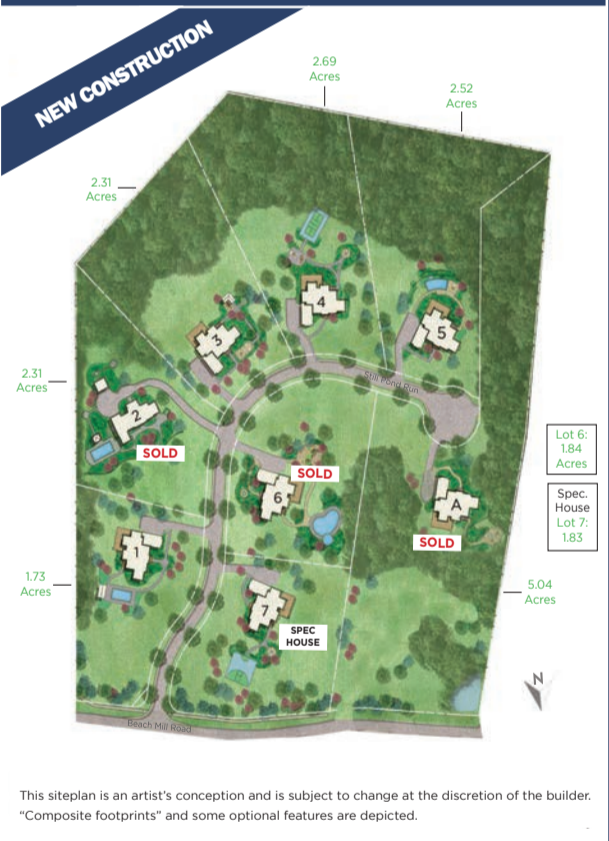


Twee Ramos, Susan Canis, Joe Trippi and Justin Scango

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NEWS

Casino Bill SB 675 Carries Over in 13 to 2 Vote

VA Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee ends consideration of a Tysons casino for this session; likely to be back in 2025.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Tuesday, Feb. 6, the Virginia Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee carried over Senate Bill 675, introduced by Sen David W. Marsden (D-Fairfax), in a vote of 13 to 2, thereby accepting the Resources Subcommittee's recommendation to put the Fairfax County casino bill on hold until next year. Sen. R. Creigh Deeds (D-Charlotte) made the motion to carry over SB 675 Casino gaming; eligible host localities.

Moments earlier, a substitute motion to "PBI the bill" [pass by indefinitely] by Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-Fairfax) failed in a 9 to 5 vote, with one abstention.

Speaking to his bill before the vote, Marsden reiterated his statements from the subcommittee meeting: the Board of Supervisors did not oppose this legislation; it is a massive revenue package for the Commonwealth of Virginia in a year and a time when the state's finances could use a boost. He added the claim that Fairfax County taxpayers would save "about \$500-\$600 per year on average with the casino and conference center."

Without a casino, Marsden said, "There's no reason right now for people to come to Fairfax County."

Boysko countered that the proposed legislation places a casino along the Metro Silver Line, the county's highest Class A real estate. A casino has only been mentioned in the county's economic development discussions for the past year, not the last 20 years before that. The bill undermines the work of the entire community, she said.

"It is not something that I believe the Fortune 500s would like to have in the middle of their community," Boysko said. She offered that if one of her colleagues wanted a



PHOTO BY HUNTER MILL DISTRICT OFFICE

Linda Colbert, mayor of the Town of Vienna; Walter Alcorn, Fairfax County supervisor Hunter Mill District; Naila Alam, town councilmember of the Town of Herndon, gather after providing testimony on Feb. 1 opposing a pathway for a casino in Fairfax County.

casino in their part of the county, "they are welcome to bring a bill next year."

Fairfax County Board Supervisor Walter Alcorn, D-Hunter Mill testified on Feb. 1 at a 4 p.m. subcommittee meeting and opposed Senate Bill 675, providing a path for a casino in Fairfax County.

"I am a strong no," Alcorn said. "And I'd be happy to put in the record my letter expressing my concerns and also maps showing my district and which areas would be authorized under this legislation."

Claudia Arko, the county's legislative staff, reminded committee members that they received letters from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors chairman. Arko remarked, "I just wanted to make sure you saw that." That letter did not oppose the bill.

Sen. L. Louise Lucas, D-Norfolk, chair of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, opened the microphone for others in the audience to testify.



SENATE OF VIRGINIA VIDEO

Sen. Dave Marsden, D-Fairfax, patron of SB 675, testifies. "I don't want us [Fairfax County] to become more of a taker. I want us to be more of a giver to the rest of the state."

"The Town of Vienna is strongly opposed to any casino, even the proposal of a casino in Tysons," said Linda Colbert, mayor of the Town of Vienna. She explained that the town had been a part of the Tysons Comp Plan and strategic plan, and a casino was never mentioned. "Town of Vienna residents are just really, really strongly against this. I have not heard from one resident, actually, that is for it."

Naila Alam, Town of Herndon councilmember, testified: "We are also opposing the casino bill," Alam said.

The Virginia Senate subcommittee had considered several gaming bills at the 4 p.m. meeting before moving on to Sen. Marsden's SB 675. The committee unanimously approved a motion to combine SB 628 with SB 345 to change the list of cities eligible to host a casino by removing Richmond and adding Petersburg because Richmond voters twice rejected a referendum for a casino there. When Lucas turned attention to SB 675, Senate staff provided a summary,

reporting that the casino gaming bill established the site parameters and requirements for a Fairfax County Casino.

Marsden described at length SB 675's potential benefits to the county and the Commonwealth of Virginia as "enormous here."

"[It] would help with school construction funding and local needs. ... Fairfax County is losing a lot of commercial real estate income," Marsden said. "The revenue projected in the 70/30 split for Fairfax County is \$94 million, and for the Commonwealth of Virginia, it is \$300 million."

Virginia Diamond, of the Northern Virginia AFL-CIO, testified that the union "strongly supports this bill for the great jobs that it is going to create for members of our community."

Sen. L. Louise Lucas, D-Norfolk, said she wanted updated projections from JLARC specific to Fairfax County, citing her desire to "keep this bill alive."

The JLARC study from 2019 says: "A casino in Northern Virginia ... examined as part of this study, would increase statewide gaming tax revenue by an estimated additional \$155 million (59 percent) and employ an additional 3,200 workers. A Northern Virginia casino is projected to attract substantial revenue from out-of-state customers and retain in state about \$100 million that Virginia residents are currently spending at casinos in other states."

Alcorn told the Connection: "Senate Bill 675 authorizing a casino in Tysons is dead for this year and carried over to 2025 after a vote by the Senate Resource Subcommittee. I'm very happy that the subcommittee members listened to the community and the people elected to represent them. It is a big victory for everyone who cares about good government," Alcorn said. He then thanked Town of Vienna Mayor Linda Colbert and Herndon Councilmember Naila Alam, for joining him in testifying at the meeting.

Reston Association Updates RELAC Referendum

FAQs hours before first public hearing.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Reston Association (RA) announced that its RELAC [Reston Lake Anne Air Conditioning Corporation] referendum will occur on Feb. 16, with ballots sent to eligible members that day. March 8 is the deadline for the RA referendum ballot return.

RELAC is a private utility that has supplied chilled water for air conditioning to approximately 300 cluster and condominium

units surrounding Lake Anne since the mid-60s. The system runs on recirculated lake water from Lake Anne. On opening day in 1965, RELAC was hailed as cutting-edge technology; however, some people criticized it for inefficiency.

On Feb. 5, RA posted online its updated RELAC Referendum FAQs, the same day RA was to host its first two advertised virtual Board of Directors' public hearings on RELAC. The RA Calendar contains the link to join the Feb. 5 meeting and the link to the meeting details. On Feb. 12, there will



HICKORY CLUSTER ASSOCIATION (2012 IMAGE)

Two high-capacity, controllable Evapco evaporative condensers were delivered in 2012 to the RELAC facility. They would transfer heat from indoor chillers into the air rather than Lake Anne.

be a second public hearing. Similarly, the RA Calendar provides a link to join the meeting.

RA organized the referendum because RELAC informed the units it serves in December 2023 that it would no longer supply

cooling services in 2024.

On Dec. 11, 2023, the current owners of RELAC announced that the 2023 cooling

SEE RELAC, PAGE 5

County's FY 2025 Budget Process Kicks Into Gear

Potential budgetary shortfall of \$284.5 million complicates matters.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fasten your seatbelt. In February, Fairfax County Government and Public Schools push forward on the budget for FY2025.

The school board's public hearing on the budget was held on Tuesday, Feb. 5. County Executive Bryan Hill will unveil his FY 2025 Advertised Budget Plan on Feb. 20. On Feb. 22, the school board subsequently approves its proposed budget plan for FY 2025. A Joint County/School Budget Committee will meet on Feb. 27 to deliberate on the tax rate and budget for FY 2025.

On March 5, the Board of Supervisors advertises the FY 2025 tax rate. The tax rate that is eventually adopted can be the same as or lower than the advertised tax rate, but not higher.

A look back at the FY 2025 Fiscal Forecast Summary, presented at the Joint Meeting of the Board of Supervisors and the School



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill.

Board on Nov. 28, 2023, helps predict what the FY 2025 advertised budget faces. The FY 2025 budget cycle began when County Executive Bryan Hill and School Superintendent Michelle Reid shared their budget forecasts. Based on the existing tax rates, Hill's budget forecast included critical predictions of the local economy, housing market, and tax revenues for FY 2025.

A relatively flat real estate mar-

Fairfax County Government and Fairfax County Public Schools

Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Budget Process Timeline

- Nov. 28:** Joint County/School Budget Committee to discuss FY 2025 fiscal forecast
 - Jan. 25:** FCPS Superintendent releases FY 2025 Proposed Budget
 - Feb. 5:** School Board holds public hearings on budget
 - Feb. 20:** County Executive releases FY 2025 Advertised Budget Plan
 - Feb. 22:** School Board adopts FY 2025 (proposed) Budget Plan
 - Feb. 27:** Joint County/School Budget Committee to discuss FY 2025 budget and tax rate
 - March 5:** Board of Supervisors Advertises FY 2025 tax rate
 - March 19:** Board of Supervisors Advertises FY 2024 Third Quarter Review
 - April 16:** School Board Presents FCPS Budget to Board of Supervisors
 - April 16-18:** Board of Supervisors holds public hearings on FY 2025 Budget
 - April 30:** Board of Supervisors marks-up FY 2025 Budget
 - May 7:** Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2025 Budget
 - May 23:** School Board adopts FY 2025 Approved Budget
 - July 1:** FY 2025 Budget Year begins
- <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/>

ket, 1.68 percent, impacts assessment growth. The FY 2025 estimate cited a 2.07 percent change in residential assessment, (1.60 percent) nonresidential, and 0.47 percent for new construction. The total real estate base thus dropped to the projection of 1.68 percent in FY 2025 compared to 6.59 percent in FY 2024 actual and 8.57 percent

in FY 2023 actual.

