

THE CONNECTION

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



C-Shift at Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Station Herndon 4 drape black bunting standing in solidarity and mourning the tragic on-duty death of Loudoun County Firefighter Trevor Brown.

Mourning Fallen Firefighter

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Love to Read? Consider Sharing

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6% Raises for All?

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Boost for Minority Business

PAGE 6

SENIOR LIVING, PAGE 5, 15 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 17

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



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SOLD!

201 W. Cameron Road
Falls Church City 22046
\$1,400,000

SOLD!

6709 Pine Creek Court
McLean, 22101
\$1,200,000

SOLD!

1562 Forest Villa Ln
McLean, 22101
\$1,550,000

SOLD!

2336 N. Oak Street
Falls Church, 22046
\$2,000,000

SOLD!

1639 Macon Street
McLean, 22101
\$2,215,000

SOLD!

1313 Merrie Ridge Rd
McLean, 22101
\$1,637,500

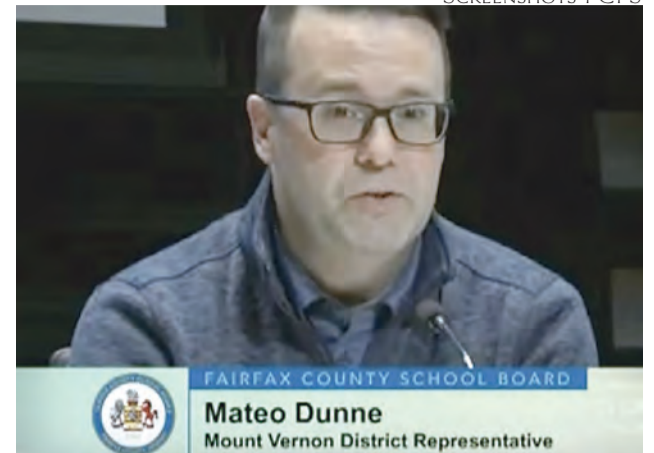
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Michelle C. Reid, Superintendent



Karl Frisch, chair, Providence District



Mateo Dunne, Mount Vernon District

School Board Approves \$3.8 Billion Budget

Mateo Dunn proposal not to increase pay for top division leadership rejected by Board; Supervisors will influence budget.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Thursday, Feb. 22, the twelve-member Fairfax County School Board approved the Fiscal Year 2025 Advertised Budget 11-0 with one abstention.

The Advertised Budget totals \$3.8 billion. It includes an increase of \$301.8 million, or 8.6 percent, over the FY 2024 Approved Budget. The Fairfax County School Board and Dr. Michelle Reid, division superintendent, requested an additional \$254.0 million, or a 10.5 percent increase, from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

The budget includes a 6 percent compensation adjustment for all employees up and down the pay scale.

Ricardy Anderson (Mason), Karl Frisch (Providence), Melanie Meren (Hunter Mill), Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Braddock), Sandy Anderson (Springfield), Seema Dixit (Sully), Robyn Lady (Dranesville), Marcia St. John-Cunning (Franconia), Kyle McDaniel (at large), Ryan McElveen (at large), and Ilryong Moon (at large) voted yes. Mateo Dunn (Mount Vernon) abstained.

Before the vote, Dunn moved to amend the main motion to exclude the 25 highest-paid FCPS employees, including the superintendent, from salary increases.

Dunn said he wanted to focus more on school employees struggling financially because of their low salaries yet contributing the most on the front lines with children daily. In his experience, you don't give the same raise to everyone because some people are underpaid compared to the market, he said. Some are grossly underpaid.

"So rather than give everyone the same raise and have some people remain grossly underpaid, you try to level out those differences, so everyone is basically in a better situation," Dunn said.

Drawing attention to leadership in the federal government, Dunn looked at the pay for most of Fairfax County's school division senior leadership and the fact the division

has a three-and-a-half billion dollar budget. "Most of our senior leadership at FCPS earn more than the leadership of the Department of Defense, which has a \$1 trillion budget. So if our CFO is getting paid more than the CFO of the Pentagon, I think that's a problem," Dunn said.

Chair Frisch asked for a second on Dunn's motion; no one seconded, thereby killing the motion.

Reid spoke before the main motion vote. The county has high expectations for its school division, she said. Reid called Fairfax County Public Schools not only "a premier division in Virginia; it is one of the preeminent divisions in this country," according to Reid. "Everybody that's part of the Fairfax County staff family puts their all into their work," she said.

Fairfax County has gradually fallen further behind in its pay scale, not just in the region but across the country, she said. "And it impacts not just recruitment but retention. As hires get into different roles, they see that they can earn a greater wage elsewhere. That's a disincentive to stay," said Reid. "We rank seven out of eight in the regions around us, and that's not acceptable."

The school board hired Reid in 2022 at a salary of \$380,000 a year. Six percent of that would be a \$22,800 raise.

Karl Frisch said, "We cannot retain a world-class school system without making sure we retain and recruit world-class staff. We must be competitive locally and nationally. ... This bare-bones budget is a start."

The division's Office of Communications released a statement on Friday, Feb. 23: "The State of Virginia has historically underfunded FCPS by continuing to use outdated staffing formulas that leave school districts around the Commonwealth lacking the meaningful support needed for excellence in public education. Virginia provides less funding per student than many neighboring states, including Maryland, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Additionally, the county transfer to FCPS over the five-year period (FY 2019-23) has averaged 52.6 percent of

FY25 REVENUE OVERVIEW

FY25 SUMMARY	CHANGE FROM FY24 (\$ in millions)
State Revenue*	\$42.2
Federal Revenue	\$2.3
Beginning Balance and Other Revenue	\$3.3
County Transfer Request	\$254.0
Total FY25 Projected Revenue Increase	\$301.8

*Based on combined impact of the Governor's Introduced Budget and additional funding anticipated by FCPS.

FY25 Revenue Overview

the county's disbursements. The county's FY 2025 budget proposal provides FCPS 51.4 percent, a difference of \$63 million. The school division's local transfer request for a 10.5 percent increase is less than requests from Loudoun County Public Schools' (11.3 percent) and Prince William County Public Schools' (10.6 percent). There are no new initiatives included in the FCPS Advertised Budget request."

Key highlights of the adopted Fairfax County Public Schools Fiscal Year 2025 Advertised Budget: FCPS enrollment is expected to increase 2.3 percent since FY 2023. Growth is also seen in the number of students receiving additional services. Student enrollment in free and reduced-priced meals is expected to increase by 19.4 percent, English for Speakers of Other Languages by 12.9 percent, and special education by 10.7 percent. Preschoolers receiving special education will rise 47.2 percent.

The budget considers the expansion of preschool, intensive family engagement, updated technology, green school initiatives, increased mental health services, and additional support for athletics and fine arts.

"We appreciate our longstanding and collaborative partnership with the Board of Supervisors," said Reid. They are strong supporters of our schools and our students."

However, during the Tuesday, Feb. 20, Board of Supervisors meeting, Chairman Jeff McKay and some supervisors questioned the School Board FY 2025 Advertised Budget.

McKay said that he "expected a difficult budget." Speaking to the school board's re-



Snapshots

FCPS enrollment is projected to increase 2.3% since FY 2023. Student enrollment in free and reduced-priced meals is expected to increase by 19.4%; English for Speakers of Other Languages by 12.9%; and special education by 10.7%. Preschoolers receiving special education services will rise 47.2%.

The Advertised Budget of \$3.8 billion includes an increase of \$301.8 million, or 8.6 percent, over the previous budget. Schools seek an additional \$254.0 million, or 10.5 percent increase, from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

quest for a funds transfer of \$165 million, he described it as "unrealistic."

Supervisor Dan Storck (Mount Vernon) said that the FCPS Board request "is undoable, and they must look to reduce."

Supervisor Jimmy Bierman (Dranesville) questioned, "If we fund a school transfer of \$165 million, what is the comparison of teacher pay to county pay?"

The FY 25 Budget Calendar shows a joint Fairfax County School Board and Board of Supervisors meeting on Feb. 27 to discuss the budget and tax rates. On March 5, the Board of Supervisors advertises the tax rate. On April 16-18, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors holds three days of public hearings on the budget.

See the budget calendar for all dates leading up to when the school board adopts the FY2025 Approved Budget on May 23.

The next regular board meeting will be held on Thursday, March 7, at Luther Jackson Middle School at 7 p.m.

Trident Systems Expanding its Chantilly Operation

It will invest \$3.7 million to produce space electronic systems.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

There's good news for Fairfax County and the Sully District in particular. Trident Systems is investing \$3.7 million to expand capacity at its operation in Chantilly for the production of space electronic systems. It's located at 3810 Concorde Pkwy., No. 2200.

Under the umbrella of LightRidge Solutions Co., Trident is already a leader in multi-function space electronics and integrated C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) solutions.

And now, its newest action will enable it to develop space electronic systems for the federal government, Department of Defense and U.S. Intelligence community. This undertaking is anticipated to create approximately 50 new jobs.

"Trident's rapid growth [in] providing unique solutions that maximize our customers' mission-impact enabled the need for this higher-volume production facility," explained Lorin Hattrup, general manager, Trident Systems Space Electronic Systems. "We are excited to expand our presence in Virginia supporting our nation's critical space needs. Our



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY EDA

From left are Trident Systems President Dan Hibbard, Trident Systems General Manager Lorin Hattrup, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade Chelsea Jenkins, Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully) and Fairfax County Economic Development Authority President and CEO Victor Hoskins.

new production facility will allow us to support a range of products on rapid timelines, while maintaining affordability."

