

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 7, 2024

2022 Assessed Value of Property		2023 Assessed Value of Property	
<b>Total:</b>	\$862,240	<b>Total:</b>	\$977,220
Percent Total Change: 25.45%		Percent Total Change: 13.34%	
This amount was allocated between land and building as follows:			
Land:	\$334,000	Land:	\$362,000
Building:	\$528,240	Building:	\$615,220
District Rates per \$100 of Value:		District Rates per \$100 of Value:	
REAL ESTATE	1.1100	REAL ESTATE	TB
Infest. Prevention	.0010	Infest. Prevention	TB
Stormwater	.0325	Stormwater	TB
Town of Herndon RE Tax	.2650	Town of Herndon RE Tax	TE
<b>Total Tax Rate</b>	<b>1.4085</b>	<b>Total Tax Rate</b>	<b>T</b>

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Advertiser a 4 cent increase in the real estate tax for FY 2025.

## County's Real Estate Tax Rate Advertised at 4 Cent Increase

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Supervisors at its March 5 meeting approved advertising a 4-cent FY 2025 real estate tax rate increase for the County Executive's FY 2025 Fairfax County Advertiser Budget. The advertised rate is \$1.135 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

Chairman Jeff McKay wrote in an email that he hopes the board can decrease the stated advertised rate. The Board is permitted to implement a lower rate than advertised, but not a higher rate.

Two months are left before the board adopts the budget and tax rate on May 7. District supervisors and county budget staff will host budget town halls in the coming weeks around the county. McKay says budgeting is the board's most difficult and important task.

"Receiving community feedback is instrumental to our decision-making process,"

McKay said. He encouraged residents to attend their supervisor's budget town hall, testify in the Government Center on April 16, 17, and 18, and/or contact him at chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Supervisor Patrick Herrity, the board's lone Republican, said he will be attending the town hall. SEE COUNTY'S REAL ESTATE, PAGE 5

Date	Time	Event	Location
Thursday, February 29, 2024	7pm	Sully District Town Hall	Rocky Run Middle School Lecture Hall
Monday, March 11, 2024	7pm	Dranesville District Joint Budget Town Hall w/ MCA	McLean Community Center
Monday, March 11, 2024	7pm	Broaddock District Budget Town Hall	The Budget Town Hall will be televised on Channel 16 (Cox Channel 1016; Verizon/Comcast Channel 16) and streamed online
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	7pm	Springfield District Budget Town Hall	The Budget Town Hall will be televised on Channel 16 (Cox Channel 1016; Verizon/Comcast Channel 16) and streamed online
Wednesday, March 13, 2024	7pm	Mount Vernon District Budget Town Hall	The Budget Town Hall will be hosted online on Zoom
Monday, March 18, 2024	7pm	Dranesville District Budget Town Hall	Herndon High School Cafeteria
Wednesday, March 20, 2024	7pm	Hunter Mill District Budget Town Hall	Patrick Henry Library
Friday, March 22, 2024	6pm	Franconia District Budget Town Hall	The Budget Town Hall will be televised on Channel 16 (Cox Channel 1016; Verizon/Comcast Channel 16) and streamed online
Tuesday, March 25, 2024	7pm	Hunter Mill District Budget Town Hall	The Budget Town Hall will be hosted on Teams
Thursday, March 28, 2024	7pm	Mason District Budget Town Hall	Mason District Government Center
Tuesday, April 2, 2024	5:30pm	Providence District Budget Town Hall	The Budget Town Hall will be televised on Channel 16 (Cox Channel 1016; Verizon/Comcast Channel 16) and streamed online

Supervisors hold public meetings on the FY 2025 Budget.



SCREENSHOT VIA FACEBOOK

The wheels on the bus will go round and round, starting on Friday. Striking Fairfax County Connector bus drivers and mechanics of ATU Local 689 ratified an agreement with contractor Transdev.