Economic performance in the Washington Metro region has trailed the nation; office vacancies are up in Fairfax County. Nonresidential values are projected to decline, primarily driven by accelerating losses in office property values. A projected 1.9 percent annual change in general fund revenue for FY 2016–FY 2025 equates to approximately a \$152 million revenue increase over FY 2024 Ad-

opted. According to the FY 2025 Budget Forecast, County revenue growth is projected to generate \$152.3 million, and schools projects an increase in revenue of \$66.1 million

The FY 2025 Summary reported the following: Projected Schools Revenue: \$66.1 million; Employee Pay and Benefits: County (\$180.5 million) and Schools (166.1); Debt Service and Capital Requirements: County (\$17.4) and Schools (\$10.9 million); Metro: County (\$16 million); Other Adjustments: County (\$29.4 million) and Schools (\$102.6 million); and Reductions: County \$20.0. The totals were County (\$223.3) and Schools (\$213.5).

However, with County revenues estimated to increase by \$152.3 million, there is a combined net projected budgetary shortfall of \$284.5 million. Multiple priorities are not included, such as for the County baseline funding for IT initiatives, increased investments in affordable housing, environment, and energy, basic need assistance and for schools implementation of secondary security audit recommendations; expansion of middle school athletics, and the impact of federal government lowering the CEP (Community Eligibility Provision) that allows high poverty schools and division to offer breakfast and lunch percentage from 40 percent to 25 percent.

Budget Timeline in 2024

Fairfax County Public Schools released their proposed FY 2025 budget on January 25, 2024. After several months of deliberation, the Board of Supervisors adopts the budget on May 7, and the school board adopts the budget on May 23. The Board of Supervisors will hold three days of public hearings on the budget, April 16, 17 and 18. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/>

MOUNT VERNON

37th Annual Mount Vernon Town Meeting

Join us in person or virtually to learn more about why we are "The One"!

Saturday, February 10, 2024

7:45 a.m. – Exhibit Hall Open

9:30 a.m. – Speakers, Q&A's and Virtual Tour

12:15 p.m. – Taste of Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon High School
8515 Old Mount Vernon Road
Mount Vernon, VA 22309

Live on Channel 16, Facebook

More details: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon

Join Supervisor Dan Storck for the 37th Annual Town Meeting! Meet your Supervisor and many County, state and federal leaders. Have your questions answered, learn about issues important to you, connect with County agencies and service providers and mingle with your neighbors. The highlight of the morning will be taking a "virtual tour" of the changing Mount Vernon District from Lorton to Huntington.

Speakers: Board of Supervisors Chairman **Jeff McKay**, County Executive **Bryan Hill**, Mount Vernon District School Board Member **Mateo Dunne**, Special Guest Congressman **Gerry Connolly**, Senate Majority Leader **Scott Surovell**, Delegate **Paul Krizek** and other community leaders.

New this Year: Lifelong Learning, Education Funding and Q&A with NVCC Provost **Dr. Diane Mucci**, Former School Board Member **Karen Corbett Sanders**, Former Delegate and School Member and Education Author **Kris Amundson**.

For more information, call the Mount Vernon District Office at 703-780-7518, TTY 711, visit the office at 2511 Parkers Lane, or send your questions/comments to mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov.

To request reasonable ADA accommodations or language translation services, call the Mount Vernon District Office, 703-780-7518 or TTY 711 on or before 2/3/24.

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Connect with TEAM MVD and your Mount Vernon neighbors at the 37th Annual Town Meeting! #ConnectMVD

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New Food Establishments Open in Lorton

By Mike Salmon
The Connection

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

The growing area in Lorton off Silverbrook Road welcomed two new restaurants in January as this Liberty Market area grows with the population in southern Fairfax County.

In January, local officials gathered to cut ribbons at Ledo Pizza, 9049 White Spruce Way, and Taco Rock, 9021 White Spruce Way. Supervisor Dan Storck traditionally looked at the Lorton area as a place that gets overlooked for modernization, so it's grown recently with the addition of a community center, a library, hotels and Texas Donuts over near Silverbrook Road.

The Liberty Market area is an adaptive-reuse project on grounds that were formerly Lorton Reformatory. The Lidl grocery store opened here a few years ago, and in the near future there are plans for a wide variety of restaurants, retail, and service operators.

Former prison guard towers at each corner give the place some character. The property is registered on the National Register of Historic Places.

Former reformatory buildings are being used for a museum and apartments. It is described as a place "where historic character meets modern convenience," their description reads. In addition, there are garage townhomes and single-family homes in the Liberty community.



The new Ledo Pizza in Lorton.



Taco Rock is the latest in a variety of cuisines in Lorton.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

From left are 2nd Lt. Quang Bui, Tom Pickett (CAC), PFC Jackson Russell and Capt. Dan Spital.

Officer of the Quarter: PFC Jackson Russell

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

PFC Jackson Russell is the Sully District Police Station's Officer of the Quarter for October, November and December 2023. He was honored at the Jan. 10 meeting of the station's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

While introducing him, Capt. Dan Spital, the station commander, called Russell the most aggressive on the Midnight Squad, in terms of the number of felony arrests he's made. Yet, added Spital, "He's a humble young man who just wants to keep our community safe."

The captain noted that, recently, Russell got into a foot pursuit with a suspected fentanyl dealer who ran through the woods and dived into a pond. But when he came out, both Russell and a K9 apprehended him. Spital then said that the Sully residents can rest easier because of this officer.

Next to speak was Russell's supervisor, 2nd Lt. Quang Bui. "I came to the Sully Station last June and, right away, Jackson stuck out to me from all the other officers," said Bui. "He comes to work and takes ownership of his assignments. He gets along well with his peer

officers and continues to shine, do the work and do the right things to keep the Sully District safe. He's a great guy and a great officer, and I'm happy to be here for this ceremony [honoring him]."

The person nominating Russell for Officer of the Quarter was Sgt. David Winter. "Officer Russell is one of the newest members of the Sully District Station, but also one of the hardest-working officers," wrote Winter. "He is extremely proactive and always prepared to make a daily impact to his community."

Winter stated that Russell is "committed to seeking out drug dealers in our neighborhoods and holding them accountable for their unlawful actions. He led the Sully District Station in arrests in 2023, compiling 170 misdemeanor arrests, along with 34 felony arrests. The overwhelming majority of these arrests were from proactive enforcement."

"Officer Russell, while young in seniority, is already taking on an informal leadership role on the squad," continued Winter. "He has a great attitude, is extremely professional and is more than deserving of being nominated for the Sully District Station Officer of the Quarter."

RA Updates RELAC Referendum

FROM PAGE 3

season would be the final year that RELAC would supply chilled water to its consumers. On Dec. 28, 2023, the Homeowner Association Boards of all RELAC Clusters and Associations received notice via email, with a copy sent to Reston Association representative, that a memorandum of understanding which establishes the foundation for a carefully structured community-owned entity would assume responsibility for the management and operation of the RELAC service.

Section VI.2(b)(15) of the Amended Reston Deed states that "in any residential cluster in which central air-conditioning service is available to the lot line, no individual air-conditioning units of any type shall be permitted."

RA declares that it will enforce the covenant: (1) "unless and until" the covenant is repealed; (2) there is definitive proof that such services [central air conditioning] are unavailable; and (3) through a member health exception.

Anticipating that the RELAC referendum will pass, RA's Covenants Department is now processing Design

Review Board (DRB) applications for HVAC systems and is discussing how to expedite health exemptions, according to the Feb. 5 amended RELAC Referendum FAQs.

Andrew Fregly, an RA member who lives lakeside, states in his Feb. 5 email sent shortly before noon to the RA Board Liaison, Leslie Meeds, and copying RA Brittney Copeland, that "RA has no authority to enforce the [air conditioning covenant (CAC)] since "the residential clusters previously served by RELAC do not currently have a central air-conditioning service available, [as the amended Reston Deed requires]."

Fregly suggests that "RA immediately amend the FAQ to note that the covenant is not currently in force relative to the residential clusters formerly served by RELAC so as to avoid potential future legal action against Reston Association based on their statement in the FAQ that they 'will enforce the covenant.'"

Cara O'Donnell, director of Communications and Community Engagement of Reston Association said "The RA Board of Directors takes this situation very seriously and understands the importance of cooling this summer."

Herndon Seeks Business Owner to Serve on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

The Town of Herndon is seeking an energetic, results-oriented business owner to serve an unexpired term on the Herndon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (HDEIC), an advisory group that advocates for priority consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion in the development of town policies and programs.

The HDEIC was formed in 2022 at the initiation of the Herndon Town Council; its membership includes town residents, business owners, and a council chair. The committee meets four times annually on the third Thursday in February, May, August, and November. The committee advises the Town Council on matters related to the promotion, engagement and enhancement of the Town of Herndon's diverse community.

The current vacancy is for a member who owns or manages a business in the town and has expertise in the business sector. This new member's term will expire on December 31, 2024.

To apply, please visit herndon-va.gov/BoardApplication. For more information, contact the Town Clerk's Office at town.clerk@herndon-va.gov or 703-435-6804.

Friends of the Reston Regional Library Donate \$100K to Fairfax County Public Library

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Supervisor Walter Alcorn announces location on the new Reston Regional Library.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Sunday, Feb. 4, a large group of library supporters, Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) leadership, and Supervisor Walter L. Alcorn (Hunter Mill) gathered at the Reston Regional Library. The Friends of Reston Regional Library would present a contribution of \$100,000 to the FCPL Board of Trustees.

Using their funds raised primarily through the sale of donated books — 40 tons to be exact — the “very generous” gift would be invested in FCPL’s children’s and young adult collections. The funds would benefit cardholders throughout Fairfax County since Reston Library is a regional library.

The Director of the Fairfax County Public Library System Jessica Hudson, said that the Friends gave the county library system \$200,000 almost two years ago to support the digital collection. The pandemic saw a spike in library usage, and the relatively flat county material budget was insufficient to meet the demand.

“This time, we came forward, and we said we really, really need dollars for the children’s book collection,” Hudson said. She said that if one browses through the children’s material collection, they will see those items are “thumbed to death.”

