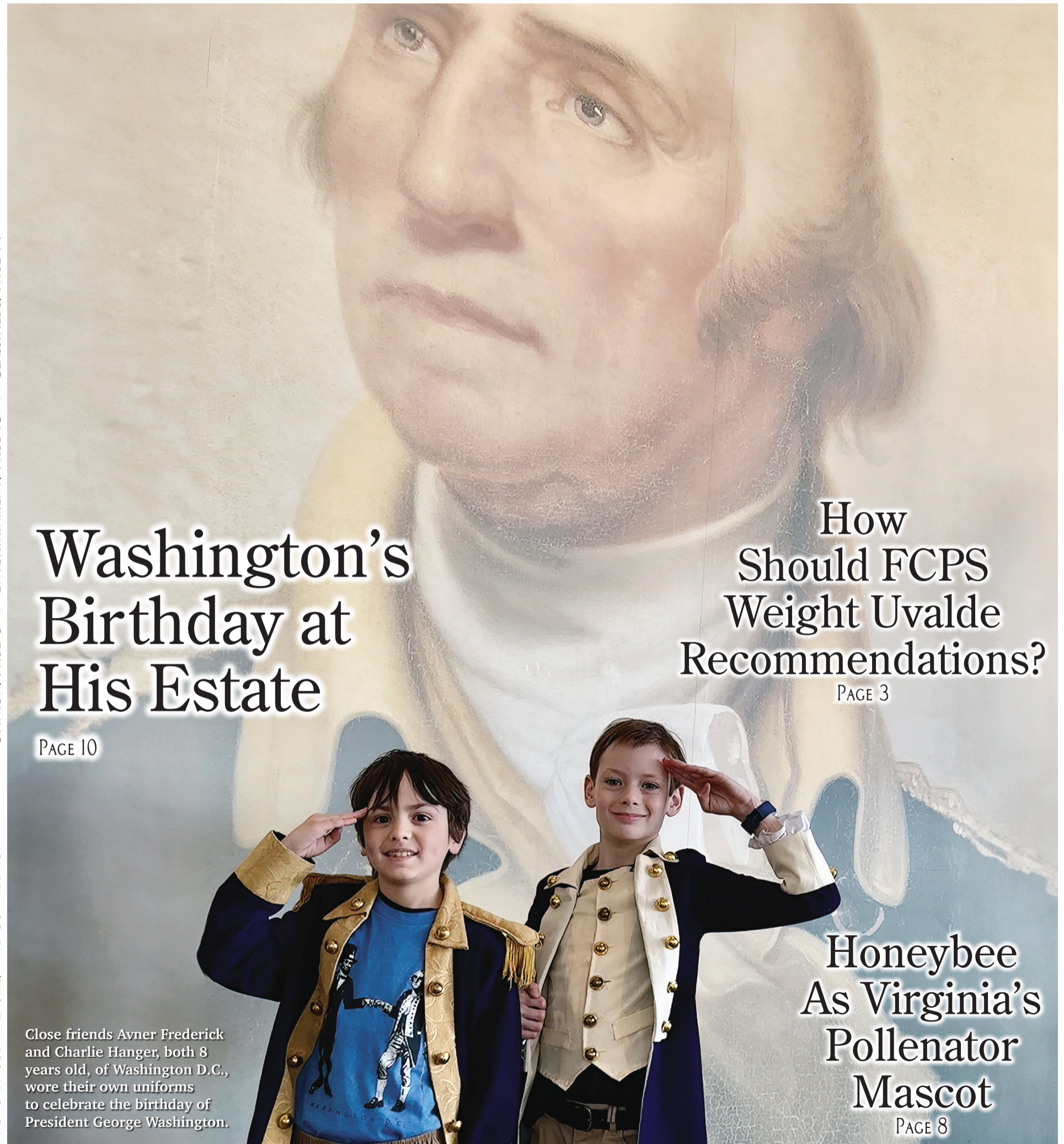


THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ❖ Chantilly ❖ Great Falls ❖ Herndon ❖ McLean ❖ Oak Hill ❖ Oakton ❖ Reston ❖ Vienna



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Honeybee As Virginia's Pollenator Mascot

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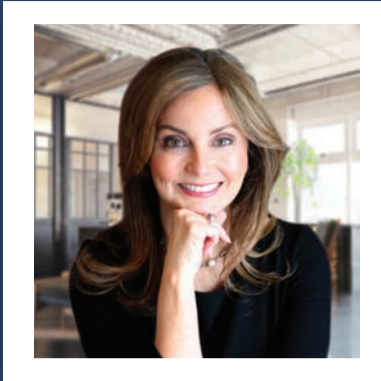
Close friends Avner Frederick and Charlie Hanger, both 8 years old, of Washington D.C., wore their own uniforms to celebrate the birthday of President George Washington.

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PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

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NEWS

DOJ Releases Uvalde Review

How should officials here evaluate recommendations?

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The deadliest K-12 school shooting in the U.S. since Sandy Hook occurred in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24, 2022. A former student equipped with a high-powered AR-15 rifle entered Robb Elementary School at 11:33 a.m. Over the course of the 77-minute gap from when officers first arrived on the scene and when they confronted and killed the subject, the shooter murdered 19 students and two teachers.

The U.S. Justice Department deemed the response “cascading failures of leadership” in its Critical Incident Review of the Response Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School released on Jan. 18, 2024. The nation’s chief law enforcement officer, Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General of the U.S. said, “We hope to honor the victims and the survivors by working together to try to prevent anything like this from ever happening again, here or anywhere.”

The DOJ provides a litany of blistering observations by topic, followed by recommendations in its 600-page review. The content translates to school divisions, law enforcement, and legislatures across the U.S.

According to Garland, the victims and survivors of the mass shooting at Robb Elementary deserved better. “The law enforcement response at Robb Elementary on May 24, 2022, and the response by officials in the hours and days after, was a failure. As a consequence of failed leadership, training, and policies, 33 students and three of their teachers, many of whom had been shot, were trapped in a room with an active shooter for an hour as law enforcement officials remained outside,” states the DOJ in the review.

On Jan. 18, the same day the DOJ released its Uvalde review, President Joe Biden said in a statement that there were multiple points of failure that hold lessons for the future. He said that his team would “work with the Justice Department and Department of Education to implement policy changes necessary to help communities respond more effectively in the future.”

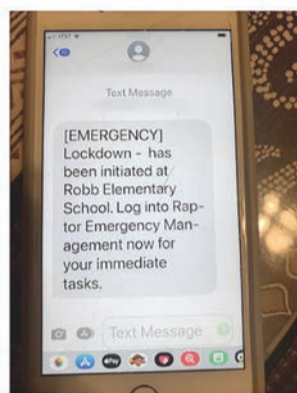
“No community should ever have to go through what the Uvalde community suffered,” Biden said.

Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers said in statement on Jan. 18, that no community is immune from school shootings and urged implementation of the DOJ’s recommendations.

The DOJ’s critical incident review is life-saving knowledge intended for law enforcement agencies, school divisions, and state departments of education. It lists observations and recommendations on Tactics and Equipment; Leadership, Incident

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Figure 7-5. Raptor alert received by UCISD employees on May 24, 2022



Source: CIR Document and Data Review.

SCREENSHOT

The message no parent or loved one wants to read.