To make this project a reality here, the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (EDA) worked with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to obtain it for both the county and the commonwealth. According to a county press release, "VEDP will support Trident System's job creation via the Virginia Jobs Investment Program, which provides consultative services and funding to companies creating new jobs to support employee recruitment and training activities."

As a business incentive supporting economic development, this jobs investment

program is geared to decrease the human-resource costs of new and expanding companies. And since it's state-funded, it also exemplifies Virginia's commitment to enhancing job opportunities for its citizens.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin made the announcement about Trident's multimillion-dollar investment in its Chantilly facility on Feb. 13. "Trident Systems' expansion demonstrates the strength of the Commonwealth's aerospace and tech ecosystem," he said. "This homegrown Fairfax County company has grown its business in the Commonwealth for nearly 30 years, and its continued innovation in space electronics is at the heart of this production expansion to serve

the defense and intelligence communities."

Pleased, as well, was Supervisor Kathy Smith (D-Sully). "I want to thank Trident Systems for choosing Fairfax County as you keep growing and contributing to the diversity of our economy," she said. "Your growth adds to our world-class space sector, and we look forward to supporting your success for years to come."

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay was equally happy. "Congratulations to the entire Trident Systems team as you expand your operations and continue to prosper here in Northern Virginia," he said. "Your growth is yet another shining example of how companies supporting mission-critical operations in the space sector innovate and thrive in Fairfax County."

Trident has cemented its reputation as an innovative trailblazer in its field for more than three decades. According to the county's Economic Development Authority, "Using a rapid response, radiation effects-mitigated design approach for deployment in harsh environments, Trident has delivered semi-custom, high-performance, radio frequency and processing solutions at significantly lower costs than traditional space products."

For more information, go to www.tridsys.com.

* * *

The Fairfax County Economic Development Authority promotes this county as one of the world's top locations for business and talent. It offers site-location and business-development assistance, plus connections with county and state government agencies, to encourage companies to locate and expand in Fairfax County.



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Celebrating 104th Birthday in McLean

Friends, family, Kenyan drummers, neighborhood Fairfax County firefighters and staff at Lewinsville Adult Day Health Care in McLean gathered there recently to wish Serah Wankijiku Mbugua a very special happy 104th birthday.

Born in rural Kenya on Jan. 1, 1920, Mbugua – whom everyone at Lewinsville calls “Mama Serah” – has been a Lewinsville participant for 10 years. Even at her remarkable age, she still enjoys morning walks (with a walker), dancing, eating bananas and rice, and attending Lewinsville several days a week, where the staff consider her a local treasure.

“Mama Serah is so happy, proud and joyful,” said Lewinsville ADHC nurse Max Powell. “She always has a smile on her face. Whatever Mama Serah wants, Mama Serah gets. She is the sheriff here.”

Lewinsville staff was excited to celebrate the milestone birthday. They decorated the center in Kenyan colors, gave Mama Serah a tiara and presented her with a giant birthday cake (though they decided against 104 candles, Powell said). Mama Serah blew out the candles herself.

Mbugua’s daughter, Nyambura, 68, said she does not know the secret to her mother’s longevity, adding that her grandmother lived to 104, so it may just run in the family. What she does know her mother comes home from ADHC well cared-for and “very, very happy.”

Staff at Lewinsville said Nyambura and her husband, Quadri Mogaji, are very involved with Mama Serah’s care at the center. They need to be extra communicative because Mbugua, who came to the United States in 1998, does not speak much English.

“We don’t have to worry about anything,” Nyambura said. “She is happy and safe when she is here. We love everyone at Lewinsville so much.”

Lewinsville is one of four NCS Adult Day Health Care locations, along with Herndon Harbor, Lincolnia and Mount Vernon. ADHC believes everyone should live their best life, regardless of physical or mental limitations. Keeping older adults with dementia and other cognitive conditions engaged physically, mentally and socially can have a great impact on their health – just look at Mama Serah.

“We just love her,” says Marlese Clifton, Lewinsville’s nurse coordinator, adding the center was proud to celebrate Mama Serah’s Kenyan heritage and respects all clients’ cultures. “When I interview families who want to come here, one of the issues is when the client is home, they sleep a lot of the time. Then they come here and are safe and engaged – and they want to come

here more days because of it.”

Special guests at the celebration included firefighters from Fairfax County Station 44 in McLean and NCS Deputy Director Keisha Dotson, who offered best wishes on the milestone day.

“What a blessing for such a long life,” she said. “I am so happy for Mama Serah has chosen the Lewinsville family.”



Serah Wankijiku Mbugua shared a happy 104th birthday at Lewinsville Adult Day Health Care in McLean.

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Fulfilling a Long-Ago Promise ‘Unevenly Applied’

Fairfax City’s VMBDA helps minority businesses succeed.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The Virginia Minority Business Development Agency (VMBDA) has just opened a new business center in Fairfax City. And at the outset of its ribbon cutting, Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read explained the organization’s importance.

“The promise that someone can become a successful entrepreneur is the foundation our country was built on,” she said. “People come here today, as they came 400 years ago, saying, ‘I have an opportunity to recreate and reinvent myself and to have a business that meets needs and builds the community and country.’”

But the problem, said Read, is that this hopeful ideal has been “unevenly applied throughout our country’s history.” Now, though, enterprise organizations such as the VMBDA are offering access and availability to help grow minority entrepreneurs.

As a result, she said, “Everyone has the opportunity to live the dream that was promised by our country’s founding fathers – that this is where you come to [achieve] prosperity, health and wellbeing for yourself and your family. And VMBDA is delivering on that promise.”

The center is staffed with seasoned business consultants who offer technical assistance and business-development services fostering the growth and global competitiveness of minority-owned businesses. These services include helping such businesses develop, increase their revenue, secure transactions and build capital.

Located at 10306 Eaton Place, near Fairfax City’s own economic-development headquarters, VMBDA chose this site to capitalize on the synergy it can find there among itself and GMU’s Mason Enterprise Center, the Virginia Procurement Technical Assistance Center, and the Virginia Small Business Development Center.

“I am so delighted that you’re here in Fairfax City,” Read told VMBDA officials. She also said how pleased she is that it’s “part of this collaboration and coalition of other organizations supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia to grow small businesses.”

Because of this unity, she said, “People realize the fact that entrepreneurship is not out of reach for anyone – no matter your age, where you came from or what language you speak. The opportunity is here for you.”

VMBDA’s Sharon Pinder is VMBDA’s president and CEO, and Tommy Marks is its director, and Read said she appreciates “what they’re doing to plant the seeds and to grow these entrepreneurs. And the City welcomes them because growing entrepreneurs and businesses is what this City does best.”

In response, Pinder said, “It is absolutely



Celebrating after the ribbon cutting: (In center, from left), are Tommy Marks, Old Town Fairfax Business Assn. Executive Director Tess Rollins, Catherine Read, Fairfax City Economic Development Authority member Dawn McGruder, and Sharon Pinder.



Sharon Pinder.



Catherine Read.



Tommy Marks.

an honor and privilege to be here at such a historic kind of occasion during a historic time in this country. And Madam Mayor, the words that you expressed ring so true. It’s what our mission is about and it’s what inspires us to get up every morning to do what we do.”

Pinder said she also believes in the adage that “to whom much is given, much is required,” adding, “That is what our passion is all about, as we do what we do every day for businesses of color. So thank you for the warm welcome and for providing this environment, because that’s important, as well.

“You can do this work in challenging kinds of environments. But if you’re in a welcoming situation, that then plays well in terms of what you’re trying to deliver.” Pinder then introduced some of her organization’s board and team members attending that day’s ceremony.

She also announced that her group had received a monetary grant from the Capital Readiness Program – a federal, technical-assistance program that helps underserved, minority entrepreneurs grow and scale their businesses. She also explained its significance.

The national Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) was established in 1969, on the heels of the Civil Rights Movement and racial unrest in the late 1960s. Still, said Pinder, “We were created in order to provide support for minority businesses – and more than 50 years later, unfortunately, we’re still having the same conversation.”

But she said the organization’s mission continues to endure because “we’re one of 23 affiliates from across the country, so we’re part of a national organization. In terms of our membership nationally, there are 1,700 corporations that belong to us and over 16,000 certified minority businesses.

“Our work is cut out for us, and that’s why this grant is so important,” said Pinder. “Business is about relationships and turning those relationships into revenue. That’s our mantra and what we do. And in a recent Washington Business Journal, for the fifth year in a row, we were named one of the biggest business-advocacy groups in the Greater Washington Region.”

Sometimes, she said, “You need validation that what you’re doing makes a difference.” She then thanked the VMBDA leaders in attendance for what they do “to help us make a difference.” Next, she introduced Director Marks. He served 24 years as an Army officer, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in September 2001, before joining VMBDA – and it was his idea to move the organization to Fairfax City.

“I hit the jackpot with Tommy Marks,” said Pinder. “He comes to us with decades of experience, being retired military, a retired senior executive in the federal government, and the former director of the U.S. Army Small Business Agency.”

“He’s been able to drive us forward, in the few years he’s been here, in terms of the support we get,” she continued. “When we won

a grant to be the first in the history of the MBDA to have a presence in Virginia, he was the only guy who could do this deal.”