“We don’t even look at getting rid of them until they are just falling apart at the seams,” said Hudson. “We are incredibly thankful,” she said, referring to the gift.

Library Board Trustee Parker Brugge (Hunter Mill District) said that he has seen the incredible amount of work the book sales take, as has Trustee Sujatha Hampton (Dranesville District), who was in the audience. Brugge told how the Board of Trustees had developed a new committee this past year, the FAN committee [Friends and Advocates Network]. It brings together advocates and Friends of Libraries to educate the Board of Supervisors on the needs of the library. Through FAN and the committee’s work, the library secured a one-time budget increase of \$300,000 for the collection in FY2024.

Brugge observed, “This supervisor doesn’t need education,” referring to Alcorn, who championed the budget hike. Brugge emphasized that by the end of February, Fairfax County would begin its budget cycle. “We’re going to be reaching out to all of you so that you can help us advocate on behalf of the library to increase the budget and make sure the library gets the funds it needs,” Brugge said.

Alcorn said he knew that the Reston Library was a regional library and not a community library. “But this is truly a cornerstone of the community,” he said.



Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) announces the location of new Reston Regional Library.



Library Board Trustee Parker Brugge (Hunter Mill District)

Wanting to provide an update on the new library, Alcorn said that although the county’s present library facility has served the community and its members well for many



During the recent Mystery and Thriller Book Sale at Reston Regional Library, the Friends of the Reston Regional Library present the \$100,000 check to FCPL Director Jessica Hudson, representatives from the Collection Services Department, and Hunter Mill Supervisor Walter Alcorn.

decades, the new Reston Regional Library is moving forward.

Alcorn said the new library will be where the temporary modular Reston fire station stood up to two years ago. The location is at 1840 Cameron Glen Drive, in Reston, about a block from the North County Government Center. Demolishing any structures would not be necessary because the location is already cleared. As for the current library, the facility would kept open during the construction of the new building.

Alcorn said that this year is seeing the development of the plans and the design, and

there must be a rezoning procedure for the library. “I’m doing everything I can to make sure that the information is shared with the community as quickly as possible ... so we don’t have any more delays, as it is time to move on to get ourselves a new Reston Regional Library,” Alcorn said.

According to its website, the Friends of Reston Regional Library is an all-volunteer, registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It is “driven by an active team of volunteers who support literacy in the library and our community through blood, sweat, and book sales.”



PHOTO VIA GFCA NEWSLETTER

GFCA Team and Bartlett Tree Experts say goodbye to the Southern Red Oak



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Artists Jenn Griffith and Karen Bateman, members of the Great Falls Studios, capture the final days of doomed Southern Red Oak growing within the summer road of Georgetown Pike.



PHOTO VIA GFCA NEWSLETTER

Bartlett Tree Expert performs Level III tree assessment.

Ancient Great Falls Oak Faces the End of Life

Looking for the root cause.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Southern Red Oak (*Quercus falcata*) in Great Falls spent most of its life — a reported 200+ years — well-lived and protected in the right-of-way along Georgetown Pike. Known as the “summer road,” the stretch was used initially for foot and horseback traffic. Aug. 22, 2012, saw the addition of Georgetown Pike, including its summer road in the National Register of Historic Places.

In December 2023, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) alerted the Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) that due to the “probable likelihood of failure with a high likelihood of impacting a target, including people, road, vehicle,” the Southern Red Oak would be removed. Bartlett Tree Experts, a local Great Falls arborist, assessed root, bark, internal density, and decay levels. Their Level III Risk Assessment concurred with VDOT that removal was necessary. It is a “potential future safety concern,” Chris Rich, president of GFCA, said.

The plan was to remove the tree the week of Feb. 5. However, Alex Liggitt, spokesperson for Northern Virginia VDOT, said on Feb. 5 that removal would not occur this week. A coordinated effort is required between Asplundh Tree Expert and Dominion Energy.

Nearly two-and-a-half years earlier, in September 2021, the Southern Red Oak became the subject of its then-first pending removal. The Connection reported that members of the GFCA protested against its removal and

sought a professional opinion. Michael Clagett, leading arborist at the U.S. Naval Academy and International Society of Arboriculture member, filed a tree assessment for the Southern Red Oak.

Upon examining the base, he found no evidence of decay, insect damage, or flaws in the root flair. “Failure due to lean is considered unlikely” because the tree looked to be well-anchored, Clagett reported. He calculated the tree’s age to be more than 200 years, with a height of 55 to 65 feet and a diameter of more than 50 inches.

When developer Toll Brothers put forth its plans for the Great Falls housing project, Marmota Farms, a bike path was to be constructed beside Georgetown Pike, and a 12-inch water line installed underground within the zone of the Southern Red Oak’s absorbing roots. A tree’s water and absorbing roots well extend beyond its canopy drip.

Clagett cautioned in his report, “The pipe installations should avoid severing major roots, and the bike path should be rerouted to avoid damaging roots.”

On Sept. 15, 2021, as Toll Brothers moved forward developing its property, protestors from the Great Falls Citizens Association rallied against clearing the entrance of Marmota Farm at 9800 Georgetown Pike, which Toll Brothers did by right. Two concerns that came into focus were existing and potential tree loss, including the Southern Red Oak.

At the time, The Connection reported a Toll Brothers spokesperson, said that Toll Brothers had “been responsive in addressing concerns related to the community, including continuing to work cooperatively with the county to save trees throughout the site as well as preserve the historic nature of the



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Painting of the Southern Red Oak by Jenn Griffith, Great Falls Studios

Georgetown Pike roadway.”

Fairfax County reports that oaks, especially “old oaks,” are vulnerable to oak decline. Root damage can also kill trees.

On Saturday morning, Feb. 3, three plein air artists came to capture the last days of the Southern Red Oak’s life. They prepared their easels, retrieved their canvases, and started painting beneath the dazzling blue sky of winter, the air crisp and the burgeoning daffodils heralding the arrival of spring.

“Great Falls Studios was keyed into the imminent demise of this historic tree last week,” said artist Jenn Griffith. “For me, it’s pretty staggering to think of all that has happened in the world and right here along



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

If interested in salvaged wood in the form of cookies, different widths, and lengths, send an email to marmota.oak@gfca.org for further information.

Georgetown Pike in the 230+ years since this Southern Red Oak was a sapling. I felt like this was a special moment to gather with other artists to memorialize a bit of our local history,” Griffith said.

“The beautiful trees are one of the many things that I fell in love with about Great Falls,” said Karen Bateman. “Given the special history of this tree, I felt it was a wonderful opportunity to invite other members of Great Falls Studios to do the same.”

Recently, GFCA members stepped forward to see if they could save some “mementos of the past,” usable lumber from the Southern Red Oak. GFCA reports in its Newsletter, “The salvaged wood, in the form of cookies [horizontal slices through the 58” diameter trunk] and live edge planks cut from the limbs, will be sold to cover the transportation and milling costs.”

The deadline to state interest in the wood has reportedly been extended beyond Feb. 5. Send an email to marmota.oak@gfca.org for further information.

Mount Vernon District Town Meeting Feb. 10

By Supervisor Dan Storck



Come learn more about why the Mount Vernon District is “The One” at our 37th Annual Town Meeting! This year’s event on Super Bowl Saturday will be filled with important District information, delicious food and engaging activities for the whole family, proving that the excitement of the weekend extends beyond just football.

Established by my predecessor, Gerry Hyland in 1988, the Town Meeting has become a cherished community tradition that I am fortunate to host year after year.

Join us Saturday, Feb. 10 from 7:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Mount Vernon High School, 8515 Old Mount Vernon Rd., to see your neighbors and engage and learn about the County budget, public safety and other issues important to you. Our popular Exhibit Hall runs from 7:45 – 9:30 a.m. featuring many County agencies and local service providers. Take a moment to check out the KidBiz Young Entrepreneurs Expo which features many “small” business owners. The Fairfax County Health Department will have flu vaccines available and Public Health Nurses will be onsite to answer your questions about childhood and adult vaccines. Don’t forget to grab some coffee and treats from the MVHS Athletic Boosters Club while listening to the MVHS Chamber String Quartet.

The program runs from 9:30 a.m. – noon featuring a “virtual tour” of the District with updates on recently completed, current and future projects, followed by Q&A panels with local leaders and special recognitions.

You will hear from Congressman Gerry Connolly, Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay, County Executive Bryan

Hill, Mount Vernon School Board Representative Mateo Dunne and other local elected leaders who will be speaking and answering questions from residents. Special this year, we will hear about the state of education funding in the Commonwealth.

After the program from 12:15 – 1:30 p.m., please join us for a Taste of Mount Vernon!

Sample dishes from local restaurants such as Dishes of India, Della J’s Delectables, Grandma’s Famous Kitchen, 2 Jefes Tex-Mex, Domino’s, Ruby’s Jamaican Kitchen and many more. This addition has become a beloved portion of the Town Meeting and we hope you will stay to find your new favorite local restaurant.

Join us in-person or stream from your home on Facebook @SupervisorDanStorck and Channel 16 <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/channel-16/stream>. We are excited to show you all that is happening in the District.

By this point you should have received your annual Advisor mailer in your home mailbox, highlighting major accomplishments and projects from the past year, as well as our focus for 2024.

Looking forward, our goals for the coming year include: advocacy to increase state funding for schools, reducing large truck parking on our roadways, increasing housing options for all, beginning exterior construction on Original Mount Vernon High School, launching a new Mount Vernon business forum, completing the Lorton Visioning process and opening Bunnyman Brewery at the Workhouse Arts Center. Be sure to check it out and if you have any questions, comments or want to connect with Team MVD, be sure to join us for the 37th Annual Mount Vernon District Town Meeting.