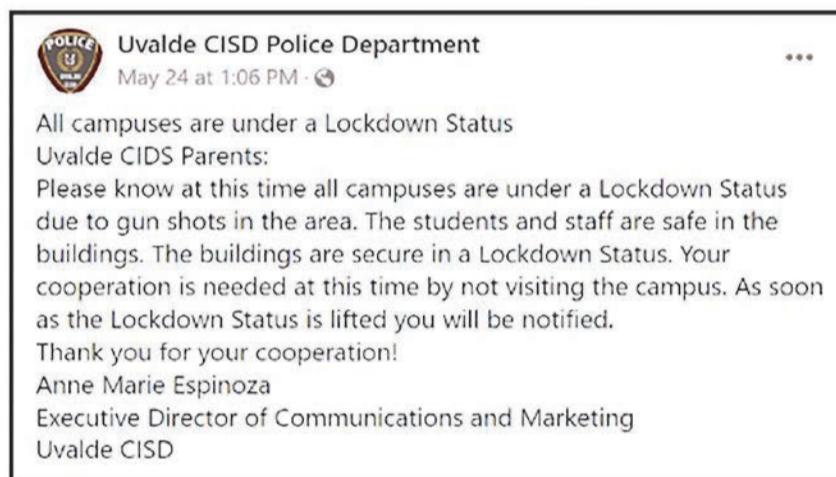
Critical Incident Review Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School



SCREENSHOT COPS U.S. DOJ

Cover of Critical Incident Review of the Response Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School by the U.S. Department of Justice

Figure 8-3. Initial UCISD post on May 24, 2022



The TXDPS, Border Patrol, and the UCSO were often involved in the high-speed pursuits and crashes, but the UCISD Communications Director never contacted those agencies before distributing a news release.¹²⁴¹

SCREENSHOT

Erroneous information relayed concerning Uvalde active shooter incident.

Command, and Coordination; Post-Incident Response and Investigation; Public Communications During and Following the Crisis; Trauma and Support Services; and School Safety and Security.

Yet so far, leadership in Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia have yet to call publicly for studying or implementing the recommendations in DOJ’s Uvalde report. No officials have called for reviewing or revising current policies here. Discussion here on active shooter strategies, physical building hardening, campus policing and how to react in certain attack scenarios has yet to be informed by recommendations in the detailed report. The report contains recommendations about how to respond to a possible attack by insiders with authorized access to schools, by snipers operating from a distance and frontal assaults where an armed intruder forcibly enters.

The Connection began reaching out to officials in early February for reaction, and several key officials responded.

Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools (response via mail response, Feb. 6, 2023): “Reading, studying and learning from the Uvalde report is important and necessary work. It is also re-traumatizing for children, families and educators across our country, all of whom were impacted by the horrific loss of life in Uvalde. The report reinforces my belief in the importance of part-



PHOTO BY FCPS

Dr. Michelle Reid, division chief, Fairfax County Public Schools

nerships in communities to help keep schools safe. In Fairfax County, we are so grateful for our partnerships with law enforcement and community agencies that help us maintain a focus on student and staff mental health and physical safety.

“I want to make clear that we have a multi-disciplinary approach to school safety in which training, planning, and partnerships are critical to our district protocols. Schools are a reflection of our communities, and unfortunately, across the nation, our communities have become increasingly violent. As we all think about the impact of events such as the Uvalde tragedy, it serves as a reminder of the need to convince ourselves to prioritize the health and safety needs of our communities.

“The impact on our students and staff of traumatic events like this makes it hard to do our best teaching and learning in schools across the nation. Our country and our elected officials would do well to recognize that in order to learn, students and staff must first feel safe, and resources must be committed to this effort. We need everyone’s help in making our schools and our communities a safe place to thrive.”

Karl Frisch, Chairman, Fairfax County School Board and Providence district representative said in an email response, Feb. 12, 2024: “Fairfax County Public Schools has a thorough and multi-faceted strategy for ensuring the safety and security of our schools, incorporating physical, technical, and operational safeguards. Our dedicated team within the Office of Safety and Security is committed to regularly updating and refining our safety protocols to ensure the wellbeing of our students and employees remains our top priority.”



PHOTO BY FCPS

Karl Frisch, Chairman, Fairfax County School Board

Melanie Meren, vice chair of the Fairfax County School Board, Hunter Mill district representative said in an email response Feb. 16: “I’m not able to provide specific comments on the DOJ’s report... . Speak with the Fairfax County Police Department, though, as they are the law enforcement experts. You may know that our school resource officers, who are assigned to middle and high schools, are budgeted for and employed by the police department.



PHOTO BY FCPS

Melanie K. Meren, Fairfax County School Board vice chair, Hunter Mill District

SEE REACTION, PAGE 12

THE CONNECTION ♦ FEBRUARY 21-27, 2024 ♦ 3

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Celebrating after the ribbon cutting are (from left) Jignesh and Kruti Lakhani with daughter Diya, 1-1/2; Gaurang Gandhi (with glasses) and son Aavyan, 1; Shalini Varshney, Shital Gandhi, Kathy Smith and Lakhani's brother Abhi. (Front row, from left) are Aarya Gandhi, 4 (Gaurang and Shital's daughter) and Granthi Lakhani, 6 (Jignesh and Kruti's daughter).

NOVA PRIME Physical Therapy Opens in Chantilly

Filling a gap in women's health care here.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Determined to provide exceptional care, doctors Shital Gandhi and Kruti Lakhani have just opened NOVA PRIME Physical Therapy at 13995 Metrotech Drive in Chantilly. Both are experienced, certified physical therapists and are proud that their woman-owned clinic will fill a need in the community.

"When we were looking for a location, we learned that physical-therapy places here didn't also offer women's health," explained Gandhi. Besides providing a wide array of other physical-therapy services, NOVA PRIME also focuses on improving women's pelvic health and other conditions, plus enhancing their postpartum recovery after pregnancy.

"Sometimes, a woman can understand another woman's situation better than a male can," said Lakhani. "And women can feel more comfortable talking to another woman about their personal health conditions. Women do so many things for their families and jobs, but they also need to take time to take care of themselves."

Gandhi and Lakhani have each worked in physical therapy for more than 10 years. And together, they aim to bring a new standard of personalized and empowering healthcare to the area.

"We offer state-of-the-art techniques and modalities here, such as dry needling to relieve muscle pain, and high-end, electrotherapy modalities," said Gandhi. "And we plan on adding laser and traction therapy soon. I'm also certified in ergonomics and spine manipulation, and Kruti excels in caring for orthopedic patients – particularly those recovering from surgery – and people dealing with injuries and balance problems."

Among the clinic's services are:

- ❖ Orthopedic Physical Therapy - Targeted interventions for musculoskeletal issues, injuries or chronic conditions.



From left are physical therapists Shital Gandhi and Kruti Lakhani.

- ❖ Post-Surgical Rehab - Recover and regain normal, daily activities after joint replacements, fracture or ligament repairs.

- ❖ Neurological Rehab - Improve gait/balance, quality of life after stroke, etc.

- ❖ Sport, Work and Auto Injury Rehab - Enable faster recovery, return to sports or work with confidence, prevent re-injury and improve performance.

Clinic hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-8 p.m.; and Saturday, 8 a.m.-noon. For appointments and more information, go to www.novaPRIMEpt.com or call 571-774-6378. Referrals are not needed; appointments are preferred, but NOVA PRIME will give same-day appointments, if possible.

The clinic's official grand opening was held just before Christmas. But, said Lakhani, "We were very excited, even before then, because we'd received many calls from prospective patients. So we've had a good response."

During the grand opening, both doctors spoke about their backgrounds with those attending. "A decade ago, my journey as a physical therapist began," said Lakhani. "Over the years, I've worked at outpatient orthopedic clinics and have experience in treating neurological conditions, pre- and post-operative conditions and work-related injuries."

SEE NOVA PRIME, PAGE 11



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

PFC Jacob Juranek is flanked by Capt. Jane Russell, station commander, and Lt. Ryan Low, assistant station commander.

'Shining Example' of Commitment to Duty

PFC Jacob Juranek is Sully Police Officer of the Year.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

PFC Jacob Juranek is the Sully District Police Station's Officer of the Year for 2023. He was honored in front of his family and fellow officers during the Feb. 14 meeting of the station's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

In his letter nominating Juranek, Sgt. Richard Boaz stressed that it's a prestigious recognition and he was making this recommendation enthusiastically. And he stated that the young officer has "consistently exhibited qualities and dedication that epitomize the highest standards of our agency."

One recent incident, wrote Boaz, serves as "a shining example of PFC Juranek's exceptional commitment to duty. In response to a stabbing report, he displayed swift and decisive action. Not only did he administer lifesaving measures to the victim, but he also demonstrated remarkable professionalism by keeping the individual calm and reassured throughout the ordeal. Thanks to Juranek's quick and composed response, the victim has made a full recovery."