“We’re definitely grateful to be here,” replied Marks. “The Virginia MBDA center is one of 50 such business centers across the United States. We’re a quasi-government agency. In order for the government to do its job, its business model is these business centers.

“We went after the first-ever Virginia center and were blessed to receive it. Think about it – 50 years when we were right at the doorstep of Washington, D.C. – and we don’t get a business center to cover the commonwealth. Northern Virginia, from Fredericksburg north, was covered by either Washington, D.C., or a business center in Maryland. The southern half of the commonwealth was covered by a business center in North or South Carolina.”

Marks said it’s been the VMBDA’s job to cover Virginia since 2021 and he’s been all over the state since then, bringing awareness of what the VMBDA does and what it offers to minority businesses. “We’re a business-consultation organization and a business enhancer,” he said. “We were in Alexandria for four years since 2019. We moved to the City of Fairfax last July because of the synergy it brings. Again, we thank you – this was our best move.”

For more information, email info@mbda-virginia.com, call 571-407-5096 or go to www.mbda-virginia.com.

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BULLETIN

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

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 6

Annual Housing Symposium. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At GMU's Harris Theatre, 4471 Aquia Creek Lane, Fairfax. Housing professionals, developers, advocates, and others interested in Fairfax County's affordable housing industry are invited to join the Fairfax County Housing Symposium. The event will feature elected leaders, industry professionals, policy experts, affordable housing users, and others who are working toward a common goal of a Fairfax County everyone can afford to call home. Attendees will participate in discussions about affordable housing development and preservation challenges; the 'lived experiences' of affordable housing; the direct line between homelessness and housing; and other Fairfax County housing topics. They will also enjoy a brief tour of One University, Fairfax County's new premiere affordable housing community located next to George Mason University. The new community, scheduled to be completed this Spring, will feature affordable independent living senior homes and multifamily apartments as well as student housing. Past Housing Symposium presenters and discussion leaders have included: Congressman Gerald Connolly, U.S. House of Representatives; Jeffrey Little, General Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of

Inova Blood Drive, March 8, in Fairfax

Every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood. And more than 200 units of blood and blood components are required daily to support the communities Inova serves. To help meet the need, Inova is holding a blood drive on Friday, March 8, from 1-5 p.m., in the bingo hall of Fire Station 3 at 4081 University Drive in Fairfax. Blood donations may be scheduled at <https://bit.ly/CoffFX0308>, or call 866-256-6372 and use code 8540.

Housing and Urban Development
Jeffrey McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Jenny Schuetz, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute Metro
David Swift, Senior Product Manager, Amazon Housing Equity Fund

THURSDAY/MARCH 14

Attend Last-Minute College Financing Strategies. 6:30-8:30 p.m. Virtual. Learn how you can find and win scholarships even if you're just starting the process or are already in college. Sponsored by Reston Community Center in Reston. Join if you've applied to college and just started looking for scholarships or you're currently in college and you need or want additional funds to pay the tuition bills. Register at www.scholarshipworkshop.com/reston2

ST. PATRICK'S DAY SOBERRIDE

A local nonprofit organization will sponsor free safe rides to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2024 St. Patrick's Day SoberRide program will be in operation beginning at 12 p.m. noon

Sunday, March 17 (St. Patrick's Day) and operate until 12 a.m. midnight on Monday, March 18 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period.

During this twelve-hour period, area residents 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app's 'Payment' tab (under the 'Add Lyft Pass' option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's 2024 St. Patrick's Day SoberRide promo code will be posted at 11 a.m. on Sunday, March 17 on www.SoberRide.com.

"Nearly half of U.S. traffic fatalities during St. Patrick's Day involve drunk drivers according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration," said Kurt Erickson, WRAP's President. During the 2023 St. Patrick's Day campaign, over 900 people in the Washington-metropolitan area used WRAP's SoberRide program rather than possibly driving home impaired. The charity also offers its SoberRide program on Cinco de Mayo, Independence Day, Halloween and the winter holidays through and including New Year's Eve.

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One of The Arts of Great Falls youth atelier classes in action.



2023 Gala

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY ARTS OF GREAT FALLS



Meralee Fredenburgh, executive director of The Arts of Great Falls

Raising Funds for Children's and Teens' Fine Arts

Arts of Great Falls produces Monet's garden-inspired gala.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

To the Arts of Great Falls, it is all about supporting an “artful community” for 15 years and counting through arts education, support for local artists of all ages, offering scholarships to students from underserved Fairfax County Public Schools and more.

The Arts of Great Falls will host its fund-

raising gala, An Evening at Monet's Garden, on March 9 at River Bend Golf and Country Club, 375 Walker Rd., Great Falls.

Visit the website to purchase tickets, donate and preview auction items, become a sponsor, with opportunities at all levels. You can sponsor a youth artist for \$300. Give a young artist in Fairfax County's underserved schools an art class; donors will receive website and gala program recognition.

Hors d'oeuvres and a three-course dinner precede the live auction, music, and dancing. Funds raised at the gala will benefit the youth arts program based on traditional atelier training developed during the Italian Renaissance, formalized in nineteenth-century France, and studied until about a century ago.

Classes have expanded beyond the gallery and into a second classroom at the historic Forestville Schoolhouse, 9812 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, allowing the Arts of Great Falls to serve twice as many students.

Students unfamiliar with the atelier learn the technical skills required to master realistic drawing and painting techniques, similar to an “old master artist.” Students create artwork precisely as they see it in their head and heart, without making any compromises because they lack the necessary skills to execute it.

Michela Mansuino is the lead youth instructor. She studied at Studio Imone, one of the top art programs in the United States. Students' artistic abilities are developed through successive levels of mastery. As a

result, youth students attending The Arts of Great Falls classes have attended some of the country's top art schools, such as the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Parsons School of Design, and Rhode Island School of Design.

The Arts of Great Falls Art Studio is located in the Great Falls Village Centre, 756-C Walker Road, Great Falls, with a second classroom at the historic Forestville Schoolhouse, 9818 Georgetown Pike.

“Research shows that art instruction can boost self-confidence and help teens focus on the present moment,” said Meralee Fredenburgh, executive director of The Arts of Great Falls. “We are so proud to provide this unique opportunity to Northern Virginia youth.”

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NEWS

McLean Central Park Construction Will Run Through 2024

The Fairfax County Park Authority will begin revitalization work at McLean Central Park in early March. The project scope includes the removal and replacement of the existing walkways and playgrounds, and the addition of a new pavilion.

Contractor Imperio will mobilize on site over the next week, and active construction activities are slated to begin the first week of March. FCPA anticipates that active construction will conclude by the end of 2024.

Residents should expect occasional construction traffic entering and exiting Dolley Madison Road. While portions of the park will be closed throughout the duration of the construction, access for tennis courts and basketball courts will remain open.

McLean Central Park is located at 1468 Dolley Madison Blvd. in McLean. For more information, please contact project manager Heather Lynch at heather.lynch@fairfaxcounty.gov; or contact the Public Information Office at Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

This project was made possible in part by contributions made through the Fairfax County Park Foun-



A project at McLean Central Park includes removal and replacement of walkways and playgrounds, and the addition of a new pavilion.

ation in partnership with the McLean Central Park Playground Team. The Fairfax County Park Foundation, a 501(c)(3), supports the Fairfax County Park Authority by raising private funds, obtaining grants, and creating partnerships. For more information about the Park Foundation, visit its website or call 703-324-8582.

Learn about Fairfax County Police Department

The Community Police Academy (formerly Citizens Police Academy) is designed to give people a glimpse behind the badge and provide information about training, policies and the many units and divisions within the Fairfax County Police Department.

Toward that end, the FCPD is now accepting applications for the Spring 2024 Community Police Academy session that'll meet from March 14 to May 18, as well as for the Fall 2024 session meeting from Sept. 12 to Nov. 16.

Participants will learn about topics including Police Training (including weapons and driving), Crime Scene Investigation, Use of Force, Traffic Stops, Internal Affairs, Police Helicopter Capabilities, and SWAT.

Classes will be held on nine consecutive Thursday nights, from 6:30-10 p.m. The final class, which includes graduation, is held on a Saturday from 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Classes rotate to various police department facilities around Fairfax County. Due to the popularity of the program, all participants are required to attend at least eight of the classes to successfully graduate.

Attendees must be at least 18 years old, live or work in Fairfax County, must clear a review of their criminal record and police contact history, prior to acceptance. They must also provide their own transportation.

The FCPD seeks people from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds when selecting participants for its Community Police Academy. Candidates from different ethnicities, professions, cultural backgrounds, orientations, age groups and communities throughout Fairfax County are

encouraged to apply to enrich class discussions and strengthen community relationships.

This program is not an accredited certification course to become a sworn police officer. For information regarding employment as a

police officer or about the paid police academy, please visit <https://joinfcpd.org>. For more information about the Community Police Academy, email CPA@fairfaxcounty.gov.

— BONNIE HOBBS



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PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

George Mason University's honeybee hives at the landfill.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

Native meadows on a landfill slope.

A New View of the Landfill

Grassland at the I-95 landfill provides habitat for ground-nesting birds and other wildlife.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

A landfill can be more than a garbage dump. It can be a place of ecological renewal. The latest example at Fairfax County's I-95 landfill is a plan to protect some of the landfill's grassland habitat for ground-nesting birds and other wildlife.