## Tentative Agreement Between ATU Local 689, Transdev

**Fairfax County Connector Bus service expected to restart Friday, March 8.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

After a daylong negotiation session on Tuesday, March 5, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689, representing striking Fairfax County Connector bus drivers and mechanics, reached a tentative agreement with Transdev. After a 15-day strike, Local 689 Fairfax Connector workers ratified a contract with contractor Transdev that addresses the Union's

demands for fair pay and strong benefits. Workers are expected to return to work Friday March 8.

More than 650 bus operators and maintenance workers of Fairfax Connector walked off the job over Unfair Labor Practices on Feb. 22 after months of negotiations.

According to a March 5 release, ATU went on strike on Tuesday, Feb. 22, protesting what it called Transdev's unfair labor practices. Transdev operates the Connector Bus Service. "Tuesday's bargaining session was the fourth time the union and the company met in person since the strike began," ATU said.

Fairfax Connector members voted to ratify the agreement on Wednesday, March 6. Local 689 won contract changes that guaranteed retirement security for members, competitive salaries for bus operators and technicians, and an improved 40-hour guarantee, among key Union priorities.

## Fraley Is New CEO At United Community

United Community today announced the appointment of Leah Fraley as its new CEO, effective April 1, 2024. Leah succeeds Alison DeCoursey who left United Community in June of 2023. Bryan Rice will remain Interim CEO until April 1.

Leah Fraley is an experienced nonprofit leader with an extensive background in strategic planning, fundraising, and a passion



Leah Fraley is the new CEO of United Community.

SEE FRALEY, PAGE 5



# The Trusted Real Estate Resource for Alexandria and Beyond.



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## Mount Ida | \$2,650,000

Located in close proximity to SSSAS Lower School and ACDS while DC and Old Town Alexandria are easy commutes. Built in 2008, this home has been recently updated. There is flex space throughout on 4 levels with 5-7 bedrooms and an in-law/nanny suite on the lower level with private entrance. The main level features a primary suite – one of three – great gathering rooms, and separate private spaces. The kitchen's premier appliances, butler's and storage pantries, and oversized island are eloquent. And there is an oversized 2-car garage. 3107 Russell Rd  
**Janet Caterson Price 703.622.5984**  
[www.JanetPriceHomes.com](http://www.JanetPriceHomes.com)



## Old Town | \$2,900,000

Wonderful Potomac River views! Renovated 3-bedroom, 3-bath home features hardwood floors, chef's kitchen, and spacious rooms for entertaining. Primary suite deck overlooks the river. Finished lower-level rec room, and 2 off-street parking spaces. 610 South Lee Street  
**Babs Beckwith 703.627.5421**  
[www.BabsBeckwith.com](http://www.BabsBeckwith.com)

**OPEN SUN 3/10, 2-4 PM**



## Old Town | \$1,485,000

Exquisite 1808 Federal style townhome with 4 upper-level bedrooms, 2 full and 2 half renovated baths, original wood floors, an expansive parlor, a large dining room, lovely kitchen, gorgeous staircase, library, brick patio, and ample storage. 307 N Washington Street  
**Lauren Bishop 202.361.5079**  
[www.LaurenBishopHomes.com](http://www.LaurenBishopHomes.com)

**OPEN SAT 3/9 & SUN 3/10, 12-2 PM**



## Alexandria | \$1,075,000

A dreamy Cape Cod-style detached home that boasts 5 bedrooms and 2.5 baths across 3 levels, close proximity to King Street, Braddock Shopping Center and a short drive from Old Town Alexandria. 2014 Scroggins Road  
**Jillian Hogan Homes 703.951.7655**  
[www.JillianHoganHomes.com](http://www.JillianHoganHomes.com)

**OPEN SAT 3/9, 2-4 PM**



## Del Ray | \$915,000

Charming 3-bedroom, 1.5-bath Colonial with 1-car garage on no-through street. Traditional layout, updated kitchen, beautiful hardwood floors, wood-burning fireplace, large bedrooms, and a brick patio. 2718 Hemlock Avenue  
**Chris Fischer 703.930.6349**  
[www.FischerRealEstate.com](http://www.FischerRealEstate.com)