Yet even beyond this incident, explained Boaz, Juranek "consistently proves to be a proactive and vigilant officer. His regular patrols of his district result in numerous criminal arrests across a spectrum of charges, showcasing his unwavering dedication to maintaining public safety." Boaz noted, as well, that Juranek interacts with community members with the "utmost professionalism," earning their respect and trust.

"Moreover, Juranek's willingness to volunteer for special assignments underscores his commitment to the agency's mission," wrote Boaz. "His positive attitude, coupled with a strong work ethic, positions him as a valuable asset to our team. He enjoys the respect and admiration of his peers, as well as the trust of his supervisors and command staff."

In addition to Juranek's "outstanding performance in critical situations and day-to-day responsibilities," stated Boaz, this officer consistently demonstrates "formidable investigative skills. His investigations are not only thorough, but also pursued until all leads are exhausted."

"These efforts have not gone unnoticed, as Juranek received a Highly Qualified ranking in the most recent Neighborhood Patrol Unit process. This recognition extends beyond his immediate supervisors, highlighting the broader acknowledgment of his exemplary contributions."

In conclusion, Boaz wrote, "It is unquestionable that PFC Juranek's remarkable performance both in critical incidents and routine duties – coupled with his strong investigative skills – make him an exceptionally deserving candidate for the Sully District Station's 2023 Officer of the Year Award."

❖ ❖ ❖

In addition, American Legion Post 1995 of Centreville submitted Juranek's information to the American Legion Department of Virginia for consideration as its statewide Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. The results will be revealed at a later date.



U.S. Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D-10)



Sen. Ghazala F. Hashmi (D-15)



Del. Patrick A. Hope (D-1)



Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-38)

House of Delegates Considering SB 280, Medical Aid in Dying

Death with dignity bill passed in Virginia Senate.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Virginia is a battleground state within itself. State legislators are fiercely divided concerning proposed legislation, SB 280. If passed, it would allow an eligible adult diagnosed with a terminal disease to request an attending health care provider to prescribe a fatal dose of a controlled substance to be self-administered for the purpose of ending the patient's life.

Senate Bill 280, one of the two Virginia bills concerning Death with Dignity, passed passed the Senate. Its companion, House Bill 858, which was originally "put on hold for the day," failed in committee.

Crossover Day, Feb. 13, this year in the Virginia General Assembly was the legislative day of the session, where bills pass out of their respective chambers to be considered by the other chamber, or not.

End of life choice, which could allow a terminally ill person to die on their terms, is a controversial issue in the United States and Virginia.

U.S. Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D-10), announced she would not run for reelection after being diagnosed with incurable progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP). "If this bill becomes law in Virginia, it would return the control over to when, where and how our stories end to us, not to our diseases," wrote Wexton in a letter read in the Virginia Senate by Sen. Jennifer Boysko.

In ten states and the District of Columbia, some patients with terminal illnesses can request medication from their doctors to end their lives.

Fifteen states, including Virginia, are currently considering Death with Dignity bills that would allow physician-assisted deaths.

In Colorado, an amendment would, among other things, remove the residency requirement and reduce the waiting period from 15 days to 48 hours in its End of Life Options Act (2016). In New Jersey, Assembly Bill No. 407 introduced by Assemblyman Robert Auth (R), would repeal the state's Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act (2019).

Between now and Saturday, March 9, when the 2024 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly is scheduled to finish or adjourn sine die, the Senate can only hear bills that passed in the House of Delegates, and the House can only hear bills that passed in the Senate. No new bills can be introduced. If the bill passes before the General Assembly wraps up on March 9, it is sent to the governor's desk. The governor can veto it, sign it into law, or allow it to become law without

his signature.

On Feb. 7, SB 280 passed on a party line vote (21-Y-19-N). SB 280 was introduced by Sen. Ghazala F. Hashmi (D-15). The tally sheet reports: YEAS--Aird, Bagby, Boysko, Carroll Foy, Deeds, Ebbin, Favola, Hashmi, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, McPike, Pekarsky, Perry, Roem, Rouse, Salim, Subramanyam, Surovell, Van Valkenburg, Williams Graves--21; and NAYS--Craig, DeSteph, Diggs, Durant, French, Hackworth, Head, Jordan, McDougle, McGuire, Mulchi, Obenshain, Peake, Pillion, Reeves, Stanley, Stuart, Sturtevant, Suetterlein..

Hashmi said in her release regarding the passage of SB 280 that it was "inspiring to see such legislation, intended to bring ease from physical pain to those in the final stages of life, pass through the full Senate chamber." She added that having spoken with numerous Virginians and many constituents, the legislation is vital for their families.

Boysko, co-patron of SB 280, reading from the letter by U.S. Rep. Wexton, said that Wexton's Progressive Supranuclear Palsy had worsened. "It has become clear that no matter how many medications I take or how many hours of physical, occupational, and speech therapy I do, I cannot stop PSP's inevitable progression."

In a statement by the Virginia Catholic Conference on "Assisted Suicide Legislation," dated Feb. 5, Bishop Michael Francis Burbidge, Catholic Diocese of Arlington, and Bishop Barry C. Knestout of the Diocese of Richmond wrote, "Human life is sacred and must never be abandoned or discarded. ... In Oregon, only 3.3% of the patients who died by assisted suicide since its legalization in 1998 were referred for psychiatric evaluation."

In an update on last week's rapid-paced Virginia General Assembly processes pending Crossover Day on Tuesday, Feb. 13, HB 858 Health Care — decision-making, end-of-life penalties introduced by Del. Patrick Hope (D-1) would have granted "immunity from civil or criminal liability and professional disciplinary action to any person who complies with the provisions of the bill and allows health care providers to refuse to participate in the provision of a self-administered controlled substance to a patient for the purpose of ending the patient's life," according to Virginia's Legislative Information System.

Following the Senate passage of SB 280, the Virginia Society for Human Life released a statement saying that Virginia Democrats voted to undermine state protective assisted suicide law. "Current law in Virginia protects vulnerable patients and doctors from being pressured into assisted suicide situations," states the release.



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What's Going On Around Reston Non-Town?

BY JOHN LOVAAS
THE INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

If you're getting all your news from cable television you might think the only political pot stirring here is the national campaign for president featuring two old white guys, Democratic incumbent Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, the Al Capone autocrat of the GOP facing 91 criminal counts in courts around the U.S. In fact, while local political and other activities may not pose the existential threat to our democracy lurking at the presidential election level, local politics and civic activity surely have more immediate impact on us every day.

In the November 2023 elections, Democrats won control of both houses of the Virginia legislature. In Reston we elected Karen Keys-Gamarra (D) delegate to succeed 44-year institution Ken Plum, and Jennifer Boysko (D) senator to replace Janet Howell in a modified district including Reston. Even with Dems' slim majorities, slick Governor Youngkin's rightwing agenda is in trouble!

In September 2023, Jennifer Wexton, Congresswoman in the neighboring 10th District, announced that due to serious illness she would not seek re-election in 2024. Within weeks of the Virginia legislative elections, 10 Democrats, including Sen. Jennifer Boysko and three other newly elected legislators, flocked to announce they were running for Wexton's seat. Several of them do not even live in the 10th district, but it turns out that the Constitution does not require residency for one to run for Congress! This should be fun to watch.

A proposal to bring big-time gambling to Reston with a casino at our gateway Wiehle Metro Station sparked uproar and community-wide opposition. It's been a long time since I've seen our community so united. The proposal to bring casinos to Virginia, and Reston specifically, came from Comstock, developer of the Wiehle station area. Shockingly, Democratic Senators Scott Surovell (Majority Leader) and Dave Marsden, support casin



Lovaas

nos and are taking wads of cash from Comstock. That's right — Democrats, not Republicans, are leading the charge in the Commonwealth's legislature to bring casinos to Fairfax County. However, our local Democrats Boysko, Keys-Gamarra, and Supervisor Alcorn, sensing popular anger, voiced strong opposition at least to a Reston site.