On Feb. 20, the Board of Supervisors directed the county staff to identify a no-mow area and develop a plan to avoid mowing during grassland birds' ground-nesting season, generally between April 1 and mid-July. Supervisors Dan Storck, James Walkinshaw and Jeff McKay proposed the initiative or "board matter," recommended by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. Supervisor Storck offered, "I was pleased to bring this Board matter to my colleagues and received unanimous support. The County continues to lead on environmental and climate issues and becoming a leader in landfill grassland management to protect ground-nesting birds is just another example."

The directive recognizes that some mowing is needed for inspecting the landfill cap, accessing gas wells and accommodating stormwater drainage. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality requires mowing at least once a year. Managers seek to discourage trees from taking root and disrupting landfill caps.

"We are looking forward to developing a mowing schedule that helps protect nesting habitat for grassland species at the I-95 landfill complex," explained Eric Forbes, deputy director, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. "For the mowing schedule change, we will be doing a pilot to see how we can manage the landfill functions at the site and evaluate any potential operational issues."



GRAYSON SMITH, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Bobolinks fly up to 12,500 miles roundtrip to and from South America every year and seek out fields of tall grasses, finding them at the landfill. The female bobolink makes a depression in the soil and builds a nest on the ground.

Grasslands Are Rare

Of the United States' historical 550 million acres of grasslands, fewer than 40 percent exist today. Justin Folks, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, has noted that much of today's Virginia croplands were grasslands before European colonization and now grassland acreage in the state may be less than .0001 percent.

Part of Fairfax County's 250-acre-closed, I-95 landfill, though created by people, is in effect a grassland, a rare habitat in Fairfax County. The landfill's meadow and grassland and other habitats support over 126 bird species according to ebird.org, including grassland specialists like bobolinks, dickcissels and grasshopper sparrows, plus other wildlife species found nowhere else in Northern Virginia. In Virginia, over 50 bird species rely on grasslands.



DAN SUDIA, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Dickcissels also come north in the spring from the tropics and find grassy fields at the landfill. These sparrow-like birds also build nests on or near the ground, well concealed in dense vegetation.

"The I-95 landfill provides the biggest patch of grass in eastern Fairfax County. The birds have found it and breed there in good numbers."

— Greg Butcher, ornithologist

Grassland Birds Declining

Grassland birds are among the most imperiled group of birds, reports the National Audubon Society. Their population has dropped by 53 percent since 1970, according to the Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative.

Local bird watchers have especially delighted in seeing bobolinks and dickcissels, two ground-nesting birds, among others, at the landfill.

Bobolinks fly up to 12,500 miles roundtrip to and from South America every year and seek out fields of tall grasses. Sporting a bright yellow "cap," the male perches on the grasses, flutters and sings. The female bobolink makes a depression in the soil and builds a nest on the ground.

Information

- ❖ Fairfax County Landfills, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/locations-hours>
- ❖ GMU Honeybee Hives, <http://bees.gmu.edu>
- ❖ Smithsonian Guidelines for Grassland and Shrubland Birds, <https://www.vaworkinglandscapes.org/education/resources/field-management-guidelines-for-grassland-birds/>
- ❖ Audubon Grassland Birds Report, <https://www.audubon.org/our-work/prairies-and-forests/grasslands-report>

Dickcissels also come north in the spring from the tropics and find grassy fields. These sparrow-like birds also build nests on or near the ground, well concealed in dense vegetation. "Male dickcissels are aggressive defenders of their primary territory, keeping a close eye on their immediate neighbors by confronting each other at territorial boundaries," reports All about Birds.

Auduboner Greg Butcher, an ornithologist, commented, "The I-95 landfill provides the biggest patch of grass in eastern Fairfax County. The birds have found it and breed there in good numbers. By mowing less, we can keep grassland birds in eastern Fairfax County."

More "Greening" of the Landfill

Toward the end of 2024, the county will install a five-megawatt solar field with pollinator-friendly, native vegetation under the panels and energy production beginning mid-2025.

The county started a honeybee and pollinator habitat project in 2017, converting five acres of turf into native meadow habitat. George Mason University installed 24 European honeybee hives at the landfill, led by Director Germán Perilla. The project's website cites as the purpose "to assess the connections between honeybees and their local environment, specifically with regard to the pollen resources they use and contaminants that they might introduce to and accumulate within their hives."

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Mourn Loudoun County Firefighter Killed in Explosion

NIOSH, Federal Investigation Underway.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The tragic line-of-duty death of Firefighter Trevor Brown, 45, of the Sterling Volunteer Fire Company, has devastated his family and fellow firefighters and left local, regional, and national colleagues mourning his passing. Brown had been with the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System since 2016.

On Friday, Feb. 23, C-Shift of Fairfax County Herndon Station, Company 4, hung black bunting across the front of their firehouse, signifying their brother's death. Firefighters and medics work, eat, sleep, and socialize together on and off duty. It's more than a job or a profession; it is a lifestyle.

Brown died at the scene of a "catastrophic explosion" on Feb. 16 that destroyed a Sugarland Run home in Loudoun County. He and other firefight-

SEE MOURNING, PAGE 13



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

C-Shift at Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Station Herndon 4 drape black bunting standing in solidarity and mourning the tragic on-duty death of Loudoun County Firefighter Trevor Brown.



PHOTO VIA [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/STERLINGFIRE](https://twitter.com/STERLINGFIRE)

A catastrophic explosion on Feb. 16 destroys a Sugarland Run home in Loudoun County.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Burke Centre Shopping Center Left Turn Restriction Fairfax County

Willingness to Hold a Public Hearing

Find out about plans to prohibit left turns from the Burke Centre Shopping Center (5815 Burke Centre Parkway) easternmost access to eastbound Burke Centre Parkway (Route 643) to improve safety. New pavement markings, signs and flex posts will be installed at the intersection to restrict left turns out of the shopping center.

Review the project information at <https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/BurkeCentreSC> or at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2239 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

If your concerns cannot be satisfied, VDOT is willing to hold a public hearing. You may request that a public hearing be held by sending a written request to Mr. Andrew Beacher, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 on or prior to **March 11, 2024**. If upon receiving public comments it is deemed necessary to hold a public hearing, notice of date, time and place of the hearing will be posted.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.

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Fed Up: Fairfax Connector Workers on Strike

Union cites unfair labor practices and Transdev's 'slow-walking the talks.'

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Workers from Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 689, representing the 683 bus operators and mechanics for the Fairfax Connector, went on strike just after midnight on Thursday, Feb. 22. The Amalgamated Transit Union (AFL-CIO/CLC) is the largest labor organization representing transit workers in the U.S. and Canada. The strike is still going on as of Tuesday morning, Feb. 27.

The call to strike came after months of talks, beginning in October 2023, about a new labor contract with the contractor, Transdev Services, Inc., which failed to produce an agreement despite 12 bargaining sessions. Fairfax Connector drivers and mechanics have been working under an expired contract since December 2023.

"Despite 12 bargaining sessions, a vast divide between the Union and the company remains due to Transdev's slow-walking the talks and, for the most part, its refusal to engage in meaningful discussions on key economic issues," says the Union's press release dated Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024.

Two hours after the strike began, at 2 a.m., picketers took to the lines at the three Fairfax County-owned garages of the Fairfax Connector, the Herndon Garage at 268 Spring St., Herndon; the Huntington Garage at 8101 Cinder Bed Rd., Lorton; and the West Ox Garage at 4970 Alliance Dr., Fairfax.

ATU Local 689, said, "The Union remains committed to bargaining in good faith to reach a tentative agreement on a new contract and intends to continue to meet with Transdev even while on strike."

Transdev Services, Inc. accepted a contract award from the County of Fairfax on April 17, 2019, for the operation and management of the Connector Bus System (a fixed-route bus service known as "The Connector") for five years from the date of the award, with the option to renew for an additional ten-year period. The contract expires on April 17, 2024, according to the county.

The Political and Communications Director of ATU Local 689, Matthew Girardi, said in an email that all bus service had stopped at 9:45 the morning of Feb. 22. "We hope that Transdev finally comes to the bargaining table with a fair offer and that Fairfax officials weigh in on the side of workers who have been operating under an expired contract for months. If not, we will continue to picket from 2 a.m. to 7 p.m."

Jeff McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, said in a statement the morning of Feb. 22 that he had communicated with the county executive Bryan Hill and his team during the negotiations and knew there was a deadlock. McKay said he did not know a strike would happen.

The strike left "almost 26,000 daily users

of the Connector without the service they rely on," according to McKay. "To be clear, the county is not a party to these negotiations, and it would be inappropriate for me to interfere," McKay said.

The Union said on Feb. 21 that it had taken "extraordinary strides to avert a strike," such as consistently providing fair contract proposals to both sides and the public, involving a federal mediator in negotiations, and meeting with Fairfax County officials. "However, because of Transdev's unfair labor practices and regressive bargaining, as well as Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chair Jeff McKay's refusal to weigh in, a strike was unavoidable."

In his Feb. 22 statement, McKay said he fully supports "the ability of Connector drivers and mechanics to be treated and compensated fairly." McKay added that he "supports the ATU Local 689's right to advocate on behalf of their members and hopes the Union and Transdev can reach an agreement on a contract that is in line with similar transit services in neighboring jurisdictions and respects the exemplary work of drivers and mechanics."

"Additionally, while transit service is essential, the cost is ultimately borne by our residents and must also be considered in these negotiations," McKay said. "Connector service needs to be sustainable, not just now but in the future."