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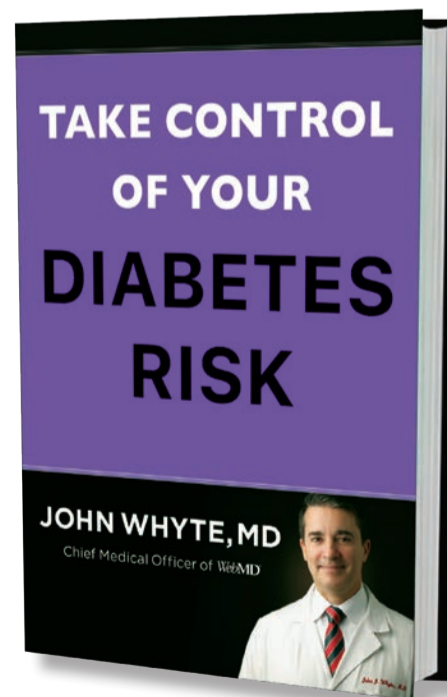
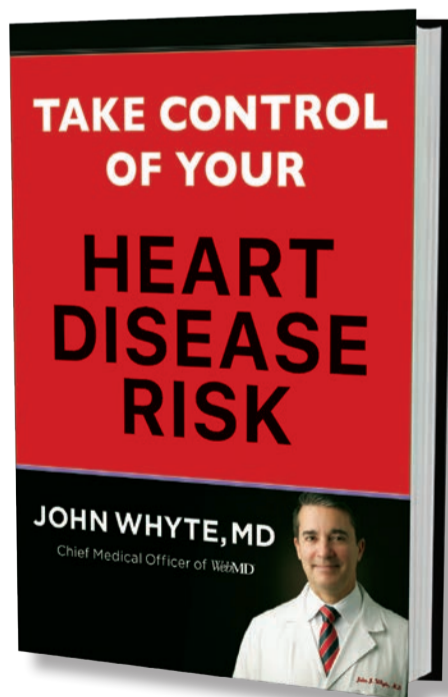
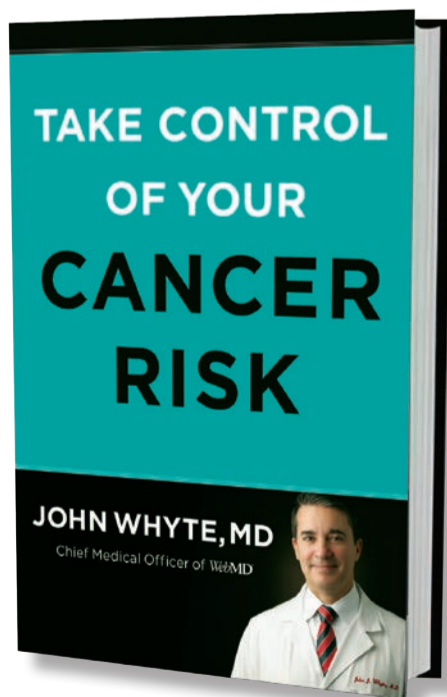
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From left are Will Sanfilippo, Kaitlyn McCarley, Laila Tomhave and Alejandro Cahoon.



The cast of "Sweeney Todd," school edition, poses in character.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Murder, Romance, Revenge and Amazing Songs

Not Just Dance presents dramatic musical, 'Sweeney Todd.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

A Tony Award-winning tale of love, murder and revenge in 19th-century London, "Sweeney Todd," school edition, is Not Just Dance's upcoming show. Performed by the advanced musical-theater students of this Chantilly-based, theatrical-arts educational studio, it promises to wow the audience.

"People will be surprised at the caliber of the actors' talents, because this is basically a college-level production," said Producer Dawne LeKang. "And they'll really get wrapped up in the story."

Show dates are Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Feb. 15, 16 and 17, at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Feb. 18, at 2 p.m. Ticket information is at <https://ci.ovationtix.com/35534/production/1180554>.

Performances are at the studio at 14225 Sullyfield Circle, Suite D, in Chantilly. Because of its violent themes, the show isn't recommended for ages under 13.

Todd is an unjustly exiled barber who returns to London seeking vengeance against the lecherous judge who framed him and ravaged his young wife. When he meets Mrs. Lovett, a resourceful owner of a failing pie shop, he opens a new barbershop above her store and both their fortunes improve – but for a deadly reason.

The cast and crew of 25 have been rehearsing since September. And the scenes take place on the street, in the pie shop and in the barbershop.

"It's a very difficult show to perform because of Stephen Sondheim's score, and our talented, young performers have really risen to the task," said Director Jen Farmer. "Most of the costumes are black and white to show

the drabness and dirtiness of the city and people's poverty and desperation."

"Yet everything about this show is visually appealing, amazing and believable – the actors, the sounds and the sights," she continued. "Our tech classes have done a phenomenal job on all of this play's special effects – from the set design and color palette to the construction of Sweeney's barber chair. Every one of the audiences' senses will be awakened."

Chantilly High senior Will Sanfilippo portrays Todd. "He owned a business with his wife and child in London until he was convicted of a crime he didn't commit, and a corrupt judge sent him to prison in Australia," explained Sanfilippo. "Now, he's a grief-stricken, vengeful father determined to make the judge pay for what he did. Sweeney's grim and methodical, but also has many outbursts because of all the pent-up emotion inside him."

Loving his role, Sanfilippo said it's his favorite one he's ever played. "Sweeney's an in-depth character; it takes lots of work to portray all those emotions at the same time without over-acting," he said. "I have to put myself in his shoes to fully understand how he'd react to certain things. And it's a great experience playing the lead because the entire show revolves around him, and all his thoughts are revealed – not just by me – but by the whole cast."

Sanfilippo's favorite number that he sings is "My Friends" because "It's almost the catalyst for him to start his revenge and form his plan to kill the judge. The whole show is gothic and thrilling. Once people start it, they'll need to know what happens next. It enthralls you and is never boring. There's always something exciting happening on-stage."

Playing Mrs. Lovett is Oakton High junior Kaitlyn McCarley, who describes her character as "quirky and a little crazy. But she also has a loving, compassionate side, and she loves Sweeney. She's spontaneous, positive and an optimist who looks on the bright side and reminds Sweeney to have patience and things will work out for him."

"I love playing her because of the two

parts of her personality, so I try to make each of them stand out," continued McCarley. "And she has so many fun and exciting songs with challenging melodies and harmonies." McCarley especially likes singing "God, that's Good" because "It's a big, energetic number where everyone's bustling and running around her bakery while she sings this fast-paced song."

She said audiences will enjoy the show's "great ensemble moments where they get to see everybody shine. We've got a really cool set – especially Sweeney's barber chair. And although the story's pretty dark, it also has comedy to give it some relief."

Fairfax High senior Alejandro Cahoon portrays Anthony, who loves a young woman named Johanna and is Todd's friend. "He's happy, bubbly and down-to-earth and appreciates the smaller things in life," said Cahoon. "And once he sets his mind on a goal, he'll stop at nothing to get it."

He said mainly focusing on playing a romantic character is a different experience for him, so it's a bit challenging. But, said Cahoon, "I enjoy showing Anthony's determination to be with Johanna, and I like singing his songs. My favorite is 'Johanna' because it's dynamic and has a very pretty melody."

As for the audience, he said people will enjoy the "almost simplicity of the story and

minimalistic set because, at the same time, both are intriguing. And all the songs are different from each other and lovely to listen to."

Laila Tomhave, a Herndon High sophomore, plays Johanna, 16. "She was the ward of Judge Turpin, who sent Sweeney to prison far away," said Tomhave. "She's innocent and naive but is able to protect herself when she has to. Her life is kind of a metaphor for a caged bird wanting to be free. Her parents aren't in the picture, but she's unhappy living with the judge and being trapped with him in his house."

Tomhave likes "the intricacies of playing Johanna's innocence, while knowing darkness is within her. And her musical part is a lyrical soprano, unlike most of the other, more belting-type singing parts."

She especially enjoys singing the number, "Kiss Me, Part II," because of the challenge of four different characters singing and overlapping their portions of the song at the same time. And her favorite song overall is "A Little Priest" because it's "a dark-humored play on words that's very comedic."

Even with the main story focusing on the lead characters, said Tomhave, "The ensemble – which sings 13 songs – really is the core of the show. And considering this play's level of difficulty, for the audience to see it being done by teenagers will be impressive."

BRIEFS

Help Stuff the Bus for Britepaths

Britepaths is partnering with Fairfax County and MV Transportation to hold a Stuff the Bus Food Drive, this Saturday, Feb. 10, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Walmart at 11181 Lee Hwy. in Fairfax. Community members are asked to donate greatly needed supplies to help stuff the Fastran Bus and stock Britepaths' emergency pantry.

The most-needed items are laundry detergent, toilet paper, shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, body wash and feminine hygiene products. Volunteers are also needed to help run the drive. For more information and volunteer registration, go to <http://britepaths.org/donate-food>.

Have Coffee with a Cop on Feb. 13

Fairfax City police are holding Coffee with a Cop, next Tuesday, Feb. 13, from 8-11 a.m., at the Kamp Washington Starbucks, 10930 Fairfax Blvd. in Fairfax.

Money Does Grow On Trees

Virginia Forestry pays for community tree plantings.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Virginia's Department of Forestry strives to see many more native trees planted in the Commonwealth. For the second year in a row, they are willing to give money away to make that happen. DOF has \$800,000 in Trees for Clean Water Grant (TCW) money to award in 2024, for projects from \$1,000 up to \$50,000 per applicant. Under the grant program last year, DOF awarded 58 grants totaling nearly \$853,000 across the Commonwealth. Two of the grantees were located in Fairfax County: the Town of Herndon, and the Ridge Road Estates Home Owners Association (RREHOA) in Springfield. So, contrary to the old adage, money does grow on trees.

The program was "established to encourage the creation of long-term, sustained canopy cover to improve water quality across the Commonwealth. This grant is used to fund tree-planting efforts that raise public awareness of the benefits of trees and impacts on water quality," according to the Department of Forestry. Projects could include: riparian buffers, community or street tree plantings, neighborhood-wide projects, converting turf-to-trees, and tree giveaways, or other similar projects. Funds, which are paid on a reimbursement basis, can be used to cover site and soil preparation and amendment, fees of contractors or consultants, purchase of trees and shrubs up to two calibers, essential materials, and maintenance expenses including watering during the grant period.