Fairfax Supervisors' Chairman Jeff McKay, after a lengthy silence, issued a long, fuzzy public statement appearing to oppose casinos...on the grounds that the state would get most of the casino tax revenue. McKay's statement was so fuzzy that Majority Leader Surovell cited it as support for his pro-casino position! If the need for additional tax revenue is so critical, I'd suggest that rather than bring casinos with well-known negative externalities to Virginia, the senators explore increasing taxes on high-income individuals and corporations. For now, the legislature has delayed action authorizing casinos until 2025, but this

is not over.

Now, how about some short, good news items on the ground here in Reston. One: There is a rapprochement in the works between the Reston Community Center (RCC) and Lake Anne Condos Board that renews RCC-sponsored activities on the Plaza. This should be a win-win-win proposition covering plaza maintenance costs and RCC getting due credit for its support for popular activities enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. My fingers are crossed.

Two: An empty storefront on the same Lake Anne Plaza is about to be filled by the popular Elden Street Tea Shop relocating here this Spring. A tea festival is planned shortly after their opening. I am wondering if there might be a name change in the shop's future?

Three: As you may have heard, I have retired from managing the Reston Farmers Market I founded some 26 years ago. The good news is that Fran Lovaas will be continuing as a Manager of the Market which opens on April 27th on the newly paved LARCA parking lot. The market will include four wonderful new vendors.

TJ Admissions Upheld

Statement from Fairfax County Public Schools:

The U.S. Supreme Court today let stand an appeals court decision upholding the admissions policy for the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST), ending a three-year legal challenge by a group that claimed the policy was unfair.

"We have long believed that the

new admissions process is both constitutional and in the best interest of all of our students. It guarantees that all qualified students from all neighborhoods in Fairfax County have a fair shot at attending this exceptional high school," said Karl Frisch, Fairfax County School Board chair and Providence District representative.

The Fairfax County School Board adopted the plan in late 2020 to address the shortcomings in an admissions system that persistently drew students from just a handful of the County's middle schools and resulted in classes that

lacked the socioeconomic and geographic diversity seen in the other schools.

The plan raised the minimum GPA and class size, guaranteed every middle school a certain number of seats, and eliminated the standardized tests and application fee that had long been part of the admission process.

"We're very proud that the last three years of TJHSST admissions decisions included students from every Fairfax County middle school and the average grade-point average (GPA) was 3.9, which is consistent with historical averages,"

Frisch added.

In the last group of admission offers for the freshman class that entered in the fall of 2023, economically-disadvantaged students comprised 11.64% of the class. The gender breakdown was 43.4% female and 57.6% male. Asian-American students represented 61.6 % of the offers, with white students receiving 19% and Black and Hispanic students receiving 6.7 % and 6.0%, respectively.

All students admitted to TJHSST are qualified and have earned their place in this prestigious school.

Are Fairfax County Workers Shortchanged in Proposed Budget?

On Feb. 20, 2024, Fairfax County released a draft budget that falls short of stopping continued employee attrition, keeping staffing adequate to meet the needs of the citizens, and fails to help those who work here have a chance to live here.

County workers have been falling behind for years. Other jurisdictions are providing

competitive salaries and hiring experienced and talented Fairfax workers while our County struggles to keep pace.

The County needs to do better, and not just in terms of compensation. We must make sure our most vulnerable citizens are supported. We need to back our folks In Juvenile Courts, our workers in School Age Child-care (SACC) and those doing

the difficult work of Child and Adult Protective Services. Our trades workers, those driving trucks, cranes and picking up our refuse, are increasingly contracted out because not enough county workers can be hired or retained. We've got to do better.

Dave Lyons
Executive Director
Fairfax Workers Coalition

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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Preschool Mail Carriers Deliver Valentines

FCPS teacher broadens students' learning and social skills through play.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**
THE CONNECTION

On Monday, Feb. 12, Meagan Bahamonde, "Miss Meaghan," a Fairfax County Public Schools preschool teacher at Forestville Elementary in Great Falls, told her seven students they would deliver Valentine's Day cards and packages to other teachers in the school throughout the week.

"We have to check our mailbox; I think it's full," Miss Meaghan said. She explained that two students would have the chance each day, and everyone would have a turn. Miss Meaghan emphasized the importance of giving, respecting, and looking at the teacher when they delivered the valentines.

The children didn't realize that playing postal carrier would teach essential skills for their preschool development. Matching the posted classroom number to the addressed valentine required early math skills. Greeting teachers and explaining their purpose supported verbal skills. Handling valentines requires fine motor skills to grip and distribute them. Service to others boosted self-esteem.

Miss Meaghan welcomed the children to circle time and discussed mail and community assistance. In a book about postal carriers, she read that they deliver in rain and snow, follow a route, and often visit the same homes daily. The children shared their mail carrier experiences. One child interjected that her mother lifted her to reach their mailbox. Another child read a page out loud.

Miss Meaghan had transformed the classroom play space into a post office. Students could practice writing on editable valentines, mailing them, and dressing up in the blue mail carrier hat, jacket and crossover postal carrier bag for creative play.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Preschooler Sachin Maitra of Forestville Elementary School adjusts his mail carrier hat as classroom teacher Meagan Bahamonde, Fairfax County Public Schools, prepares to give him a high five. Saad Lawal gives a thumbs up, signaling he is ready to be a mail carrier.

Before school ended on Monday, Miss Meaghan announced that Sachin Maitra and Saad Lawal would be the first to deliver the teacher valentines. The two assistant teachers would stay in the classroom and help the other children make Valentine's Day art for their parents.

Saad put on the postal carrier jacket and Sachin the carrier bag and hat, which kept slipping over his eyes. The young mail carriers set out with their teacher to match the classroom numbers on the valentines to the classroom door numbers. What are we going to say?" prompted Miss Meaghan.

"Happy Valentine's Day," Sachin said.



Preschool teacher Meagan Bahamonde, Fairfax County Public Schools, reads a book about postal carriers to her students in preparation for Valentine's Day and the preschoolers delivering valentines to teachers.

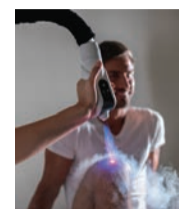
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February's Big Buzz About Bees

Could the Honeybee become a Virginia mascot?

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

In case you didn't know, since 2020, February has been designated Winter Honey month in Virginia, a fact perhaps not well advertised outside of the beekeeper community. In this session of the Virginia General Assembly, Delegate Patrick Hope (D-1) introduced HB 517 to designate the European Honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) the official state pollinator.

One might wonder, what is all this buzz about bees and honey this month? As the calendar swings around to February, most think of chocolate as the timely sweet, not winter honey. If one thinks 'honey' at all, it's likely as an endearment for that special someone to whom one might gift chocolate in recognition of February's Valentine's Day. While in ancient times, Egyptians and the Chinese used caramelized honey with fruits and nuts to make candies, in modern day, chocolate is the king cupid of candies.

What is 'winter honey'? Honey produced from the nectar of summer flowers, such as lavender, sunflowers, and clover, takes on slight hues from the flower and tends to a light color. Fall honey produced from the nectar of fall flowers, such as aster and goldenrod, is darker. The darkest color comes from borage, sumac and buckwheat nectars, the later bloomers. Winter honey is the darkest in color although all raw honey darkens a bit with age. There are more than 300 unique types of honey available in the United States, each originating from a different floral source.

There are about 4,000 bee species native to the United States, ranging in size from a tiny two millimeters Sweat bee, to the B-52 bombers of bees, the Carpenter bees, about the size of a grape. Only the honey bee makes honey that humans eat, but in that sense they can be considered livestock, and compete with native bees.

Most bees are solitary, nesting alone in the ground or dried plant stalks, rather than in social hives like the honeybee. All bees gather nectar and pollen. It's their job as important pollinators of plants in our ecosystem for which they are best known and prized.

The European honey bees were sent to Jamestown in 1622, when requested by colonists to help improve crop growth. George Washington raised bees at Mount Vernon and is said to have enjoyed honey and hoecakes almost daily for breakfast. Over the years, honey production has drawn both commercial enterprise and hobbyists. In 2022, Virginia produced 240,000 pounds of honey for sale, of the 125 million pounds sold in the United States. That's only a small niche of the market, compared to the number one producing state, North Dakota, which produced over 28 million pounds.