The Union is demanding improved wage increases, 40 hours of scheduled work and pay at eight hours a day/five days a week, and a defined retirement benefit, not the 401(K) match system that has resulted in the majority of Fairfax Connector workers "having zero retirement," according to its Feb. 23 statement.

The Union cited Transdev's failure to provide financial information to the Union during the contract talks and surveillance of employees during the strike authorization vote conducted on Dec. 27, 2023 as unfair practices.

According to the Union, Transdev's latest contract proposal at the end of January ignored most of the Union's key priorities. While it included wage increases for bus operators, due to the high cost of living in Fairfax County, Transdev must provide more than wage increases to ensure an improved quality of life for its employees, the Union said. Local 689 insists on improved benefits for workers so they can live where they work and retire with dignity.

The Union reportedly has yet to hear back from Transdev on the latest proposal provided to the company earlier this month. The most recent bargaining session was Friday, Feb. 16.

On Friday, Feb. 23, John Costa, international president of the Amalgamated Transit Union visited all three Fairfax County picket lines in Herndon, Lorton and Fairfax. He was there to fire up the Union's 650 Fairfax Connector bus operators and mechanics on the



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Bus drivers and mechanics from Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689, representing the 683 bus operators and mechanics for the Fairfax Connector, hold the picket line at the Fairfax County Herndon Garage at 268 Spring St., Herndon, one of three county garages.



SCREENSHOT VIA TWITTER

Liz Shuler, president of the AFL CIO, visits the picket lines of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 workers, representing the 683 bus operators and mechanics for the Fairfax Connector.



SCREENSHOT @ATULocal689

Fairfax Connector Strike Continues, Day 4. "Workers of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 are out [Sunday, February 25] because they deserve a fair contract with benefits that reflect their hard work and dedication to the riding public."

second day of their strike. Costa called out Fairfax County Supervisor Jeff McKay.

Liz Shuler, president of the AFL CIO, visited the picket lines. She posted on X, "Everyone should be able to live where they work and retire with dignity. Fairfax Connector @ATULocal689 bus drivers are essential workers who deserve retirement security, fair

wages, and good benefits."

Commuters seeking information about Fairfax Connector's operating status can visit the county's website. Passengers can also receive updates by calling Fairfax Connector customer service at 703-339-7200.

Transdev did not respond to requests for comment for this story.

VOLUNTEERS

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Reading with 8-year-old 3rd-grader Henry Posadas-Ramirez, Braddock District Supervisor James Walkinshaw, says he is willing to “take the heat” for calling Braddock Elementary his favorite school “for doing amazing work to have kids do amazing things.”



Volunteer reader Elaine Runkle, reading with Jeanyne Rhaigine Tabao, says “sessions are a very good way to pass on the love of reading.”



Volunteer Claire Palmer listens to Maria Lopez, a 3rd grader, read in a quiet school lobby corner after a quick lunch break.

Read On Young Readers

Volunteers pass on love of reading.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Local educator David Walrod, President, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, recently said, “Reading skill is the best predictor of high school graduation and going on to college.” Knowing of that predictor, some community members wanted to help local students succeed. They formed the volunteer group Read On Young Readers, focusing on pre-kindergarten to third grade students, to mitigate the reading loss experienced by some during COVID. The group has continued the program after in-person school classes resumed to add to students’ chances of educational success through good reading skills. Braddock Elementary School’s assistant principal Holly Dowling says, “We are thrilled to have the program here and the needed one-on-one time for vulnerable students.”

Kelly Price, who organized the group with Larry Kugler, shares that their goals have morphed slightly since normal school schedules restarted. The group still hopes to instill a love of reading and to provide another reliable adult in a student’s life. The group focuses on Title 1 schools, whose students might face additional challenges, or not have English as their first language. While the volunteers do not teach students how to read, they do focus on the basics of comprehension, plot prediction, diction, and other elements of written prose. All students receive three new books each month; donations providing book purchases. A monthly book packing meeting brings volunteers together to prepare the books for distribution, including inclusion of small toys donated by the mother of a volunteer, a former teacher.

Would you enjoy reading with kids too?

The all-volunteer Read On Young Readers group members, now about 22 strong, with all sorts of backgrounds, including some former teachers and school administrators, enjoy reading age and content appropriate books with the young students. They particularly enjoy hearing their students’ questions and comments, and are often reminded that “kids say the darndest things.” Volunteer Cindy Sweeter, a retired early childhood educator who worked only at Title 1 schools during her career, says she understands the positive impact of one-on-one relationships that reading with a student brings. And she adds, “we often get back more than we give.”

Volunteer Elaine Runkle shares that this is something she wanted to do since before she retired from a career in finance. She finds it very rewarding, saying, “I get more [out of the sessions] than the kids do. ... The time frame for reading with my own kids went too fast. The 20 minute sessions are a very good way to pass on the love of reading.”

She adds that reading with the same child for a year or more helps to convey that another adult cares when one or more parents may be absent from the home, or are busy earning a wage to find enough time for interaction while working long hours.

The ROYR group currently is assisting students in three Fairfax County schools: Mount Eagle, Mason Crest, and Braddock. Through the FCPS’s Mentoring Program, volunteers undergo fingerprinting and a background checks, and receive guidance on working with students before they begin direct work. Sessions could be online or in person.

Assistant principal Dowling shares, “Students look forward to the sessions, but we can’t lose instruction time, so reading sessions are held at lunch time.” That means finding time and a quiet place to read can be challenging.

At Braddock Elementary on Feb. 23, the group’s volunteers were joined by guest readers Braddock Supervisor James Walk-

inshaw and Mason District School Board member Ricardy Anderson. Walkinshaw praised Braddock Elementary, as his “favorite school” for their amazing kids and staff. He said the great thing about the school is, “So many different groups contribute to the work here.” He supports ROYR because, “if no one at home is modeling a love of reading, seeing volunteers love reading, it’s going to stick with them.”

Now in the program’s fourth year, ROYR is working in-person with 33 individual students and two pre-kindergarten classes in small groups for their second year at Braddock. Price hopes to entice more reading volunteers to join the group. Fifteen more readers would allow the group to expand to an additional school. She asks if you or someone you know would enjoy sharing the love of reading, their sign-up form can be found at <https://www.readonyoungreaders.com/volunteer-with-us> as well as their link for donations.

Mourning Volunteer Firefighter

FROM PAGE 11

ers responded to a suspected propane gas leak at 347 Silver Ridge Drive around 7:40 p.m.

On Tuesday, Feb. 20, Loudoun County Fire & Rescue Chief Keith Johnson informed Loudoun County supervisors that, following his request to the United States Fire Administration, that National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health will become involved in investigating what led to Brown’s death.

“They will fly in resources to be able to

complete an objective look at this, which will follow the efforts of this board and be fully transparent when that report is done,” Johnson said. He added that two firefighters remain hospitalized, one with second-degree burns and another with second and third-degree burns. Both had long roads to recovery.

Johnson is asking for donations to the Loudoun First Responders Foundation at lfrf.org. A Celebration of Life for Trevor Brown will take place on March 4 at Cornerstone Chapel, 650 Battlefield Parkway, in Leesburg.



FIREFIGHTER TREVOR BROWN
LINE OF DUTY DEATH - FEBRUARY 16, 2024

VIA [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/STERLINGFIRE](https://twitter.com/STERLINGFIRE)

Firefighter Trevor Brown, 45, of the Sterling Volunteer Fire Company.

Gun Safety Bills Head to Governor's Desk

Rally cry in Richmond: 'Sign the Bills'

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Two Virginia Democratic state legislators representing constituents in Fairfax County, Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D38) and Del. Marcus D. Simon (D13), spoke at the "Don't Veto Our Safety" rally held in Richmond Saturday, Feb. 24. They and members of the coalition of advocacy groups who organized the rally believe gun safety bills introduced in the 2024 session will prevent gun injuries and deaths. They urged Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin to "sign the bills" that passed in the Senate and House of Delegates and are heading to his desk.

In a statement, Christian Martinez, Youngkin's spokesperson, said that the governor would review any legislation that came to his desk. "But as he reiterated during his State of the Commonwealth address, Virginia's gun laws are already among the toughest in the nation."

Every bill that passes the Senate and House of Delegates before it becomes law must be presented to the Governor, according to the Constitution of Virginia, Article V. Executive. The Governor will have seven days to act on a bill after it is presented to him. He has three options: sign the bill, and it becomes law; veto it (and may recommend amendments), in which case a two-thirds majority of each house is required to override the veto; or not act on the bill, and it becomes law.

Following last November's elections, Democrats took control of the General Assembly for Youngkin's final two years. The Democrats' slim majority in each of the two chambers, however, makes it unlikely that they would have the numbers to overturn a Youngkin veto; 27 votes in the Senate and 67 in the House to override a veto.

Boysko introduced the gun safety bill SB 368. It narrowly passed both houses and did so by party lines: House 51-Y 49-N and Senate (21-Y 19-N). It addresses the storage of firearms where minors or persons prohibited from possessing them are present.

Boysko wrote in her "Boysko Bulletin, released Sunday, Feb. 25, that she sent a clear message to the Governor telling him to sign, not veto, the gun safety legislation



PHOTOS SCREENSHOT

Del. Marcus D. Simon at the rally: "If you want to have a gun in your house, you need to store it in a child-proof container."



Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D38)



Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R)



Del. Laura Jane Cohen (D15)



Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-39)



Philip Van Cleave



The 2024 Virginia General Assembly Session is scheduled to finish or adjourn sine die) on Saturday, March 9, 2024.

the General Assembly has passed. According to Boysko, guns are the number one cause of death for children and teens, including suicides, school shootings, accidental shootings, and other tragedies. Virginia offers a tax credit of up to \$300 to purchase a gun safe. "I

hope that Governor Youngkin will do the right thing for our communities and sign the bill," wrote Boysko.

Simon said at the rally that they have spoken to Republicans about gun laws, and they answer that it's "hopeless" and "essentially, there

is nothing we can do as gun laws don't work. "I'm here to tell you all [that] it is not hopeless; we can do something; we are not helpless. We have things that we can do to make our community safer." Holding up a child-proof medicine container, Simon said, "If you want

to have a gun in your house, you need to store it in a child-proof container."

Simon is the chief patron of HB 183 "Firearms; storage in residence where minor or person prohibited from possessing is present, penalty," which passed a party-line vote of (51-Y 49-N in the Democratic-controlled House on Feb. 1. The Senate reported from the Courts of Justice with amendments (8-Y 5-N) and further action is pending as of Monday, Feb. 26. Simon said if Virginia is not going to ban assault weapons, let's not carry assault weapons on the streets and sidewalks, referencing HB 175, which he introduced, and its companion bill in the Senate, SB 99, introduced by Sen. Adam Ebbin (D39).

Philip Van Cleave, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, said, "While VCDL supports the right of gun-control proponents to rally, the bills they want signed into law will lower violent crime at all." The Virginia Citizens Defense League is a non-profit organization dedicated to "advancing the fundamental human right of all Virginians to keep and bear arms."

According to Van Cleave, that is because the bills negatively affect lawful gun owners while having little or no effect on violent criminals. "That's like trying to eradicate drunk driving by penalizing sober drivers or trying to reduce traffic fatalities by prohibiting the use of seatbelts," Van Cleave wrote.

Another gun safety bill headed to the Governor's desk is HB 498, which is the school board policy and parental notification of safe household firearms storage responsibility. Del. Laura Jane Cohen (D15) introduced HB 498. It passed the House (54-Y 45-N), with three Republicans voting yes. HB 498 passed the Senate (22-Y 17-N), with Republican J.D. "Danny" Diggs (R24) voting yes.

Sen. Adam Ebbin (D39) introduced SB 99, assault firearms; carrying in public areas prohibited, that will be presented to the Governor as of Monday, Feb. 26. It passed the Senate (21-Y 19-N), the House (52-Y 48-N), and the House substitute agreed upon by the Senate (21-Y 18-N).

Van Cleave said that most of the gun bills passed by the General Assembly are unconstitutional, as confirmed by the recent U.S. Supreme Court case *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association (NYSRPA) v. Bruen* (2022).

The 2024 Virginia General Assembly Session is scheduled to finish or adjourn sine die on Saturday, March 9, 2024.

SENIOR LIVING

More Senior Living on Page 5

Senior Living featured the fourth week of the month in the Connection

Six in 10 People with Dementia Will Wander

Alzheimer's Association offer tips to prepare for this emergency situation.

On March 7, 2023, Fairfax County Police on alerted on Twitter: "#Missing 79-yr-old Catherine Hudgins last seen 1:20 pm leaving the 2200 block of Colts Neck Rd in Reston. 5'7", 162lbs, grey hair, brown eyes, gray jacket, blue jeans, gray sneakers. Endangered due to mental &/or physical health concerns. Call 703-691-2131. #FCPD"

The alert was like a bolt of electricity throughout Northern Virginia where so many people know and love the former Hunter Mill Supervisor Cathy Hudgins. Fortunately, a police license plate reader led authorities to a bus driver who had seen Hudgins. The information led to finding her safe and returning her to her home.

While many episodes of wandering don't get farther than the driveway or a helpful neighbor, not all end happily.

Wandering and getting lost is common among people living with Alzheimer's or other dementia and can happen during any stage of the disease. Six in 10 people living with dementia will wander at least once; many do so repeatedly. Although common, wandering can be dangerous — even life-threatening — and the stress of this risk weighs heavily on caregivers and family.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, on Feb. 8, Judy Hollon, a woman with dementia, wandered from home and was found deceased in the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. Just a few weeks earlier, Eucharia Eleweanya, also a woman with dementia, wandered from her home in Prince George's County and was found deceased a week later.

"Anyone who has memory problems and is able to walk is at risk for wandering," said Cindy Schelhorn, senior director of communications and marketing with the Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter. "Even in the early stages of dementia, the person can become disoriented or confused for a period of time and may not remember his or her name or address."

Behaviors that may indicate an increased risk of wandering include:

- ❖ Forgetting how to get to familiar places

- ❖ Talking about fulfilling former obligations, such as going to work

- ❖ Trying or wanting to "go home," even when at home

The stress experienced by families and caregivers when a person living with dementia wanders and becomes lost is significant. Planning ahead and being prepared is critical when this dangerous – and potentially fatal – situation occurs. When preparing an emergency plan, be sure to:

- ❖ Ask neighbors, friends and family to call if they see the person alone.

- ❖ Keep a recent, close-up photo and current medical information on hand to give to police.

- ❖ Know your neighborhood and any dangerous areas nearby, i.e. bodies of water, dense foliage, bus stops or busy roads.

- ❖ Create a list of places where the person may wander, including past jobs, former homes, places of worship, or a favorite restaurant.

- ❖ Consider enrolling the person in a wandering response service.

"When a memory-impaired person goes missing, don't wait. Begin looking immediately," said Schelhorn. "Many people who wander are found within 1.5 miles of where they disappeared. If the person isn't located within 15 minutes, call 911 and report that a person with Alzheimer's disease or dementia is missing."

Wandering situations can happen even to the most diligent of caregivers. Following are strategies to help lower the chances of a wandering incident:

- ❖ Identify the time of day the person is most likely to wander. Plan activities, such as folding laundry or preparing dinner, to keep the person engaged and reduce anxiety, agitation and restlessness.

- ❖ Reassure the person if he or she feels lost, abandoned or disoriented. If the person wants to "go home" or "go to work," use communication focused on exploration and validation. Refrain from correcting the person.

- ❖ Ensure all basic needs are met, including toileting, nutrition and hydration.

SEE SENIOR LIVING, PAGE 19

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Front row, ribbon-cutting participants are (front left) Fairfax Economic Development Director Chris Bruno, Tara Borwey, Jeff Hermann, Commonwealth Gen. Mgr. Emily Wells, Tess Rollins, Tom Ross, Catherine Read, Jeramy Biggie, Page Johnson, Tom Scibilia, Assistant Gen. Mgr. Cole Seiberlich, and head chef Tony Martinez.



From left are Jeff Hermann, Jeramy Biggie and Page Johnson inside the brewery.

New Life Breathed into Historic Building

Fairfax City welcomes Commonwealth Brewing Co.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

For Natalie and Jeramy Biggie, it was love at first sight. He owns Commonwealth Brewing Co., and she owns Liquid Distro, which distributes Commonwealth's beer in Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C.

The brewery they began in Virginia Beach in 2015 was such a huge hit that the couple decided to open a second location. They looked for three years; and when they visited Fairfax City, they knew their search was over.

"Northern Virginia has so much population density and so many people who love craft beer," said Jeramy Biggie. "And when we came across Old Town Fairfax and Main Street, we fell in love with the place, the sense of community and the atmosphere already present. We saw such a huge opportunity in this large space on top of a hill on Main Street, we couldn't believe our luck."

They spent more than a year renovating their new brewery at 10426 Main St. And the front entrance rolls up like a garage door, opening the spacious interior to the outside seating on the large, covered front patio. But that's not the only reason Commonwealth Brewery has become so popular here.

"It's because of the sheer number and scope of our beers," explained Jeramy Biggie. "We make all our own beers and only sell the beers we make. There are 28 different beers here, at any given time, in every style possible. For example, we serve everything from our Hazy IPAs to fruited sours to obscure Czech lagers."

In addition, he said, "We also offer a full bar with cocktails, wine and cider, as well as food. We make Neapolitan wood-fired pizza and actually employ the beer fermentation in the dough, sauces and pizza ingredients. And besides our eclectic mix of eight or nine different pizzas that we rotate quarterly, we serve appetizers, sandwiches, wings, wraps and seasoned fries."

Hours are Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; Friday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-midnight. And Jeff Hermann with the City's Economic Development Authority, is already a fan. "I'm familiar with them from Virginia Beach," he said. "Commonwealth has incredible beer and beverages, plus such a relaxed vibe, it



A sunset view of the Old Courthouse from Commonwealth's patio.

fits well in Fairfax."

"They make so many different, themed beers, such as Harry Potter, throughout the year, as well as surf-culture beers – especially their foamy hard seltzers," continued Hermann. "My favorite is called Pink Fluffy Unicorns, which they make for their anniversary. Their pizzas are delicious, too. They put together great flavors that go really well with their beer."

It's no wonder then that Commonwealth's recent ribbon cutting was filled with jubilation. "This building has been empty for such a long time, and we wondered why something wasn't in this space," said Mayor Catherine Read. "But of all the things that could have gone here, it's magnificent that Jeramy and Natalie have brought us a brewery – with a patio."