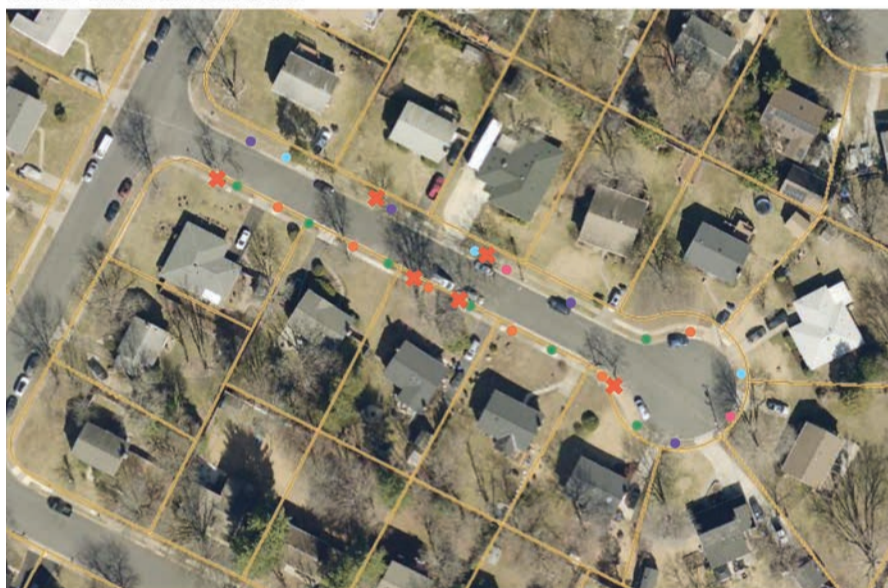
Who is eligible to apply? This is not a program for individual home owners. Grants may be awarded to civic groups, communities, local government, non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, public educational institutions, state agencies, tribal organizations, and volunteer groups. Some match of awarded funds is expected and can include in-kind and volunteer hours. Applications are accepted electronically at [https://dof.virginia.gov/urban-community-forestry/urban-forestry-community-assistance/virginia-trees-for-](https://dof.virginia.gov/urban-community-forestry/urban-forestry-community-assistance/virginia-trees-for-clean-water-grant-program/)



Before the Trees for Clean Water Grant project, trees along Herndon's Bruce Court were misshapen, interfering with power lines, and losing branches

PHOTO COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON

BRUCE CT: ALL SITE CHANGES



LEGEND:

- River Birch (6)
- American Elm (7)
- Eastern Redbud (2)
- Star Magnolia (3)
- Okame Cherry (4)
- ✗ Bradford Pear Removal (6)

PHOTO COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON

Town arborist's Nick Maletta designed a plan to remove poor trees and replant.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

RREHOA's common area field before the project has a significant number of non-native Callery Pear trees and required mowing maintenance.

clean-water-grant-program/

The Town of Herndon used its nearly \$21,000 grant to replace trees along their Bruce Court area, a few on Center Street and at the Town Hall. Town Arborist Nick Maletta explained that they

planted 36 trees in total, with the majority replacing invasive Bradford Pear trees along Bruce Court. The existing trees had been dropping branches and interfering with overhead power lines for some time. While the Town spent

maintenance funds for contracted service to remove the existing problem trees, which were not native, the grant provided the funds for their replacement. Maletta selected a mix of overstory and under-story tree species in his plan to accommodate the power lines at the site. Nearby residents had input through in-person meetings and social media. He describes only two hurdles encountered: having to compromise on one or two tree placements for resident considerations, and the lack of availability of some preferred tree species during the available planting period. Maletta says, "the more people who take advantage of the money to plant, the community will only benefit." He hopes to apply again this year.

Must you have a professional arborist available to take on a project? Ridge Road Estates HOA would say no, but you do need a few dedicated volunteers. The



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Department of Forestry community forester Jacob Zielinski, finds RREHOA's project trees already forming buds during a visit to the project site.

RREHOA's project targeting an open field common area started with removal of 42 Bradford Pear trees, along with a few species of other invasive vines and plants. They used grant funds to plant 16 large new native trees and shrubs. These plantings join 37 seedlings planted three years ago in a density meant to eventually shade out grasses, eliminating the maintenance previously required to mow turf grass. Their \$7,300 award project was lead by a resident Virginia Master Naturalist and aided by a small group of volunteers who took on many of the site preparation and tree maintenance tasks. They used grant funds for contractor service in planting the large trees. The neighborhood's children joined in to help with site maintenance, such as gathering non-native tree seeds to prevent them from spouting, and gathering brush to form habitat. The HOA was able to complete their grant fund matching obligation fully with volunteer hours. (For more on the grant program and the HOA's efforts, see Springfield Connection, November 16-22, pg 8-9)

A recent visit by DOF community forester Jacob Zielinski found the RREHOA project area and tree plantings "looking good" with some minimal deer predation, from which the shrubs are likely to recover. New trees are already forming buds. Zielinski estimates they might only need another week to open if milder temperatures continue. The HOA's selection of species, including Dogwood, Eastern Redbud, Fringe Tree, Red Buckeye, and Elderberry and Spicebush, promise a notable bloom display and the ability to attract the pollinating insects which favor them.

If your group would like to apply, applications must be submitted 30 days prior to the estimated planting date for Spring and Fall planting periods at the link provided above.

Local Audubon Chapter Votes to Change Its Name

John James Audubon claimed ownership of enslaved people.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

Libby Lyons, current president of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV), has already seen 41 different species of birds this morning at Nags Head, North Carolina. She has arrived ahead of the weekend trip organized with the Virginia Society of Ornithology to get a head start. “I saw hundreds of pintails at the Bodie Island Lighthouse and hooded mergansers flying over the water. The avocets were a treat.”

But she has taken a 10 a.m. break to discuss the announcement in the Potomac Flyer released Feb. 1 of the recent decision by the ASNV Board to change the name to remove the reference to John James Audubon.

John Audubon is widely known for his “Birds of America,” painted in the 1800s when he was 35 and containing 435 life-sized watercolors of North American birds. But in recent years it has come to light that Audubon also had a less favorable side.

The newsletter explained, “Many concerns were raised by both supporters and opponents of a name change. These include the need for the organization to be inclusive and welcoming to all Virginians, the potential loss of name recognition and connection with the national Audubon Society and other Audubon chapters and not erasing the many positive contributions that James James Audubon made to American ornithology, while also not honoring Audubon’s ownership of enslaved people, collaboration with eugenics research, and scientific dishonesty.”

Tom Blackburn of McLean, past president of ASNV, had a big part in the effort to consider renaming the ASNV. “We started about a year ago when the National Audubon Society decided to look at the issue of renaming the national organization.” He says he thinks a lot of other things came together on the timing of the decision including Black Lives Matter and the incident in Central Park when a white female dog walker called the police and falsely claimed a Black bird-watcher, Christian Cooper, was threatening her after he asked her to leash her dog.

Blackburn says he would have been quite happy if the national Audubon Society had decided to rename itself and the local chapters could have just followed. The national chapter decided not to rename but indicated the local chapters were free to make their own decision.

Blackburn says that as the largest independent chapter of the 610 chapters around the country, it was important for the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia to evaluate the issue. “I felt that we needed to begin by doing extensive research. I felt some of the things that had been published around the national decision were a little bit too excit-



Libby Lyons, President of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, which will now choose a new name.

Deciding on dropping Audubon from its name: “Not erasing the many positive contributions that James James Audubon made to American ornithology, while also not honoring Audubon’s ownership of enslaved people, collaboration with eugenics research, and scientific dishonesty.”

ed, and some turned out to be incorrect.”

The deliberation on whether to change the name included over six months of exploration, including a survey filled out by 481 members and reaching out to a dozen or so other chapters who have already changed their name.

Lyons says, “The survey responses totaled over 25,000 words. It was like a small novel. People were so passionate.”

Lyons says they discovered a survey that had been used by a chapter in Alabama and modified it. She says the ASNV survey found 43 percent of the respondents said a name change would have no effect on their decision to join, 23 percent said it would have some impact one way or the other but 29 percent said it would make them somewhat or much more likely to join.

“The younger and minority respondents felt more strongly about changing the name and we need all hands on deck as we look to the future,” Lyons says. “We need to build an intergenerational and intercultural bridge. Nature belongs to everyone.”

Blackburn says the current membership of Audubon is old and white. “If the average age of an Audubon member is 70, we need other people to support it. We need to look forward five-to-10 years to how we continue to thrive. The demographics of Northern Virginia has changed dramatically in the last few years.”

Connie Ericson, a ASNV Board Member from Arlington says, “I’ve been an Audubon member for a lot of years, and I’m sad to see the name go. It was synonymous with

conservation. But all of the information that has come out in the last few years about James Audubon and with so many people in favor of changing the name, it was inevitable.”

She says there were some pretty strong opinions in both directions. She speculates that we live in a diverse area, very urbanized, and it might be a different decision in some of the smaller rural chapters.

Bill Young, a well-known local bird watcher from Arlington who has co-created an extensive website of Monticello Park in Alexandria says, “I actually was indifferent and it wouldn’t upset me to leave the name. But of the two arguments, changing it was a little stronger. I don’t understand how young people think but if they are upset by the name I understand.” He says, “Perhaps I’ve been hardened. It’s not a hot button issue for me. There is so much anger all over that I think people are looking for outlets. I’m not sure it translates into action.”

Lyons says, “The most important thing that everyone had in common was they were all on board about the best thing that would help us in protecting birds. With climate change and the rate of development we need all the help we can get to protect birds.”

As they move forward, the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia will reach out to determine a new name for the ASNV chapter which encompasses all of Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William and Stafford counties, and portions of Fauquier, Loudoun, Rappahannock and Spotsylvania counties. Lyons said they had already received sug-

gestions for a new name from 100 people, and there is a link in the newsletter for further suggestions.

Lyons says, “We plan to move forward in the next several months. We need to make sure we have a strategy for branding and connecting with people to make this a success. One of the serious concerns is lack of name recognition when we choose a new name for our organization.” She says a number of chapters have chosen a name which combines their geographical location with the words Bird Alliance. The first was Golden Gate Bird Alliance; others include Detroit Bird Alliance and Chicago Bird Alliance. “If we choose one name and galvanize around it, it will be more recognizable.

She speculates the new name should probably contain the word bird and many people believe that the word society has an unfavorable connotation and should be dropped.

On the other hand, Blackburn says, “We do a whole lot more than watch birds. The name needs to reflect more of our mission.” He says, “There may be another incredibly good name out there we haven’t thought of.”

Lyons says a number of people thought the name change issue was just a nuisance and distracting from other more important work. “But our local chapter is moving forward with a number of exciting initiatives. We are hiring a volunteer coordinator and will continue our Stretch the Parks activities, expanding the number and variety of nature outings and putting up a Spanish channel on our website. I think we’re changing, which is great.”

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Pileated woodpecker, symbol of ASNV, taken at Roosevelt Island.



Blackburnian warbler taken at Monticello Park in Alexandria during spring migration.

NEWS

Tran Sponsors Protection for Elephants

Seeks more humane treatment of kept animals.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/
THE CONNECTION

Delegate Kathy Tran

There are no elephants living in Fairfax County. In fact, the county has not seen an elephant housed or visiting within its boundaries since 2016 in the days before the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus retired its elephants. So, northern Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran's 2024 bill to protect elephants may come as a surprise to county residents. Her HB 1531 seeks to prevent cruelty to elephants by banning the use of pain-inflicting training tools, such as bull hooks, which are used to inflict fear or pain in efforts to control the large animals.