Mason bees (*Osmia*), solitary bees are native ground nesters



Of Virginia's 477 bee species, perhaps the best recognized is the Bumblebee (*Bomfus*), often spotted visiting area flowers



European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), the only hive bee and only human consumed honey producing pollinator



Bumblebees (*Bomfus*) attracted by colorful flowers collect and spread pollen

Most commenters on the General Assembly's public comment site largely poo-poo'ed the idea of a non-native European as the Virginia pollinator mascot. Instead commenters lauded the host of the Commonwealth's native bees, including numerous species of Bumble (*Bomfus* spp), Digger (*Apidae* spp) Mason (*Osmia* spp), Miner (*Andreno* spp), Nomad (*Nomad* spp) Plaster (*Colletidae* spp), and tiny Sweat (*Halite* spp) bees, totaling 477 Virginia native species.

Delegate Hope counters that Virginia already has several named Commonwealth

mascots which are non-natives, including: the State beverage, milk, from cows introduced in 1609; the State dog, the Foxhound, introduced in 1615; and the recently added Chincoteague pony, from Spain.

A House committee member, who farms, and beekeepers 'droned' on in testimony about the Honey bee's great contribution to State agriculture. Senator Danica Roem 'waxed' on over adding the Bumblebee, a native bee, as well. Hope countered, alluding to the 'honeycomb' of intricacy related to determining which native bees might be

added. In the end, the Honey Bee prevailed in the committees of both houses.

Perhaps it is the honey bee's unmatched celebrity, including on a cereal box, an oft used endearment, and a reputation as a hard worker, which gave it an edge over the shy, solitary native bees. Whatever the reason, the bee buzz soon will be moving to the Governor's desk.

For a list of Virginia's 477 bee species see, <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/vainvertlist-bees.pdf>

Fixing Something That Isn't Broken

I am writing to express concern over the proposal to consolidate the animal services under the Department of Animal Sheltering (DAS). Key stakeholders have been left out of the process, and critical information on how this proposal will work in practice has not been provided.

LETTER TO EDITOR

This proposal has not been adequately explained. What we have at the moment works well. Why we are fixing something which isn't broken — and which was, in fact, thoroughly reviewed in 2016 — has not been adequately justified. The injuries recently caused to law enforcement officers in DC when removing 10 neglected dogs from their firearm wielding owner speaks to the need for police training and equipment, yet this proposal seeks to save money by replacing the Animal Protection Police Officers (APPOs) with civilian officers and reducing their training. This increases liability risk to the County, and one civil case could wipe these savings out.

The changes being proposed will significantly affect structure,

operations and the ability to provide services to the public, their pets and to wildlife. It completely fails to address the necessary work the APPOs do for wildlife and natural resources in this county. It also takes away the livelihood and careers of the APPOs whose work and training are dedicated to animal welfare and control. Without APPOs, we risk losing our current ability to adequately control rabies, wildlife-human conflicts, or disease spread, all of which occur at the intersection between pets, people, livestock and wildlife. In addition to their work with the Department of Wildlife Resources, the Department of Health, and the Park Authority, the APPOs also work directly with wildlife rehabilitators to save as many wildlife as possible, including wildlife injured by traffic. Yet sometimes it is more cruel to keep them alive. This is when we need the APPO the most, on the spot, providing humane euthanasia. Transporting an injured animal to the Shelter, per the proposal, only prolongs their agony. This difficult mission of the APPO conflicts with the Shelter's current mission and "No Kill" policy. How

will this inherent conflict be managed?

We need both the animal welfare and animal protection missions, separately.

How will we know that one mission is not being sacrificed to achieve the other? How will we know how many animals are not removed from conditions of abuse or neglect because the shelter is full, or of the injured wildlife left to suffer because of 'no kill' goals? What we do know is that the data provided when presenting the proposal on Jan. 30 (Safety Committee) was incorrect, cherry-picked and mis-contextualized. It provides an incomplete accounting of the work of the APPOs, particularly with regard to wildlife. This can easily be demonstrated by looking at the publicly available, validated data on the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website.

Do we really want to implement a proposal like this?

Clare Thorp, Ph.D.
Class IIA DWR Licensed
Wildlife Rehabilitator
Fairfax Station, VA

Metro Funding: Va. Should Contribute \$180 Million

BY STEWART SCHWARTZ
COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Last week we shared the joint statement of 18 non-profits thanking Virginia legislators for proposing \$65 million (+\$65 million from NoVA) but making the case that Virginia, DC, and Maryland should do more to Close the Gap. Failure to fully close the gap will mean service cuts, fare hikes, and delays to important capital projects.

As a follow-up, please see our Coalition for Smarter Growth case for Virginia providing a combined \$180 million as its fair share to fully close the gap. With our partners we will be pressing DC and Maryland to increase their commitments as well (\$209 million for Md, \$275 million for DC).

Virginia is currently offering \$65 million for FY25 and \$84.5 million for FY26, to be matched 50/50 by Northern Virginia localities, for a total of \$130 million in FY25 and \$169 million in FY26. We thank officials for this commitment.

However, this will not fully close the WMATA operating gap, meaning some service cuts, fare increases, and delays to capital projects as

capital funds are used to pay for preventative maintenance.

\$180 million would be Virginia's share to fully close the WMATA operating gap, with another \$209 million from Maryland, and \$275 million from DC.

The state is proposing \$1.3B or more in bonds and \$200 million or more in capital transportation spending for the proposed Wizards/Capitals arena in Alexandria.

The state is proposing huge sums for additional expansion of I-81.

Northern Virginia is still the strongest share of Virginia's economy and tax base, and Metro is critical to the economy and tax base, generating about \$1 billion

in annual personal income and sales tax revenue to the state. The half mile around Metrorail stations comprised just 3% of the land but contains 30% of the property value, 40% of jobs, 50% of new apartments, and 65% of new office development.

A large share of the workforce continues to depend on Metrorail and Metrobus to reach their jobs, and Metro supports the Washington DC region's large tourism industry. They will be impacted by fare hikes and service cuts.

For these reasons, Virginia should combine with Northern Virginia for \$180 million as its formula share to fully close the WMATA budget gap.

Let Us Know Your View

Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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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 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

FEB 28

MCC Governing Board

Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, Feb. 28, 6:30 p.m.

All Governing Board meetings are open to the public.

MAR 7/20

Presented by The Alden

Foreign Language Film
Thursday, March 7, 1 p.m. and
Wednesday, March 20, 6:30 p.m.

Free admission

MAR 15

Old Firehouse 5th & 6th Grader Party

St. Patty's Party
Friday, March 15, 7-9:30 p.m.

\$35/\$25 MCC district residents



MAR 16/17

The Alden's 2024 Youth Spring Production

"The Many Disguises of Robin Hood"
Saturday and Sunday,
March 16 & 17, at 2 p.m.

\$10/\$7 seniors
\$5 MCC tax district residents



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Mount Vernon Estate Celebrates Washington's Birthday

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

What better place to celebrate Presidents Day, Feb. 19, than at the restored home of President George Washington? Thousands took advantage of free admission to the estate on Feb. 19 for Presidents Day and Feb. 22 for Washington's birthday as part of the celebration.

The observance included a military demonstration by the 3rd U.S. Army Infantry, known as the Old Guard. The regiment is the oldest active-duty infantry unit in the Army, serving our nation since 1784. The Old Guard is the Army's official ceremonial unit and escort to the president, and also provides security for Washington, D.C. in time of national emergency or civil disturbance. The regiment wears the uniform of the Continental Army approved by General Washington in 1782. It consisted of a blue coat faced with a red collar, cuffs and lapels, white buttons and lining, long-fitting overalls, and a black cocked hat with cockade.

Also appearing, the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corp, the only unit of its kind in the armed forces.

The musicians of this unit recall the days of the American Revolution as they perform in uniforms patterned after those worn by the musicians of General George Washington's Continental Army. Military musicians of the period wore the reverse colors of the regiments to which they were assigned.