"Look at that vista of the old courthouse; it belongs on a postcard. This is amazing; I cannot think of a better use for this space than Commonwealth brewery. Everyone in this City was excited, waiting for something to come. Having lived here a long time, we've always imagined a downtown with vibrant spaces where people come to spend time and bring their friends. And now we have it, and it's wonderful."

"I'm so appreciative that Jeramy and Natalie chose this space and this city to put this brewery right in the heart of our downtown," continued Read. "I hope we'll be celebrating your anniversaries here, for years to come. And I think all of us should meet here as often as possible to sample everything on their brewery menu."

Growing up in the Virginia Beach area, Old Town Fairfax Business Assn. Executive

Director Tess Rollins also knew Commonwealth from there. "I'm excited that they brought it here to make Fairfax and Main Street a thriving place to be," she said. "I want thriving downtown neighborhoods, and I'm happy to see our vacant places getting filled."

"Now we'll have a place to gather, not only for friendship, but for corporate events," said Rollins. "For our community, this is awesome, and it really helps with walkability here and letting people get to know each other."

Speaking next was Jeramy Biggie. "This has been a long time coming, and we're so excited to be here," he said. "We love this city and Main Street, and this place is so large and has so much to offer the public. We look forward to having everyone come and try everything and have a good time and being the community center here that we already are in Virginia Beach."

A Fairfax resident for 44 years, City Councilmember Tom Ross said he's always "yearned for a lively, active downtown. We're finally getting there; and when I look around and see all the buildings and the color, I see that this is going to be an exciting place." Unable to resist joking, he added, "Commonwealth will be a great gathering place – there's a lot on tap here."

Seriously, though, said Ross, "Communities need these kinds of places for an active life, and that's what Old Town is becoming. Instead of being a place to drive through, it's now a place to go to."

City Treasurer Tom Scibilia said he has a long history with this building. "I had my 6th birthday party in the basement when



Nicole Toulouse enjoys a slice of pizza.

it was a bowling alley in the early '60s," he said. "My dad was an electric contractor, and this was his first commercial job – he wired this building. So it's special to me – and the view is spectacular. Welcome to the City; I can't wait to be a regular."

As Fairfax's revenue commissioner, Page Johnson said he wants Commonwealth to succeed here because businesses represent 70 percent of the City revenue. "And on behalf of those of us who live in this City, we're awfully glad to have you here," he said. "I also have a personal connection to this building, and I'm so glad to see life breathed back into it."

"It was built in 1955, when my mom was a Fairfax High sophomore and worked at a men's store which was here. My dad worked downstairs in the bowling alley as a pinsetter, and my parents met there. I got married in 1984, and the year prior, I was introduced to my wife in the Alibi Restaurant downstairs. Welcome; perhaps more than anyone else, I'm pulling for you."

Jennifer Rose, executive director of the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber's "thrilled to have Commonwealth here" and is looking forward to having it involved with the Chamber and participating in the City's many events.

Agreeing, Tara Borwey with Fairfax's Economic Development, said Commonwealth "has not only opened its doors, but has also opened its heart and is already engaging with the community."

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,

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YOU PLANT A NATIVE TREE IN

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Don't know how to plant a tree but

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the McLean Trees Foundation (MTF) (a

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appropriate native tree for your

property, deliver the tree to your

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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 leg-

endary 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 Alexan-

dria waterfront. Visit <https://tallshipprovidence.org/>

BONITA LESTINA

FAIRFAX OLD TOWN HALL

PERFORMANCE SERIES

Enjoy an evening of music show-

casing 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. Admis-

sion is free. Visit: www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts.



Vienna Restaurant Week 2024 takes place March 3-10, 2024 at restaurants in Vienna.

SCHEDULE

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

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

Bldv., Fairfax. Doors open at 7

p.m.; Films begin at 7:30 p.m. Free

popcorn, candy, refreshments and

door prizes, too!

April 12: Midnight in Paris. (2011)

PG-13 - While on a trip to Paris

with his fiancée's family, a nostalgic

screenwriter finds himself mysteri-

ously going back to the 1920s

every day at midnight.

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 purvey-

ors. Fairfax City Restaurant Week

allows diners to experience flavors

from Azerbaijan to Vietnam. The

ever-popular program will feature

more than 20 participants, includ-

ing 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 Mediterranean 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 run-

ning 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 Human-

ities 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

Herity. Job fair focuses on

students and young job seekers

looking for a variety of

employment opportunities; full

time, after-school,



The Traditional Celtic Music Band IONA will perform on Sunday, March 3, 2024 at the Old Brogue Irish Pub in Great Falls.

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.

MARCH 2-3

AI & Us. Noon until 5 p.m. At

Reston Art Gallery and Studios,

11400 Washington Plaza West,

Lake Anne, Reston. A special

exhibit of various works by

numerous artists explores the

impact of Artificial Intelligence

on art and on ourselves. Organized

by Leah Zhang, a student at

Thomas Jefferson HS, the show's

goal is to raise awareness while

sharing the anxieties and inspira-

tion that come with this exciting

– and often unnerving – innova-

tion in our lives. Open over two

weekends; free admission to

view the show (12 – 5 p.m.)

and attend the March 3

reception (2 – 4 p.m.). All

proceeds from silent auction

art sales will be donated to the

local charity, The Arc of

Northern Virginia. Visit

RestonArtGallery.com

SATURDAY/MARCH 2

Mike Zito Band Performs. 8

p.m. At Capital One Hall,

7750 Capital One Tower

Road, in Tysons Corner. Gulf

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Music Award-winner Mike Zito

will play from his newly

released album, Life Is Hard.

Visit <https://www.capitalonehall.com/>

SUNDAY/MARCH 3

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. IONA transports its

audience to all the Celtic

cultures, and their transplants.

Powerful vocals, world class

fiddling, lyrical flute with

acoustic bass, bouzouki,

percussion and piers (feet). Visit

www.ionamusic.com

SUNDAY/MARCH 3

Chamber Music Series: Kristee

Haney, mezzo-soprano. 2 p.m.

At McLean Community Center,

1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean.

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Legals

DRINKLOCAL LLC trading as BUNNYMAN BREWING, 9514 WORKHOUSE WAY, LORTON, VA 22079. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for BREWERY and RETAIL ON AND OFF PREMISES WINE AND BEER RESTAURANT licenses to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. SAMUEL GRAY, MEMBER. Date notice posted at establishment: 02/21/2024. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

Legals

Moxley Loft Studios LLC trading as Loft Studios, 4010 Gateway Dr, Fairfax, Fairfax County, Virginia 22030-0000. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Day Spa license, for on-premises of beer, wine license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.

-Werner Heisenberg

Employment

Financial Analyst - Chugh CPAs, LLP in Herndon, VA have an opening for the position of a Financial Analyst. Will analyze financial data plans; evaluate capital expenditures & depreciation; explore investment opportunities; establish & evaluate profit plans; prepare reports & projections for the financial planning & analysis dept of the company; provide analysis of trends & forecast, recommend actions for optimization; develop financial tools; maintain report; analyze financial & operational reports. Salary range of \$70,990.00 to \$75,000.00. BS Degree or foreign equiv. in Business Admin, Commerce, Finance, or related with 2 yrs exp. Email your resume w/a copy of this ad to: Aira.asencion@chugh.com

Legals

DL United LLC trading as Jacalito, 8081-A Alban Road, Springfield, Fairfax County, VA 22150. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Beer and Wine On and Off and Mixed Beverages license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Jose DeLeon. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 17

Avenue with restaurant week promo item giveaways and live music. Website: exploreviennava.com/restaurantweek

TUESDAY/MARCH 5

Girls on the Run Trivia Night. 6:30 p.m. At Commonwealth Brewing Co. in Fairfax City. Each attendee can look forward to: 5 rounds of trivia highlighting the achievements of women and girls covering Sports, Science, Movies/TV, History, and Music with prizes given to the top 3 finishing teams. Two complimentary drinks
Appetizers
Pizza of choice
A silent auction
A specialty beer release
Tickets will be sold in Teams (4-packs) and Duos (2-packs). To purchase your tickets, please visit <https://www.pinwheel.us/register/index/TriviaNight2024>. For information on corporate sponsorship, individual donations, and event details, contact Catherine Keller at crkeller@gotrnova.org. Additional event information can be found on our website www.gotrnova.org/trivia-night.

THURSDAY/MARCH 7

"Tales of the Night" Foreign Language Film. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. (France; Directed Michel Ocelot) Shown in French with English subtitles. "Tales of the Night" weaves together six exotic fables, each unfolding in a unique locale, from Tibet, to medieval Europe, to the Land of the Dead. This movie is told through gorgeous animation and is appropriate for all ages.

MARCH 7-10

Tyson's Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale. A 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Thursday, 7 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Friday, 8 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday, 9 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday, 10 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less. Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests.

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

Arts Of Great Falls Spring Fundraiser: "An Evening at Monet's Garden." The Arts of Great Falls (AGF) will sponsor "An Evening at Monet's Garden" a spring fundraiser to promote and support the fine arts through teaching and exhibiting in the community. This year's gala will focus on expanding youth programs and will feature live art demonstrations and a performance by renowned soprano, Melissa Mino, along with the Great Falls Philharmonic presenting classic French



Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel takes place on Sunday, March 3, 2024 at GMU Center for the Arts.

music. The evening venue will include dinner and dancing and both a live auction and a silent auction that runs from Feb. 24-March 9, featuring artwork, beauty treatments, interior design consultations and much more. Experience the magic of the arts, all in one evening, at River Bend Golf and Country Club, March 9 from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. For more about the Gala and buying tickets visit: <https://artsofgreatfallsgala.cbo.io>

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

Teen Job and Opportunity Fair. 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At Westfield 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.