**OPEN SUN 3/10, 1-3 PM**



## Old Town \$1,775,000

Stunning Old Town rowhome updated from top to bottom. Bright open floor plan with hardwood floors, soaring ceilings, plantation shutters and a custom, vintage-brick exposed wall. Family room off the kitchen leads to the deck and 2 off-street parking spaces. 707 Prince St

**Kari Steinberg 703.343.5242**  
[www.kariyohomedmv.com](http://www.kariyohomedmv.com)

**OPEN SAT 3/9 & SUN 3/10, 2-4 PM**



## Old Town \$1,265,000

Quintessential historic property with 2 bedrooms and 2 baths on 3.5 levels. Original hardwoods, a wood-burning fireplace, and authentic shutters reflect the architectural nuances of yesteryear. Formal garden with fountain. 3 off-street parking spaces. 323 N St Asaph Street

**Barbara Cousens 703.966.4180**  
[www.BarbaraCousens.com](http://www.BarbaraCousens.com)

**OPEN SUN 3/10, 2-4 PM**



## Quaker Village \$714,900

Gorgeous 3-story garage townhouse just minutes from Old Town. With 3 bedrooms & 3.5 baths, it offers ample room for everyone. A new roof, stainless appliances, refinished wood floors and new carpeting are recent updates that make this home truly move-in ready. 33 Arell Court

**Julian Burke 703.867.4219**  
[www.JulianBurke.com](http://www.JulianBurke.com)

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## Local Businesses Win Big At THE BEST Business Awards

**Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce recognized businesses that make community involvement a priority.**

Local business leaders gathered together this past Friday at the Hilton Springfield for THE BEST Business Awards Gala presented by the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce recognizing outstanding businesses that make community involvement a priority.

Inova Health Systems was recognized as the large business of the year with Roberta Tinch, President of Inova Mount Vernon Hospital and Vice President and Administrator of Inova Musculoskeletal Services, receiving the award.

“Community engagement impacts all that Inova does,” said Tinch. “I am able to set a tone for other leaders at Inova to remind them to get involved in the community. When we engage with the community [people] realize that we care about their health and about how we show up for them.”

Phyllis Sintay, a Realtor with

McEneaney Associates received the Chamber Citizen of the Year award. Sintay is a tireless supporter of the Chamber and other community organizations. She has supported others starting their own businesses.

“I love entrepreneurship and I love encouraging people of any age,” Sintay said. “If there is something you want to do, go out and try it. I don’t want anyone to get to 50, 60, 70 and still be sorry they didn’t try something.”

Receiving the award for mid-size business of the year was OptfinITY a locally owned and operated IT firm. Started in 2002, OptfinITY provides fast, affordable computer network support. OptfinITY president Michael Drobnis shared the many ways he gives back to the community.

“Do I expect to see any ROI for my community involvement?” asked Drobnis. “Not really. Al-



Recognized with THE BEST Business Awards for 2024 were (from left): Roberta Tinch, Inova Health System; Eric Christensen, Chairman of the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce; Michael Drobnis, OptfinITY; Brian Harte, E-1 Asset Management; Phyllis Sintay, McEneaney Associates; Bryant Rice, United Community; Felicea Meyer-Deloatch, The Growth and Health Hub.

though that would be nice, but its just the right thing to do.”

Small business of the year award went to E-1 Asset Management and managing director Brian Harte. Harte lives in the Mount Vernon area. In addition to his full time work, Harte manages the largest cub scout pack in Virginia and finds time to mentor interns in his business.

United Community was recognized as the outstanding nonprofit organization of the year with interim director Bryant Rice accepting the award.

The new business of the year award was presented to The Growth and Healing Hub, a behavioral health and wellness clinic founded by Felicea Meyer-Deloatch.

Twenty-six organizations and businesses across various industries were nominated for the awards, ranging from local restaurants to national department stores. Photos and videos from the event can be seen on the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce’s Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/MtVSChamber](http://www.facebook.com/MtVSChamber).

## ‘The Odd Couple’ ACCT presents Neil Simon classic.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

“The Odd Couple,” one of the best-known plays by the award-winning Neil Simon, makes its debut March 8 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater.