The uniforms worn by the members of the Corps are dated circa 1784, and consist of black tricorne hats, white wigs, waistcoats, colonial coveralls, and distinct red regimental coats.



In Revolutionary Army formation to defend against cavalry attacks, the battalions discharge muskets.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Close friends Avner Frederick and Charlie Hanger, both 8 years old, of Washington D.C., wore their own uniforms to celebrate the birthday of President George Washington, a favor of theirs even though they claim lineage to President Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin, respectively.



The U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment demonstrates colonial army maneuvers on the Bowling Green at Mount Vernon to celebrate the President George Washington's designated birthday.



At 3 years old, Levi Foster is too young to join the Old Guard but clearly enjoys being part of President George Washington's 297th birthday.



Platoons of the Old Guard reenact battle formation with bayonets ready at the Mount Vernon estate.



Soldiers in the Old Guard come from all over the United States, including 4 1/2 year Guard veteran, Michael Flaniken from California (foreground), and Ian Godwin, with one year experience, from Alabama.



The U.S. Army 3rd Regiment marches past the Mount Vernon estate on the its Bowling Green on President's Day, Feb. 19 before a large crowd.



Members of the Old Guard's Fife & Drum Corp play traditional period marches as part of the President's Day celebration.

NOVA PRIME Opens

FROM PAGE 4

“While treating patients and making connections with them, I thought about starting my own physical-therapy clinic and making a difference in people’s lives,” she continued. “Coincidentally, my friend Shital shared her similar dream, we started researching it and here we are today.”

Gandhi said her passion for physical therapy ignited when she was about 12 years old. “We had a family tradition to play badminton games every morning in the winter,” she said. “One day, while doing that, I injured my shoulder and couldn’t play it anymore. So I had to seek some help, and I came across physical therapy. It worked wonders for me, and I could go back to playing the game.”

Afterward, she became really curious about the field of physical therapy and resolved to learn more about it. As she grew, so did her interest in it. “Then when my older sister got into physical-therapist school, she really inspired me to help people and the community,” said Gandhi. “And that’s when I decided that’s what I wanted to do – I wanted to help people heal.”

So she, too, graduated from physical-therapy school in India. Then, after moving to the U.S., she worked in that field for five or six years before she and Lakhani made the decision to open their own facility and offer multiple specialties all in one place.

Gandhi said physical therapy is important because “you get to connect with people and give them the help they need, with a holistic approach. It’s not just curing one aspect of the body, but curing all of it, and working with patients on improving their strength, mobility and stability, and also their emotional wellbeing.”

She said few places in this area offer physical therapy for as many different conditions as theirs does. “We felt this was very needed in the community, and we didn’t want people to have to wait so long to get the treatment they required,” said Gandhi. “And now that we’ve opened NOVA PRIME, we want to thank everybody who helped to make this happen.”

Next, Dr. Shalini Varshney, an obstetrics and gynecology specialist in Fairfax County, said how pleased she was to be attending this clinic’s opening celebration. “Let us all join together to wish Shital and Kruti all the very best in their endeavor,” said Varshney. “And may NOVA PRIME Physical Therapy bring good health to all their patients.”

Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sul-
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ly) also spoke to the crowd. “It’s so exciting to have this physical-therapy business that’s really focused on the health of all women, especially, to make their lives better,” she said. “We love to have you in the Sully District; we think this is a great part of Fairfax County. I know it’s not easy to find a place and put together a vision for your business. So I congratulate you on

all this work, and I wish you very well in your business.”

Lakhani said, “None of this would be possible without God’s grace, plus the outstanding support we received from our family and friends.”

Agreeing, Gandhi also thanked both of their husbands for supporting them in this venture, “all the way from the beginning.”



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

From left are Shital Gandhi and Kruti Lakhani with some of the therapy/exercise equipment.

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Reaction To Uvalde Report

FROM PAGE 3

Katherine Hayek, spokesperson for Fairfax County Police Department, has not responded to requests for comment.

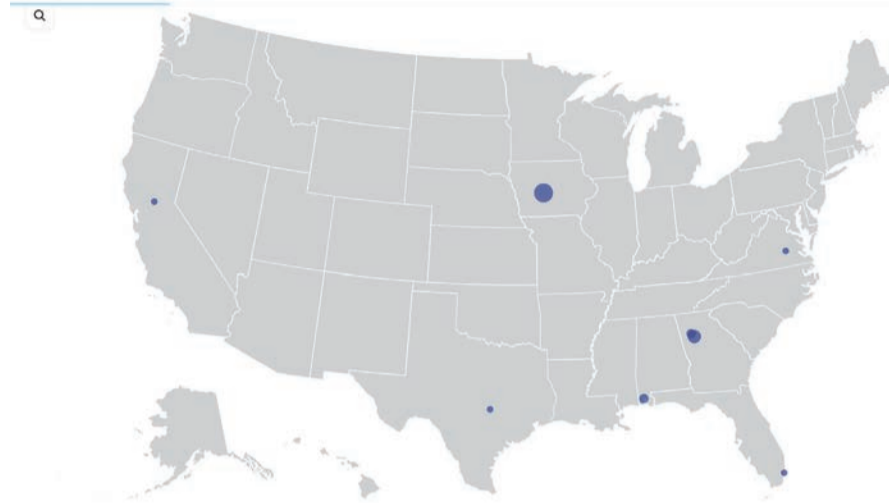
The first school shooting of 2024 happened in Virginia on Jan. 3, when an 18 year-old was shot and injured in the parking lot at Midlothian High School, in Midlothian, Va.

Following the Midlothian High School shooting in Virginia, the second U.S. school shooting of 2024 occurred on Jan. 4 at Perry High School near Des Moines. The shooter opened fire, killing a sixth grader and shooting seven others; four students and three staff members, including the school principal, Dan Marburger, who put himself in harm's way. Marburger died of his injuries ten days later, on Jan. 14.

The deadliest mass school shooting ever happened in Virginia at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. The Virginia Tech shooter was a Fairfax County Public School graduate of Westfield High School (2003). Five of the 32 people the gunman shot and killed in the massacre were Fairfax County Public School graduates: Maxine Turner, James Madison High School, 2003; Leslie Sherman, West Springfield High School, 2005; Erin Peterson, Westfield High School, 2006; Reema Samaha, Westfield High School,

2006; and Mary Read, Annandale High School, 2006. The shooter died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

EducationWeek



SOURCES: Education Week reporting, local news outlets, school and district websites, news alerts via online search engines, the Gun Violence Archive, David Riedman's K-12 School Shooting Database, and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security's Naval Postgraduate School's K-12 School Shooting database.

SCREENSHOT [SOURCE: SCHOOL SHOOTINGS THIS YEAR: HOW MANY AND WHERE (2024, JANUARY 4). EDUCATION WEEK. RETRIEVED MONTH DAY, YEAR FROM [HTTPS://WWW.EDWEEK.ORG/LEADERSHIP/SCHOOL-SHOOTINGS-THIS-YEAR-HOW-MANY-AND-WHERE/2024/01](https://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where/2024/01)]

School Shootings 2024: How Many and Where

Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers, former police officer and SRO



PHOTO BY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)

during the time that the Columbine massacre happened. Canady was very clear in an interview on Feb. 16 about "good protocol around lockdowns," especially for students who are outside during an active shooter situation. Run; Hide: Fight. Whether it's recess at the primary level or PE at the high school level, "If the assailant is inside the building, firing rounds ... we don't want to bring students back into a building where the violence is occurring. That's akin to running back into a burning building. That's for firefighters to do," Canady said. "Running into a building where gun firing is happening, that's for law enforcement. We don't want anyone [else] running into that danger."

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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 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!

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

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

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

March 8: Mandoleers – Mandolin and
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GAMEmason 2024, a two-day gaming convention, takes place Feb. 23-24, 2024 at George Mason University.

Guitar Orchestra
March 22: James & Victor – Jazz Duo/Steel Pan
April 5: Francesca Hurst – Solo Piano
April 19: Sylvan Waters Duo – Harp/Brass

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

Savor the Sweetness of Maple Syrup at Colvin Run Mill. 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. 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.