SATURDAY/MARCH 9

Children's Consignment Sale. 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Grace Weekday Preschool, 7434 Bath Street, Springfield. Cash only and all sales final.

SENIOR LIVING

Wandering with Alzheimer's

FROM PAGE 15

- ❖ Avoid busy places that are confusing and can cause disorientation.
- ❖ Use devices that signal when a door or window is opened. This can be as simple as a bell placed above a door or as sophisticated as an electronic home alarm.
- ❖ Do not leave someone with dementia unsupervised in new or changed surroundings. Never lock a person in at home or leave him or her in a car alone.
- ❖ If the person is no longer driving, remove access to car keys — a person with dementia may not just wander by foot. The person may forget that he or she can no longer drive. If the person is still able to drive, consider using a GPS device to help if they get lost.

The Alzheimer's Association can provide families and caregivers with additional guidance on keeping people with memory issues safe. For more information, call the Association's free 24/7 Helpline at 800-272-3900 or visit alz.org/safety.

About the Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia.

A Rocky Road Ahead



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

According to my most recent lab work, which depending on the month/cycle may include orders from four doctors: internal medicine, endocrinology, oncology and now nephrology (kidney specialist) as well, my health is in play, if you know what I mean?. As a result, I am getting some kind of medical assessment every four weeks. These results have been particularly scary for the past few months as I have been off my cancer medicine as if I were in remission. But I haven't been nor am I. I may be in trouble (not as amazingly healthy as I mostly have been these last 15 years) though.

It appears I may be sliding down that slippery slope that I've written about in recent columns: stage IV chronic kidney disease is now complicating my stage IV papillary thyroid cancer. And why this combination is so bad, so far as I understand, is the medicine I take (have taken daily for over three years) which has kept the thyroid cancer in check has been/is damaging my kidneys. Damaging enough that to avoid renal failure/ needing to go on dialysis, I'm off my daily pill. Which means that my thyroid cancer is not being treated anymore. And untreated cancer is generally not going to maintain the stable status quo that I've come to appreciate (as I've said repeatedly over the years: "stable is my new favorite word. Stable is not the problem"). Due to this totally expected kidney side effect, my thyroid cancer is now being viewed/described as the underlying disease. Cancer as the 'underlying disease,' that can't be good. Cancer is typically the "big dog." Now there is another 'big dog' (figuratively speaking) on "the porch:" chronic kidney disease. Unfortunately, most porches are not made to handle two dogs — if you get my drift?

A major problem of kidney disease is that it can't be reversed, it can only be maintained. The damage is irreparable. Right now, my kidney function is 25% of normal. And that's significant enough to stop the medicine that, despite its success in treating my thyroid cancer, it's simultaneously leading me down the garden path pass the porch to God probably knows where. What happens next, most immediately is another lab appointment, a PET scan — moved up from its previously scheduled early June appointment, and a first-time, face-to-face appointment with a nephrologist I've never met and who is new to my presumptive medical team. In the interim, the nephrologist has told me to reduce my daily fluid intake to two liters in an attempt to reduce the stress on my kidneys by minimizing their workload, so to speak. A workload that has been overwhelmed by years of chemotherapy for non-small cell lung cancer stage IV, which didn't exist while a slow-moving thyroid cancer went unknown/untreated. And if you didn't know, chemotherapy, if filtered through the kidney (some aren't, most are) is extremely damaging to the kidneys. But a diagnosis of cancer often comes with a heavy dose of chemotherapy. The doctors sort of must let the chips lie where they may because they have to treat "the big dog," first and foremost, and cancer is the biggest dog around, on or off the porch. It's sort of a "damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead—" type mindset.

Oddly enough, I am living proof. Despite the doctors' worst efforts, I likely was infused with the wrong chemotherapy for nearly 10 years and though I have lived to bemoan it, I am nonetheless finally "side-effected" by it and the consequences at this late date are discouraging. (You can't undo the ravages of chemotherapy either. As Curly Howard of The Three Stooges said in an episode when they were tree surgeons: "We kill or cure.") As it appears recently, I am not cured, far from it in fact. I mean, a positive attitude can only do so much, and after surviving 15 years I may have hit the limit.

I guess you could say, to what I know to be the truth: I am between a rock and a very hard place. It reminds me of another Three Stooges line. In an episode when the Stooges were to be executed for something, Curly was asked how he like to die; either to be burned "at the stake or have his head chopped off." His answer was in a column a few weeks ago which is not relevant here. What is relevant is the bad choice he had. Regardless, it was going to be an unhappy end. And I fear that my end, having to choose between thyroid cancer and chronic kidney disease will be unhappy as well. For the moment though, life goes on, and I'm definitely happy about that.

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

MARCH 9-10, MARCH 16-17

Traveling Players Presents Thrills & Chills:

A Festival of Two Plays: *Dracula: A Comic Thriller*— 1 p.m. and *Jane Eyre*— 7 p.m. At Traveling Players Studio, in Tysons Corner. Tickets are now available for Traveling Players' Thrills & Chills play festival, which runs weekends March 9-17 at their Studio in Tysons Corner Center. Performed by Traveling Players students, the festival will breathe new life into intrepid heroines and memorable monsters, with modern twists on beloved novels. Visit travelingplayers.org or call 703-987-1712.

SUNDAY/MARCH 10

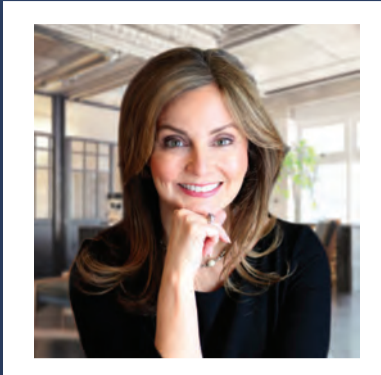
The Peking Acrobats. 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. For more than 30 years, The Peking Acrobats have revitalized Chinese acrobatics, fusing ancient athletic discipline with modern special effects to create a kaleidoscopic marvel for all ages. These world-class gymnasts, jugglers, cyclists, and tumblers provide a gravity-defying spectacle with amazing displays of contortion, flexibility, and control. Accompanied by live musicians who skillfully play traditional Chinese instruments, The Peking Acrobats execute daring maneuvers and display their technical prowess at trick cycling, precision tumbling, juggling, somersaulting, and gymnastics. Visit cfa.gmu.edu.

SUNDAY/MARCH 10

Fairfax Choral Society Performs. 4:30 p.m. The Vocal Arts Ensemble presents *The Earth, The Air, The Deep: Songs of Nature and Life*. At Annandale United Methodist Church. This concert intends to depict nature and life in music. Join the Vocal Arts Ensemble and Vocal Arts Singers as they embrace the elements — human beings, flora and fauna — and life's journey, incorporating the joy, sadness, and humor that life has to offer.

MARCH 15-17

Super Pet Expo. At Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Hours: Friday March 15, 3 p.m.-8 p.m.; Saturday March 16, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sunday, March 17, 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. Super Pet Expo encourages visitors to meet their forever pet at the Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, March 15-17, where nine rescue groups will exhibit. They are: Akita Rescue Mid Atlantic Coast, Inc; Furever Haven Animal Rescue; K-9 Caring Angels; Katies Kats Island Rescue; Margaret's Saving Grace Bully Rescue; Nalani Horse Rescue; Only Maine Coons Rescue; Shenandoah Shepherd Rescue and Virginia German Shepherd Rescue. Visit <https://www.superpetexpo.com/>



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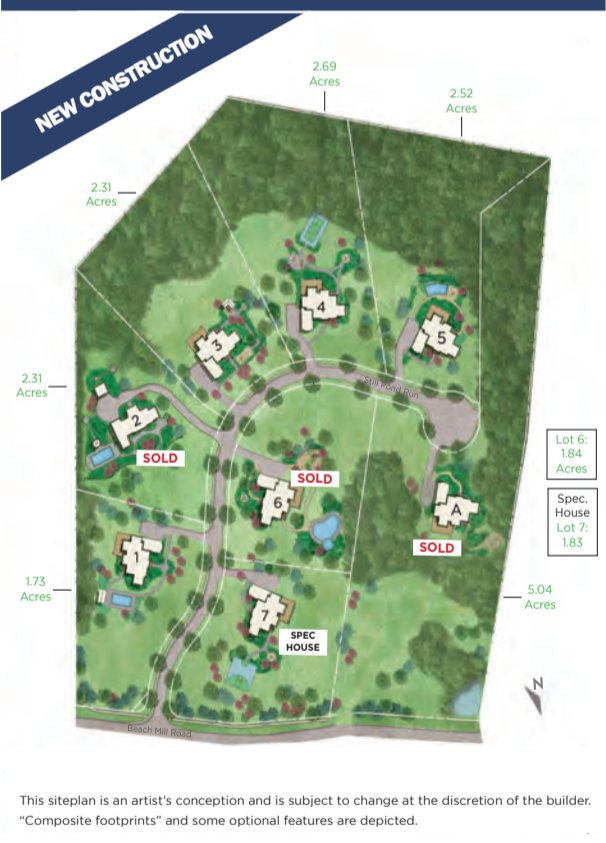


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