Tran (D-District 18) explains that elephants are not defined in Virginia law as wildlife and so do not come under wildlife law protections. "World-wide care has shifted [for elephants], recognizing their socially complex nature," Tran said. Four years ago, she and others in the legislature became aware that an elephant at a roadside zoo in Virginia was being kept alone and chained in poor conditions, and used to provide many miles of rides for visitors, often forced to carry weights over posted limits. Efforts to change Virginia's law then were not successful. As reports of poor treatment at the zoo continued, Tran says she was moved by the plight of Asha, the elephant, to sponsor the bill this year in consideration of Asha's on-going struggles. Tran says she feels a responsibility to provide protection for animals throughout the Commonwealth.

Animal welfare advocates have long criticized the use of punishment methods used to control elephants. Last year, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums voted to ban elephant keepers from using bull hooks, except in emergencies. Although an elephant's skin appears tough, it is so sensitive that an elephant can feel the pain of an insect bite and has many sensitive areas on its body where the skin is thin that handlers have exploited. A bull hook is described by the Association as, "an outdated, circus-style training tool that resembles a fireplace poker and is used

to inflict pain and punishment on elephants." It is a heavy weapon with a sharp metal hook.

In December, inspectors from the State Veterinary and Attorney General Animal Law Unit offices seized about 95 exotic and domestic animals from the Natural Bridge Zoo in Rockbridge County which owns Asha. The animal law unit is the same group which garnered acclaim for their handling of the infamous Michael Vick dog fighting prosecution. Their inspection came after a new employee informant reported the elephant's long time handler had instructed, "to always jab them where bone is close to flesh. Make it count."

In January, a Circuit Court judge upheld the seizure of 56 of the zoo animals. An unconfirmed report indicates Asha may be relocated, possibly before the seizure action, to a private elephant facility on 67 acres in northern Florida. That facility has been home to more than 200 elephants in a habitat similar to their natural environment, taking in many elephant rescues over the years.

Details about the timing and reason for Asha's move could not be confirmed. When contacted, the State Attorney General's Office would not comment "due to pending litigation with the Natural Bridge Zoo." Should Asha return, or future circus animals visit, they would be protected from use of negative handling methods under Tran's bill.

Only California and Rhode Island now have bull hook restrictions. Tran's bill, which has passed out of subcommittee, will likely be heard by the full House Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources committee on Feb. 7.

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ENTERTAINMENT

FORB'S ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

Online ordering for FORB's annual Native Plant Sale opens on Thursday, February 1, 2024 and closes on Sunday, March 24, 2024. Go to the website at www.forbpark.org, and click "2024 Native Plant Sale" on the home page. There are over 500 plants from 56 species from which to choose including Virginia Bluebells, Cardinal Flowers, several varieties of Phlox and many, many more. All orders will be picked up on Saturday, April 13, 2024 at the Riverbend Park Educational Pavilion on Potomac Hills Street.

THE MCLEAN TREES FOUNDATION, NEIGHBORHOOD TREES PROGRAM, WANTS TO HELP YOU PLANT A NATIVE TREE IN YOUR YARD!

Don't know how to plant a tree but want to support the environmental health of your community? Want your family to have the experience of planting a tree? If you live in McLean, the McLean Trees Foundation (MTF) (a local nonprofit) will help you select an appropriate native tree for your property, deliver the tree to your yard, help you plant it, provide information on maintenance, and even check back with you a few months after planting to see how your tree is doing. If you are interested in participating in this program to boost our native tree canopy in McLean, visit the website at <https://www.mcleantreesfoundation.org/neighborhood-tree-program> and submit your application! A fee of \$100 is assessed to cover the costs of the program (limit one 6-7 foot tree in 15 gallon container per household). There is a separate program for those who are interested in spearheading a community tree planting campaign in their neighborhood. MTF's Tree Champion program makes it easy to help your neighbors plant more trees!

NOW THRU FEB. 11

"The Who's Tommy." At Workhouse Arts Center, Building W-3 Theater, Lorton. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. If you already know The Who's remarkable rock opera, then you'll be singing along. If you don't, then you're in for a real treat! This spirited stage production offers some startling, fascinating variations from the movie, so if you think you know Tommy...come see what's new!

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

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



The Beatles 60th Anniversary Tribute takes place Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024 at Capital One Hall in Tysons Corner.

The Beatles
60th Anniversary Tribute!
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BONITA LESTINA FAIRFAX OLD TOWN HALL PERFORMANCE SERIES

Enjoy an evening of music showcasing a variety of genres in the elegant interior of historic Old Town Hall (3999 University Drive) in the heart of Fairfax City. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and performances begin at 8 p.m. and run from October to April. Admission is free. Visit: www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts.

SCHEDULE

February 16: Matt Trkula – Classical Guitar
March 8: Mandoleers – Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra
March 22: James & Victor – Jazz Duo/Steel Pan
April 5: Francesca Hurst – Solo Piano
April 19: Sylvan Waters Duo – Harp/Brass

NOW THRU FEB. 17

McLean Project for the Arts' Winter Exhibitions. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Project for the Arts will open its winter exhibitions—Moving Beyond Beauty: Reverence and Reclamation (Emerson Gallery) and To March is to Love: Weavings by Janel Leppin (Atrium Gallery)—on December 7, 2023. Both shows will run through February 17, 2024, with an Opening Exhibition Reception on Thursday, December 7, 2023 from 7-9 p.m. Bringing together five artists—Adjoa Jackson Burrows, Jacqui Crocetta, Maggie Gourlay, June Linowitz, and Elzbieta Sikorska—Moving Beyond Beauty features work that is at once aesthetically pleasing and philosophically compelling.

FEB. 1-18

"Shutter Sisters." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road Tysons. This sweet and funny tale explores the parallel lives of two women. A white woman named Michael struggles with strained family relationships at her adopted mother's funeral, while a Black woman named Mykal navigates a challenge of her own: becoming an empty nester. A surrealist journey through womanhood, identity, and what it means to belong. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1st-stage.org or by calling the 1st

Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH THE FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Embark on a journey of cultural richness and historical significance this Black History Month with several programs in Fairfax County parks. Join them in honoring and exploring the vibrant tapestry of Black heritage through interactive events, programs, exhibits and offerings for all ages.

Programs and Events
Black History Month at Historic Frying Pan Church, Frying Pan Farm Park, Feb. 17, noon-2 p.m., Free.
Paths of Freedom Seekers, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Feb. 11, 1-2 p.m., \$8.
Preserving Our Legacy: A Workshop for Black Cemetery Owners and Stakeholders, Frying Pan Farm Park Visitor Center Auditorium Feb. 17, 10 a.m.- 1 p.m., Free.
Remembering Metilda- An Enslaved Child at the Mill, Colvin Run Mill, Feb. 17, 1-2 p.m., \$9.
Enslaved Lives and the Legacy of Slavery, Historic Huntley, Feb. 17, 1-2 p.m., \$12.
Workshops, Exhibits and Activities
Getaway-Frederick Douglass Home & Portrait Gallery, Green Spring Gardens Park, Feb. 20, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., \$89.
Special Black History Month Exhibit: "On One Farm—The Women of Walney, 1853-1862," Exhibit is on display through Mar. 26. Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Free.
Celebrate Black Athletes in Sports and Recreation, Oakmont Rec Center, display available through Feb. 29.
Black History Month at Oakmont Rec Center.
Take a picture with the LOVE Sign at Oakmont that features Black History Month colors.
Explore achievements of Black Inventors throughout the years in the Oakmont Minigolf Story Walk.
Honor Black Musical Artists.
All Rec Centers Drop-In Fitness Classes will be showcasing songs by Black artists during many of the classes.
South Run Rec Center will offer music that celebrates Black culture and artists during Anne Hugill's Zumba class at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 10.
Black Athletes in Fairfax County. Providence Rec Center will be showcasing a different athlete from Fairfax County each week. The rec center will display a banner that tells the story of Edwin B. Henderson, who introduced D.C. to basketball in 1907.
To learn more about Black History and culture in Fairfax County



"Moonlight and Love Songs:" Robin Spielberg Performs on Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024 at Reston Community Arts Center, Center Stage.

Parks or to participate in any of the programs above, visit the Black History Month webpage.

SAVOR THE SWEETNESS OF MAPLE SYRUP AT COLVIN RUN MILL

At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road in Great Falls. As the sap begins to flow and the maple trees are tapped, Colvin Run Mill invites you to embrace the winter warmth by the fire. Immerse yourself in the fascinating process of maple syrup production. Discover the secrets behind why trees produce sap and witness the art of sap collection through tree tapping.
Experience the magic as the sap is expertly boiled down to create the delectable maple syrup that graces our tables. Indulge your taste buds by sampling this liquid gold on cornbread made with Colvin Run Mill grains.
Join them on Saturday, Feb. 10 and on two Sundays on Feb. 18 and Feb. 25 for a Maple Syrup Boil Down. Choose times between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. This program is tailored for groups, families and children aged 6 and older.

FRIDAY/FEB. 9

Winter Exhibitions Performance and Reception. 7-9 p.m. At 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Project for the Arts (MPA) will host a Winter Exhibitions Closing Reception and musical performance. The reception will celebrate the conclusion of MPA's Winter Exhibitions, Moving Beyond Beauty: Reverence and Reclamation and To March is to Love: Weavings by Janel Leppin. Following the reception, Atrium Gallery artist Janel Leppin will perform several solo pieces on her cello. The event will then conclude with a performance by Ensemble Volcanic Ash, comprised of Janel Leppin (cello), Sarah Hughes (alto saxophone), Brian Settles (tenor saxophone), Anthony Pirog (guitar), and Larry Ferguson (drums). MPA's Winter Exhibitions sponsored in part by the Young Family. Limited tickets available. RSVP at <http://tinyurl.com/winterexhibitionsclosing>

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 week-end 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

"Moonlight and Love Songs:" Robin Spielberg Performs. 8 p.m. At Reston Community Arts Center, Center Stage, Reston. Renowned for her emotive and masterful piano artistry, Steinway Artist Robin Spielberg will take you on a journey through time and emotion, performing her original compositions as well as timeless classics. Expect to be captivated by the delicate notes that evoke nostalgia and moved by the powerful crescendos that stir the soul. Tickets available at <https://Restoncommunitycenter.com>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Featuring Dancing Beethoven. Performance Sponsor: The Mather

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Ping Pong Tournament. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. No fee to enter. All ages and levels of experience welcome. To register, visit <https://c25k.redpodium.com/clifton-annual-ping-pong-tournament-2024>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

"Animaniacs" in Concert! 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Voices and Songs of the Iconic Animated Series LIVE on Stage. Join the leading voice cast of "Animaniacs" for a zany, animany and totally insanity evening! Randy Rogel—the show's

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ENTERTAINMENT



"Animaniacs" in Concert will be held Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024 at the McLean Community Center.

original Emmy-winning composer— and voice talents Rob Paulsen and Maurice LaMarche perform the world-famous songs from the beloved cartoon TV series... backed by video projections of the equally world-famous animations!