FRIDAY/FEB. 23

Film: "A Great Day in Harlem." 1994. At 7:30 p.m. At Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. ARTScreen Free Film Series: This Oscar-nominated documentary compiles interviews of all the top jazz musicians in NYC in the year 1958, for a piece in Esquire magazine, inspiring the iconic photograph by Art Kane.

FEB. 23-24

Sing Down the Moon: Appalachian Wonder Tales. 7 p.m. At Ernst Theater, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Oakcrest School will present its Middle School Theatre production. The musical leads the audience on a journey through the Appalachian Mountains with six traditional tales and folk-inspired songs. With stories inspired by beloved fairy tales, the evening is sure to be captivating while sharing mountain-lore wisdom for the whole family. Sing Down the Moon: Appalachian Wonder Tales will include performances from more than 25 students, as well as a crew of Upper School students working behind the scenes.

FEB. 23-24

GAMEmason 2024. 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. At George Mason University. A two-day gaming convention featuring Esports tournaments, arcade and tabletop gaming, industry panels and keynote speaker voice

actress Jennifer Hale. GAMEmason 2024 will feature guest speakers from Bethesda Game Studios, Monument Sports and Entertainment, and more; educational sessions with Mason faculty and staff as well as alumni and business leaders; free arcade play; tabletop and console gaming; Augmented Reality (AR)/Virtual Reality (VR) demonstrations; an artist alley featuring work by Mason students and featured artists; vendors and businesses from across the game industry; and more. Visit: si.gmu.edu/gamemason.

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.

FRIDAY/FEB. 23

Sweetheart Parent-Child Dance. 7-9 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Children are invited to come to MCC for a fancy "date" with their parent or guardian. Featured activities included a photo booth, a DJ playing favorite dance tunes, craft projects and light refreshments. Create lasting memories by joining us. Parents must attend with their child/children and register individually at mcleancenter.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 23

Buckets 'N Boards. 7 p.m. At McLean



Watercolorist Tony Neville will give a talk on Friday, Feb. 23, 2024 at the McLean Community Center in McLean.



The Capital Remodel & Garden Show takes place Feb. 23-25, 2024 at Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly.

Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Back by popular demand! BNB is a hilarious, high-energy and interactive percussion show that has captivated audiences worldwide! It offers something for everyone in the family—amazing tap dancing, clean comedy, body percussion, beatboxing and more! The show was born from Gareth Server and Matt Livingston's shared passion for music and rhythm combined with their natural joyous charm and lightning quick wit. To purchase tickets or for more information, visit aldentheatre.org.

Tony Neville giving a step-by-step demonstration of how he proceeds in creating a painting. Mr. Neville works in watercolor, charcoal and acrylic, exploring the Impressionist spirit. He's been juried into numerous art shows at The Art League in Alexandria and in the Washington, D.C. area. He regularly teaches beginner and intermediate watercolor classes in Arlington and conducts workshops on plein air painting. His works are represented in collections on both sides of the Atlantic.

SATURDAY/FEB. 24

Omnium Circus. 2 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7750 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons Corner. Led by Ringmaster Danette Sheppard Vaughn, this year's show features many new cast members who each bring their own unique talents to this circus adventure including Washington D.C.'s own Ermiyas Muluken who stars as the central character, "Johnny." Making his circus debut is the fabulous Deaf dancer, Malik Paris. Visit OmniumCircus.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 24

15th Annual Monopoly Tournament. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Moose Lodge, 9612 Fernedge Lane, Lorton. Sponsored by Ron Kowalski Real Estate Group to benefit the Lorton Community Action Center. There will be three timed rounds of Monopoly. Players of all skill levels are encouraged to play. Top prizes: 1st-\$500; 2nd-\$250; 3rd-\$100. Trophies & door prizes too! The registration fee is \$35 in advance/online; \$50 at the door. Ages 8+. To register, go to: MonopolyLorton.com or LortonAction.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 23

Watercolorist Tony Neville. 11 a.m. at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Art Society will present regionally acclaimed watercolorist,

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 15

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Employment

Employment

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ROUNDUPS

Car Seat Inspections on Feb. 29

Parents may get their children's car seats inspected on Thursday, Feb. 29, from 5-8:30 p.m., outside the Sully District Police Station. It's at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants should install the child safety seat themselves so the inspection can be performed. The seat will be properly re-installed if necessary and parents will be taught how to install the seat properly.

Everyone is eligible. Another car-seat inspection is scheduled for March 14, at the same place and time.

Sully Budget Town Hall Is Next Week

Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) and Sully District School Board representative Seema Dixit will hold a Sully District budget town hall meeting. It's set for Thursday, Feb. 29, from 7-9 p.m., in the lecture hall of Rocky Run Middle School, 4400 Stringfellow Road in Chantilly.

Take Route 29 Corridor Survey

The Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) is launching a transportation study of the Route 29 corridor between Buckleys Gate Drive and Summit Drive near the Fairfax County Parkway and Jermantown Road. It plans to reassess the long-term needs of the corridor and develop solutions - including multimodal options - that best serve both residents and commuters.

As part of the study, FCDOT is gathering public input via an online survey which will help shape future decisions. Community members may take this survey at <https://engage.fairfaxcounty.gov/b0183> or leave a recorded message at 703-890-5898, Project Code 3941.

Public comments will be accepted this way until the close of business on Friday, March 1. FCDOT will then present the survey results at a virtual public meeting on Tuesday, March 12, at 7 p.m. For more information, go to the project Website at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/study/route29>.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

SATURDAY/FEB. 24

The Northern Virginia Camp & Summer Fun Expo 2024. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Dulles Town Center, 21100 Dulles Town Circle, Dulles. Washington Parent's camp expos will feature both day and overnight camps, arts, sports, STEM and other special-focus camps and summer programs, ones for children with learning and other differences and summer fun destinations. Attendees will gather details about camp options and learn about summer activities for the entire family. We'll have plenty for the kids to do while parents focus on the best programs for their children. Give-aways, performances and more.

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

Lúnasa. 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. At Reston Community Center's Center Stage, Reston. Named for an ancient Celtic harvest festival, Lúnasa is a Reston favorite and one of Ireland's most renowned music groups. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com.

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>

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

Mnozil Brass, Jubilee. 3 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Known as the Monty Python of the music world, Austrian septet Mnozil Brass seamlessly combines slapstick comedy with virtuosity. Hailed as one of the world's premier brass ensembles, this group blends classical, jazz, folk, and pop with sketch comedy, silly songs, and sidesplitting buffoonery on their trumpets, trombones, French horn, and tuba.

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School. 2 p.m. At

McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. A key protagonist in one of the most gripping watershed moments of the Civil Rights Movement, Carlotta LaNier delivers powerful keynotes that reflect on history while inspiring hope for the future. In her lectures LaNier revisits the journey of the "Little Rock Nine" who led the nation on a turbulent path that challenged prevailing attitudes, broke down barriers, and forever changed the landscape of America. A book sale and signing will follow this event. Registrations open at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 4 at: librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/11400644.

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

Pastel Workshop with Karina Mosser. 2-4 p.m. At Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Learn the basics of creating dreamy landscapes in this often overlooked medium. The workshop will introduce you to the basics of color blending, layering, texture, harmony and balance.

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

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. Featuring Robin Bullock: Probably the foremost Celtic bouzouki, guitar and mandolin exponent in the nation. Visit robinbullock.com

FEB. 26 TO MARCH 3

Fairfax City Restaurant Week. At restaurants in Fairfax City. Showcasing Fairfax City's largely locally-owned restaurants and diverse culinary scene, the event has something for everyone. Participating restaurants will offer prix fixe menu experiences at set prices of \$25 for brunch/lunch and \$40 for dinners. Additionally, specialty restaurants offer a Two for \$10 Deal, providing food lovers the opportunity to further explore the rich variety and eclectic flavors of Fairfax food and drink purveyors. Fairfax City Restaurant Week allows diners to experience flavors from Azerbaijan to Vietnam. The ever-popular program will feature more than 20 participants, including Baku Delicious, Bellissimo Restaurant, Capital Ale House, Commonwealth Brewing Co, Coyote Grill, Curry Mantra, Dolce Vita Italian Kitchen and Wine Bar, Draper's Steak & Seafood, El Pollo Rico, Hamrock's Restaurant, Jas & Fam Caribbean Flavor, Mama Chang, Meokja Meokja, Ned's New England Deck, ONE Bar & Grill, Patriots Pub & Grill, P.J. Skidoos, Roots Natural Kitchen, Taim Medi-

terranean Kitchen, The Wine House, and ViVi Bubble Tea Fairfax. For more information, visit fairfaxcityrestaurantweek.com.