First opening on Broadway in 1965, the classic comedy opens as a group of guys assemble for cards in the apartment of Oscar Madison, a recently divorced New York sportswriter. If the mess is any indication, it’s no wonder that his wife left him.

Late to arrive is Felix Unger, who has just been separated from his wife. Fastidious, depressed, uptight and tense, Felix seems suicidal; but as the action unfolds, hilarity ensues as the clean freak and the slob ultimately decide to room together.

The Tony-award winning play opened with theater luminaries Walter Matthau and Art Carney as Oscar and Felix. Subsequent movie and television versions starred the likes of Jack Lemmon, Tony Ran-

“I hope audiences will have a good time, empathize with the characters, and appreciate what a major playwright Neil Simon was.”

— Actor Steve Rosenthal

dall, Jack Klugman, Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick.

The ACCT production is under the direction of Eddie Page with Marg Soroos as producer.

“We were looking for a comedy that had name recognition and one that would be fun to have on stage,” Soroos said. “The Odd Couple fills that bill to a T.”

‘SEE THE ODD COUPLE’, PAGE 8



PHOTO BY HOWARD SOROOS

Bruce Rauscher (Felix), Steve Rosenthal (Murray), Charles Boone (Vinnie), Joel Durgavich (Roy), Peter Halverson (Speed), and Dave Wright (Oscar) star in the ACCT production of Neil Simon’s The Odd Couple playing March 8-24. [www.acctonline.org](http://www.acctonline.org)



## Scam Season

Be alert for these scams that increase in spring and summer.

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

With warmer weather on the way, I wanted to alert you to some common scams that you should be aware of during the upcoming spring and summer months. The Fairfax County Police Department recently sent out a notice to inform residents of driveway paving scams. This scam typically starts with a knock at your door. The fraudster then presents a deal to repave your driveway, seal it, or provide other stone or concrete work. They will then attempt to create a sense of urgency for the homeowner to agree to the work immediately, often without any formal contract. The fraudster will then take a monetary deposit from the homeowner, and will proceed to begin work, but fails to complete it, often leaving the homeowner's property in worse condition than it started.

So, how can you be sure that the solicitor who comes to your door is legitimate? Fairfax County has ordinances governing how solicitors must conduct themselves. Legitimate and reputable businesses typically abide by these ordinances, especially by obtaining a Fairfax County solicitor's license, which is a laminated card displaying the solicitor's photograph, fin-

gerprints, and personal information. When a solicitor knocks on your door to offer a service, be sure to ask to see their soliciting license. If they do not have a valid license, ask them to leave and close your door. Immediately call Fairfax County Police (non-emergency) at 703-691-2131 to report the violation.

What are examples of other commonly reported scams?

Fake delivery text messages that claim your U.S. Postal Service, UPS or FedEx delivery has been kept on hold because of an issue with your address, insufficient postage, or nobody was home to receive it. Unless you explicitly sign up for status alerts on a package, you won't receive a text from USPS. If UPS contacts you regarding a package, the UPS representative will always be able to provide a tracking number which can be further verified by you on their website. FedEx does not request, via unsolicited mail, email, or text, any personal information pertaining to your account credentials or identity.

Fraudulent bank account texts, robocalls, and emails that aim to obtain victims' personal banking information

Unsolicited phone calls during



Krizek

which crooks call and pretend to be a grandchild or other family member who's been arrested and needs bail money to get out of a nonexistent legal jam. These scams are becoming more sophisticated with artificial intelligence technology that

can mimic the voices of people you know.

Sweepstakes scammers who call or write to say that you've won a nonexistent prize, but in order to receive the payout, you must provide the scammer with personal information.

How can you discern between legitimate and illegitimate messages? Many of these types of messages have misspellings or awkward grammar, and request payments and seemingly unnecessary information. Never click on any link unless you can verify that it's legitimate. Be wary of a message or caller insisting that you take any immediate action. A good rule of thumb is to go directly to the source. If you're concerned that there might be a problem with a package you're receiving or have sent, contact the post office or company directly. Contact your bank directly in a way you know to be legitimate, either online or by

calling the phone number on your statement or debit card.