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

Beatles 60th Anniversary Tribute.

7:30 p.m. At Capital One Hall, Tysons. The special concert collaboration of the Classical Mystery Tour with the Fairfax Symphony celebrates the 60th anniversary of the Beatles' first performance in the United States on February 11, 1964, when the Beatles performed at The Washington Coliseum direct from their debut on The Ed Sullivan Show. The performance will feature the original 1964 concert set list performed by The Classical Mystery Tour. The Fairfax Symphony will join the group in the second half of the performance to present hits from the Beatles' catalog conducted by Martin Herman. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

The Kiwanis Club of Tysons Polar Dip.

12:30 p.m. check-in; 2 p.m. Jumping Begins. At Lake Anne Village Plaza, Reston. Participants can sign up to jump, donate, or create a team today by visiting the website at kiwanispolar.org. Attendees can also enjoy the Kiwanis Polar Dip Winter Market, organized by LAWPA. There will be opportunities to shop, as well as children's crafts and other activities. All participants on-site who raise at least \$100 will receive an event t-shirt. Individuals who don't want to jump are still welcome to donate to the event. To join the Winter Market as a vendor, email LAWPA at lakeannewashingtonplaza@gmail.com.

SUNDAY/FEB. 11

Traditional Celtic Music.

At 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Beth Patterson and Patrick O'Flaherty: Talented singer/songwriter with a wicked sense of humor, who is also a masterful Celtic bouzouki and bass player, teams up with an internationally acclaimed mandolin and harmonica player and Irish language singer. bethpattersonmusic.com www.poflaherty.com

SUNDAY/FEB. 11

N Gauge Model Train Display. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum 11200 Fairfax Sta-

tion Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia T-TRAK members will hold a N gauge Model Train Display. Admission: museum members, free; adults 13 and over, \$5; children 5-12, \$3; under 4, free. Seniors 65+ and military (active & retired), \$4. Call 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/FEB. 11

Virginia Opera. 2-3 p.m. At Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax.

"Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World!" An Introduction of Opera for Children (and adults!). This interactive 35-minute opera tells the real-life story of Mariana Morillo Safa, a young girl living in Mexico City and her friendship with famed painter, Frida Kahlo. Mariana has her portrait painted by Ms. Kahlo and is nervous, but quickly befriends Frida and learns two important lessons in the process: that art can happen anywhere and how important it is to be brave even when you feel scared. Study Guide and information available here: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

SUNDAY/FEB. 11

Black History Month, Paths of Freedom Seekers, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, 1-2 p.m.,

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/topics/black-history-month>

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 14

"After Life" Film. 6:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Japan; Directed by Hirokazu Koreeda.

Shown in Japanese with English subtitles. In this acclaimed film, a group of people who have recently died find themselves in limbo. Counselors are on hand to help new arrivals pick one memory from their lives to bring with them into eternity. Once the memories are chosen, the staff makes a short film representing each one, and the films make up a collage of thoughtful cinematic moments.

THURSDAY/FEB. 15

Double Film Feature. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "Sing Faster: The Stagehand's Ring Cycle" and Stravinsky's "Oedipus Rex" (Not rated). Wagner's "Ring Cycle" is a daunting undertaking for an opera company and for the union stagehands at the San Francisco Opera. Directed by Jon Else. "Oedipus Rex" features Jessye Norman, Philip Langridge, Bryn Terfel and

Min Tanaka; Conducted by Seiji Ozawa; Directed by Julie Taymor. (Not rated)

FEB. 16-18

The Cher Show. At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner. Superstars come and go. Cher is forever. For six straight decades, only one unstoppable force has flat-out dominated popular culture – breaking down barriers, pushing boundaries and letting nothing and no one stand in her way. The Cher Show is the Tony Award-winning musical of her story, and packed with so much Cher it takes three women to play her: the kid starting out, the glam pop star, and the icon. Visit capitalonehall.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 17

Mason Artist-in-Residence A.I.M

by Kyle Abraham. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. MacArthur Genius Award-winning choreographer Kyle Abraham has developed a dance aesthetic that defies genre, mixing and morphing from social dance to classical dance styles and back again, creating his signature postmodern gumbo. The Center presents his visionary works using various dance and music styles to uncover the relationships between identity, history, and geography.

SATURDAY/FEB. 17

Remembering Metilda- An Enslaved Child at the Mill. Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Rd., Great Falls. 1-2p.m., For age 14 and up. Come learn about Metilda, an enslaved 14-year old girl who came to live at Colvin Run Mill. Discuss her life at the mill and the house. Examine what history tells us about the lives of enslaved children, their work, and their families \$9 <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/topics/black-history-month>

SATURDAY/FEB. 17

Enslaved Lives and the Legacy of Slavery, Historic Huntley, 6918 County Rd 723, Alexandria, VA 22306, Join a historian for a tour of Huntley that examines the relationship of the Mason family to slavery and recovers insights into the lives of the Humphrey family and other enslaved people whose labor maintained Mason wealth and social status. \$12 <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/topics/black-history-month>

SATURDAY/FEB. 17

Black History Month at Historic Frying Pan Church, noon-2 p.m., Frying Pan Farm Park, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon, VA, 20171 In honor of Black History Month, the Frying Pan Baptist Meetinghouse will be open Saturday February 3rd and Saturday February 17th from 12-2pm. Established in the 18th century, the original congregation of the meetinghouse included enslaved, free Black, and White-slave-holding members. Interpretive signage will tell the story of a local Black family that lived next to the Meetinghouse while a docent will be available to talk about the experience of Black congregants of the church. Stay for just a few minutes or a couple hours! Event is free, register online. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/topics/black-history-month>

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

Summer Camp Registration is Now Open!

MCC is offering a wide variety of enriching camp programs this summer, including Camp McLean and the Old Firehouse Summer Camp Trips. View our Summer Camp Guide at mcleancenter.org and sign up now!

FEB
10

Presented by The Alden

"Animaniacs" in Concert!
Voices and Songs of the Iconic Animated Series LIVE on Stage

\$45/\$35 seniors
\$25 MCC district residents

FEB
14

Presented by The Alden

Foreign Language Film
"After Life" (Not rated)
Wednesday, Feb. 14, 6:30 p.m.

Free admission

FEB
15

Presented by The Alden

Performing Arts Movie
Double Feature: "Sing Faster:
The Stagehand's Ring Cycle"
and Stravinsky's "Oedipus Rex"
(Not rated)
Thursday, Feb. 15, 1 p.m.

Free admission

FEB
23

Youth Activities

Sweetheart Parent-Child Dance
Friday, Feb. 23, 7-9 p.m.

\$20 per person



FEB
23

Presented by The Alden

Buckets 'N Boards
Friday, Feb. 23, 7 p.m.

\$15/\$12 seniors and students
\$10 MCC district residents

FEB
25

Perspectives Speaker Series.
Presented by The Alden in
Partnership with The Fairfax
County Public Library

A Mighty Long Way:
My Journey to Justice at Little
Rock Central High School
Sunday, Feb. 25, 2 p.m.

Free admission; registration is required at: librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/11400644



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mcleancenter.org

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Brown v. Board of Education SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS THROUGH APRIL 12, 2024

The Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program was established by the General Assembly to provide educational opportunities for persons who were denied an education in Virginia between 1954 and 1964 due to the closing of the public schools during Massive Resistance. Beginning in 2024, the scholarship program is extended to their descendants. The program is now open to eligible applicants for the 2024-2025 school year. For applications and information on eligibility, visit: **BROWNSCHOLARSHIP.VIRGINIA.GOV**

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Employment

Admin Asst/Receptionist, Burke Office 8:30-4:30, \$18-22/hr, Please email capitolcitysupply@gmail.com with resume or work exp. to make an appt.

Employment

Cvent, Inc. seeks a Lead Engineer, Corporate Systems in McLean, VA. Telecommuting permitted. Apply @ <https://www.jobpostingtoday.com/Ref #67567>

Employment

Transaction Network Services, Inc. has openings in Reston, VA for the following positions: Senior Software Engineer (Req #R285): Develop web-based software systems. Req's BS in Comp Sci/Comp Engg/related + 5 yrs exp. Integration Engineer (Req #R319): Perform integration testing. Reqs BS in Comp Sci, Comp Engg, related +1 yr exp. May work remotely. Email CV/CL to P Breda at TAG@tnsi.com. Must ref title/Req #.

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NEWS DEPARTMENT
fairfax@connectionnewspapers.com

Mary Kimm
Editor and Publisher
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Bonnie Hobbs
Community Reporter
703-778-9415
bhobbs@connectionnewspapers.com

Mercia Hobson
Staff Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon
Contributing Writer
msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer

Susan Laume
Contributing Writer

ADVERTISING
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment Advertising
703-778-9431

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Publisher
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

In Memoriam
Managing Editor
Kemal Kurspahic

Art/Design:
Laurence Foong
Production Manager
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

Local Students Among 40 Science Talent Finalists

Two local students are among the top 40 finalists in this year's Regeneron Science Talent Search, the nation's oldest science and math competition for high school seniors.

Arav Bhargava attends The Potomac School in McLean, Va. His project title is "Low-Cost, 3D-Printed, Universal-Fit, Transradial Socket for Amputees in Developing Countries."

David Lu Cao attends Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, in Fairfax County. His project title is "The Implications of 'Oumuamua on Panspermia."

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (NASDAQ: REGN) and Society for Science made the announcements.

The competition, now in its 83rd year, has consistently identified young innovators who combine their STEM talent with dedication and leadership skills to drive society forward. Program alumni include recipients of the world's most coveted science and math honors, including 13 Nobel Prizes and 21 MacArthur Foundation Fellowships, as well as the founders of many important science-based companies, including Regeneron.

The 2024 finalists' research projects showcase their breadth of knowledge, their commitment to addressing issues important to modern society, and their passion for science. Multiple students chose to explore research topics such as brain disorders, suicide risk and anxiety. Some students invented accessibility devices, including a robotic arm socket design, glasses for the visually impaired and a column-climbing robot. Other finalists dove into their local environments, studying honeybees and colony collapse disorder as well as prevention of the invasive lantern fly.