STARTING FEB. 27

Registration for Girls on the Run. Registration for the spring 2024 season of Girls on the Run is open through 11:59 p.m. on February 27th. The confidence-building out-of-school program will begin the week of March 4th and conclude at the celebratory 5K events the weekend of May 18-19. Girls on the Run is much more than a running program. It gives kids a safe space to express themselves and provides them with the tools they need to be successful in all aspects of their lives. Girls on the Run programming is specifically designed for elementary school girls starting in grade 3 while Heart & Sole programming is created for middle school girls. Currently, 104 teams throughout Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, Loudoun, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William are open for spring 2024 registration through February 27, 2024. Visit www.gotrnova.org.

SATURDAY/MARCH 2

I Love McLean Celebration. 1-4:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Chat with other community residents over light refreshments, enjoy musical performances, arts and crafts and other entertainment.

SATURDAY/MARCH 2

9th Annual O'Donovan Humanities Lecture. 7 p.m. at Oakcrest School, 1619 Crowell Road, Vienna. Henry Wingate, local award-winning, traditional oil painter, will be the keynote speaker. The topic will be "Classically Trained Artists and their Impact on Culture and Society." Mr. Wingate is trained in the Boston School tradition of painting and his work primarily features portraits, landscapes, and still-lives.

SATURDAY/MARCH 2

Teen Job and Opportunity Fair. 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At Chantilly High School, Chantilly. Presented by Springfield Supervisor Pat Herrity. Job fair focuses on students and young job seekers looking for a variety of employment opportunities; full time, after-school, seasonal positions, internship opportunities, and volunteer positions. Students of all ages are encouraged to attend, but most opportunities will be geared toward students ages 16-18.

Same Old Story. Thank God!



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not to be overly self-indulgent but, a 15-year anniversary of when I was originally diagnosed with non-small cell lung cancer stage IV (on Feb. 20, 2009), is worth mentioning, if I do say so myself. And I do. Moreover, that diagnosis came with a "13 month to two-year" prognosis. In effect a "terminal" diagnosis. I was age 54 and a half – and was just told I might not make it to age 56. Stunned doesn't begin to describe my reaction. A non-smoker my whole life with no cancer in my immediate family, the diagnosis seemed peculiar. Not that I ever woe is me but receiving this kind of prognosis led me to wonder what I did to deserve this devastating news. My oncologist couldn't offer an explanation as to why. Sometimes, there's no rhyme or reason – or no straight line from "normal" health to the slippery slope that I was now on. Cancer is not arithmetic. It didn't matter why. It only mattered that it was. My oncologist was more interested in treating my forward than he was in examining my past.

And so, it has been for almost 15 years, as I write this column on Sun. Feb. 18. I certainly remember the beginning, middle and end of the diagnostic process: eight weeks from start to finish. And when Team Lourie met – for the first time, the doctor/oncologist who would become the center of my apparently shrinking universe, we entered totally foreign territory. I had never spent a night in a hospital or even broken a bone. Yet here I was sitting across from an oncologist.

We sat in the waiting room until my name was called. We were led to the doctor's office. He was sitting down waiting for us. He stood up from behind his desk and introduced himself. After the usual pleasantries, we all sat back down, across from one another. The oncologist began by reading the reports/summaries from all the doctors I had visited while trying to determine the cause for my original discomfort in my left-side rib cage. Discomfort that forced me to go to the emergency room on Jan. 1, 2009. First came the report from the emergency room doctor, followed by the pulmonologist, thoracic surgeon, general surgeon (who performed the biopsy), the pathologist (who evaluated the tissue sample), and the oncologist who summarized it all and thus had the grim task of telling me/Team Lourie what all the doctor's reports had indicated/confirmed: non-small cell lung cancer stage IV. Five opinions. I didn't think I needed a sixth.

As a result, a week later I had my first chemotherapy infusion. This would go on every three weeks for years. Each appointment lasted anywhere from two hours to six hours, depending on the chemotherapy infused. In addition, I was getting quarterly CT scans to monitor the tumors in my lungs characterized as "Too many. They're like weeds," by my oncologist. And what happened? I didn't die. I thrived even. My oncologist was perplexed. Non-small cell lung cancer stage IV is a killer. Yet here I was, years later, alive, and reasonably well. He called me his "third miracle."

As time passed – and I kept showing up for appointments, if you know what I mean, my oncologist occasionally reassessed my condition. But he didn't find enough convincing evidence to alter my treatment, re-stage my disease or even investigate too much further. It wasn't until I presented with a lump in my throat above my Adams apple that I was referred to an endocrinologist. I made the appointment and again Team Lourie showed up. It took the endocrinologist two seconds (I'm exaggerating. Maybe it was five seconds) to ask me about the lump in my throat. It took her another 10 seconds, after I explained that I'd had this lump for nine months or so – and it had never been biopsied (to her shock) to tell us that she was going to biopsy that lump then and there. (It was a needle biopsy, so it was quite manageable right in her office.) After the procedure, the endocrinologist told me she'd have the results of the biopsy in a few days. The next day I received a call from her: Apparently, in her opinion, I never had stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer. I had, according to her, - and since this was year 9/10, was very slow-moving papillary thyroid cancer. I wasn't anybody's miracle. Instead, I might have been somebody's error.

Now we got that sixth opinion: from the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University. We sent over my medical records and then set an in-person appointment to follow up with a thyroid cancer doctor. Again, we sat in an office across from the doctor who said quite simply and happily: "If you had lung cancer, we wouldn't be having this conversation." Meaning, if I had lung cancer, I wouldn't be alive. She confirmed the diagnosis and agreed with the medication I was taking and so we went home, as pleased as possible after receiving a cancer diagnosis. However, considering what our previous cancer diagnosis was compared to what the doctor thinks it is now, we felt, for the first time since the original diagnosis, hope.

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

AI & Us Pop-up Art Exhibit Explores the Impact of Artificial Intelligence.

Leah Zhang, a Junior at Thomas Jefferson High School, and Co-President of their Assistive Technology Club, reached out to The Arc of Northern Virginia to present an idea for a fundraiser. Leah is no stranger to being of service to others. During her Assistive Technology Club meetings, she and other members help students with disabilities gain proficiency in using their tablets to speak with an assistive technology tool called nuVoice.

Outside of school, Leah is an artist and has organized an art show at The Reston Art Gallery entitled "AI and US" to benefit The Arc of Northern Virginia. This week-long pop-up exhibit will take place from Feb. 24 to March 3. On Sunday, March 3rd there will be a reception from 2 to 4 p.m.

This art exhibit explores AI's impact on art and ourselves. The goal is to raise awareness while also sharing the anxieties and inspiration that come with this exciting – and often unnerving innova-

Open two weekends: February 24 & 25 and March 2 & 3, noon - 5 pm
On display: Feb. 24 - March 3
Reception: Sunday, March 3, 2-4 pm

tion in our lives.

At the reception on March 3 from 2 to 4 pm, The Arc of Northern Virginia will provide a staffed information table, welcome remarks about the organization, and a look at an assistive technology app called "Arc2 Independence." One hundred percent of all sales will benefit The Arc of Northern Virginia.

The "AI and US" exhibit will be at The Reston Art Gallery, which is located at 11400 Washington Plaza West (Lake Level) in Reston, Virginia. Admission is free. To RSVP for the reception on March 3, please send the number of people attending in an email to Laura Allen, Special Events Manager, at laura.allen@thearcfnova.org.



AI and Us art by Leah Zhang



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