"Every year, the Regeneron Science Talent Search helps inspire and engage a new wave of talented young scientists with the potential to improve the world," said George D. Yancopoulos, M.D., Ph.D., Co-Founder, Board Co-Chair, President and Chief Scientific Officer of Regeneron and a winner in the 1976 STS. "As someone who got my start in this very competition, I know firsthand how the Science Talent Search experience

can help jumpstart students' future academic and career journeys."

The finalists were chosen based on their projects' scientific rigor and their potential to become world-changing scientists and leaders. They were selected from 300 scholars, announced earlier this month by Regeneron and the Society for Science. The scholars were chosen from 2,162 qualified entrants, the largest pool of applicants the competition has seen since the 1960s. Each student completed an original research project and extensive application process.

Finalists will participate in a week-long competition from March 6-13, 2024, where they will undergo a rigorous judging process and compete for more than \$1.8 million in awards. They will also have an opportunity to interact with leading scientists and share research with the public on March 10, both in person and virtually. The top 10 Regeneron Science Talent Search 2024 winners will be announced during an awards ceremony on March 12, streamed live from Washington D.C.

LOCAL STUDENTS AMONG 300 SCIENCE TALENT SCHOLARS

Kunal Samir Bham, Age: 18
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, VA
Project Title: Discovering Hidden Pathways: A Network-Centric Approach Reveals Novel Pathways Impacted by Prader-Willi Syndrome

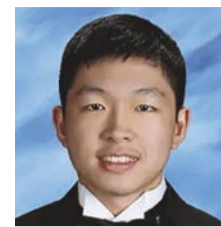
Chelsea Hu, Age: 17
BASIS Independent McLean, VA
Project Title: Silk Fibroin Microspheres: An Innovative Approach To Improve Drug Delivery to the Lungs for the Treatment of Neonatal Respiratory Distress Syndrome (NRDS)

Seoyoung Jun, Age: 18
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, VA
Project Title: Integrated Assistive Technology for the Visually Impaired – Implementation of a 3D Scanner With a Tactile Display and Machine Learning in Obstacle Identification

Rohan Kalahasty, Age: 18
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, VA
Project Title: Hybrid Plasticity: Adaptive, Brain-Like Artificial Intelligence via Prefrontal Cortex-Inspired Meta-Learning



Arav Bhargava



David Lu Cao

In total, more than \$3 million in awards will be distributed throughout the Regeneron Science Talent Search. Each finalist is awarded at least \$25,000, with the top 10 awards ranging from \$40,000 to \$250,000. Finalists may use their award prize money solely for educational purposes.

The top 300 scholars, each of whom receive \$2,000, may use their awards as they see fit; each of their schools are also awarded \$2,000 to support math and science programs, a critical investment toward their future in STEM, and our country's future as a hub of innovation and progress.

For a list of this year's finalists, visit <https://societyforscience.org/blog/top-40-selected-in-regeneron-science-talent-search-2024>

<https://www.societyforscience.org/regeneron-sts/>.

Ryan Jisup Kim, Age: 17
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, VA

Project Title: Hybrid Quantum-Classical Machine Learning for Dementia Detection

Kiran C. Myneni, Age: 17
James Madison High School, VA
Project Title: Public Health Strategies for Disease Mitigation in the SIR Model

Max Zeldes, Age: 17
The Potomac School, VA
Project Title: Improvement to Electroencephalography-Based Imagined Speech Brain-Computer Interfaces Using a Targeted, Dense Array of Electrodes With Scalp Current Density Calculations

William Zhang, Age: 17
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Project Title: Synchronization-Free Light Sheet Microscopy for 3-Dimensional Tissue Imaging

Brian Lee Zhou, Age: 17
Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, VA
Project Title: Novel Data-Driven and Constraint-Guided Deep Learning Models Optimize a Multi-Objective Flapping Fin Unmanned Underwater Vehicle Control System

Not Dying to Find Out



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Now that The Connection, most of the editions anyhow, are back on their weekly track, I'll be better able to keep you regular readers interested in Kenny-with-cancer's status. For the current moment, I am living between a rock and hard place. On the one hand I am a cancer patient who is unable, due to some predictable side effects of treatment: kidney damage, to continue to take the prescribed papillary thyroid cancer medicine that has presumably kept me going for the past three and a half years – when my original non-small cell lung cancer stage IV diagnosis was changed/corrected. Since the medicine was never a cure, I remember asking my oncologist about the timeline for the medicine's effectiveness. I was told three years, give, or take. I am now four months into year four. Hardly reassuring then that here I am, in year four, having side-effect issues which has led to a cessation of my cancer medicine. And so far as my thyroid cancer is affected, I can't imagine no medicine will stem the tide. On the other hand, diagnosis to date, to quote my late brother, medically speaking, I have been "the exception that proves the rule." Meaning, I have survived the ordeal of chemotherapy/cancer treatment better than most, according to my oncologist. However, surviving kidney damage caused by the years of treatment might be another risk/problem entirely. And unfortunately, kidneys don't get better if I stop the medicine. They just won't get worse. Which I don't imagine will be the case with my thyroid cancer. If there's no medicine to keep the cancer in check, the kidney damage might be the least of my problems. Either way, I may be damned if I do and/or damned if I don't.

Nevertheless, I'm trying not to focus too much on this reality and my three-year window of effectiveness slamming shut. Throughout my 14-plus years of treatment, often I was not presenting how my oncologist was expecting. I wasn't reacting as he had anticipated. I was doing much better than he expected then when he "prognosed" a "13 month to two years" life expectancy – at age 54 and a half for me at the initial Team Lourie meeting. As such, the experience has helped me manage my expectations – and fears. I can roll with the punches as I go from one lab result to the next, one scan result to the next. Because so far, due to a possible misdiagnosis (and/or an extremely slow-moving thyroid cancer at that) or a better-than-expected patient reaction to most treatments, I've survived nearly 15 years (Feb. 20, 2024, will be my diagnosis anniversary). What this better-than-expected patient experience has taught me is to wait and see, rather than presume the worst. In short, I'm able to wait and see rather than preemptively spend time finalizing my arrangements. However, a side effect with the word kidney in it is somewhat different compared to many of the garden variety (hair loss, fatigue, nausea, et cetera) side effects some of you may be familiar with as often characteristic of chemotherapy. It will be about the time this column publishes on Feb. 7 that I will have received the results of my most recent lab work from Feb. 5th. It's likely that my column on Wed. Feb.12 will address the potential elephant in the room: dialysis – or the avoidance thereof, brought about by an ever-increasing creatinine level (a direct result of years of chemotherapy for a lung cancer that didn't exist, apparently) that is likely confirming irreparable damage to my kidneys (so much so that I'm now being monitored by a nephrologist who has likewise ordered monthly lab work, approximately a half dozen tests or so unique to the kidneys that previously have never been measured). And though I don't like the sound of any of it, I must keep my powder dry and wait until I see the whites of my doctor's eyes (if you know what I mean). If I don't, it means I shouldn't put my cart before my horse (which I don't even own) and wait for actual medical confirmation that my ship has sailed. So, until further notice/clarification that I am in some semi-expected medical trouble, that will most likely affect my life expectancy (and not extending it, I'm afraid), I will stay in port and deal with this health storm as I have going back 15 years: underreaction and calm in the face of potentially really bad news. But until it's really happening, I'm not 'really' worried. Nor am I about to woe is me (and I wouldn't anyway, as you regular readers know). I will keep to my routine, remain positive about the negative and consider that very little of what my oncologist had predicted/anticipated health-wise originally for me has come to fruition (and 15 years of fruition is a long track record). But until it's a definite, as far as I'm concerned, it's a maybe. And I can live with maybe.

And I certainly have experience living with 'maybe.' When my oncologist first met Team Lourie and reviewed with us my previous eight weeks of diagnostic testing with a pulmonologist, thoracic surgeon, general surgeon and pathologist (X-Ray, CT scan, PET Scan, surgical biopsy) with the results all indicating/confirming non-small cell lung cancer stage IV, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. When we asked the oncologist about my chances of survival, he was very discouraging: "2% live beyond two years." Mind you, I was 54 and a half, had never spent a day in hospital; was a lifelong non-smoker with no cancer in my immediate family; and yet I'm receiving this doomsday scenario: living 30 years less than my recently deceased parents (my father died at 87 and my mother died at 86).

I had always figured I would at least live as long as they did. Then I was being told statistically that I'll be lucky to make it to age 57. Now, I'm hearing similarly ominous words. On my next birthday, I'll be age 70. I believed the doctors then as I believe them now. Still, I'll try not to take it personally and presume facts not in evidence. Life is for living, not anticipating dying.

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

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

SUNDAY/FEB. 18
"Soul to Soul" – African American & Jewish Music. 3 p.m. At Reston Community Center's Center Stage, Reston. "Soul to Soul" brings together African American and Yiddish American experiences in a deeply stirring musical presentation.

ARTSCREEN: A FREE FILM SERIES CELEBRATING THE ARTS
Join in a free film series on Friday evenings in the City of Fairfax at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. Doors open at 7 p.m.; Films begin at 7:30 p.m. Free popcorn, candy, refreshments and door prizes, too!

Feb. 23: A Great Day in Harlem. (1994) Not Rated - The documentary compiles interviews of all the top jazz musicians in NYC in the year 1958, for a piece in Esquire magazine.

April 12: Midnight in Paris. (2011) PG-13 - While on a trip to Paris with his fiancée's family, a nostalgic screenwriter finds himself mysteriously going back to the 1920s every day at midnight.

FRIDAY/FEB. 23
Black History Month Event. 5:30 p.m. Join your neighbors for an evening at the Government Center (12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax) to celebrate Black History Month. This year's theme is "The Value of Telling Our Stories." Enjoy local performances, interactive activities, enlightening discussion and light refreshments.

SUNDAY/FEB. 25
A Journey Through Civil Rights History. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School," a part of the Perspectives Speaker Series. This event, presented in partnership with the Fairfax County Public Library, features Carlotta LaNier, a key figure in the Civil Rights Movement. LaNier will share her experiences as part of the "Little Rock Nine." Registrations open on Feb. 4 at 2 p.m. Attendees can register online, a book sale and signing will follow the event. <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/11400644>



JD CALLANDER & ED BLANCHARD

Direct: (703) 606-7901 | (703) 712-1757

JDCallander@gmail.com

Ed@NewNovaHome.com

www.NewNovaHome.com

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