The General Assembly took action this session to crack down on fraud and scams, especially those targeting seniors. Del. Maldonado and Sen. Favola introduced legislation that I supported which permits financial institutions to allow an elderly or vulnerable adult to submit and periodically update a list of trusted persons who may be contacted in the case of the suspected financial exploitation of the adult, and permits financial institutions to conduct a training to instruct its staff on how to identify and report the suspected financial exploitation of an elderly or vulnerable adult.

If you have been a victim of a financial crime, please contact the Fairfax County Police Department by filing a report through the Financial Crimes Online Reporting (FiCOR) website or call 703-691-2131. Additionally, if you have been a victim of elder fraud, you can call the National Elder Fraud Hotline at 1-833-372-8311.

I also invite you to attend the 7th annual Scam Jam event hosted by the AARP and Fairfax County on April 19 from 9 am to 12 pm at the Fairfax County Government Center to learn more about how to identify the red flags to spot scams and protect yourself and your family.

## The Final Countdown

BY SENATOR ADAM EBBIN

We're in the final week of the 2024 General Assembly session and we still have much work to do. As of this writing, 785 bills have passed both chambers and are on their way to Governor Youngkin's desk, while 306 bills await final action by the legislature.

Between now and the legislature's scheduled adjournment, Sine Die, on Saturday, March 9, the General Assembly must also complete work on the budget that will set Virginia state expenditures for the remainder of this year and the next two fiscal years.

My priorities for Virginia's budget remain steadfast, including reversing the \$300 million cut to public education that was contained in Governor Youngkin's introduced budget, and increasing our investments in K-12 public education.

New funding for Metro is also

at the top of my priority list; I encourage the Senate and House budget conferees to provide Metro with needed funding to prevent it from entering a death spiral.

Another issue related to ongoing deliberations over the state budget is Governor Youngkin's proposal for Potomac Yard. As I have said before, I believe that the Commonwealth's budget is not the appropriate legislative vehicle to consider the creation of a state authority that would issue bonds to pay for a proposed sports arena for the NBA's Washington Wizards and NHL's Washington Capitals.

I will continue to advocate these and other priorities to the budget conferees and I look forward to seeing them embraced in the final compromise agreement when it is released later this week. Under rules adopted by both the Senate



Ebbin

and the House of Delegates, the budget must be finalized in time to provide legislators with at least 48 hours to review the compromise prior to their voting on it.

Once the General Assembly votes on the budget, it will be transmitted to the governor. In addition to the ability to sign, amend, or veto individual bills, Virginia governors may take similar action on the state budget bills after they are passed by the General Assembly. In fact, past governors have in some instances proposed extensive amendments to the budget after it reaches his desk – actions that are either approved or rejected by the General Assembly when we return to Richmond for Reconvened Session scheduled for April 17, 2024.

It is my continued honor to serve the residents of the 39th Senate District.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Disappointed in Letter on Abortion

To the editor:

As I was reading the letters to the editor in last week's Alexandria and Mount Vernon Gazette, I was disappointed that the letter writer did not have a better idea or a solution to end the weekly protests in front of the medical building on Sherwood Hall Lane.

I was also disappointed that your publication would publish an anonymous letter with many statements that are not true.

Since the Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade approximately 35,000 children's lives have been saved each year in the United States. The best way to locally stop these peaceful protests is for citizens

SEE DISAPPOINTED, PAGE 5

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# NEWS

## County's Real Estate Tax Rate Advertised at 4 Cent Increase

FROM PAGE 1

publican, blasted the potential tax rate increase online through Facebook, saying, "This is unacceptable, and it is having an impact on our county." Recently released census data shows that more individuals are departing Fairfax County than arriving. Herrity said the reason is because of affordability challenges, including housing, living costs, and rising taxes.

Herrity said that the FY 2025 Advertised Budget increases real estate tax by 6.79 percent and assessments by 2.89 percent on average.

"This is an increase of \$524 in the tax bill for the average homeowner and follows a 56 percent increase in real estate taxes for residents since 2015," Herrity posted on Facebook.

According to Bryan Hill's 11-page County Executive Message, dated Feb. 20, 2024, and prefacing his FY

2025 Fairfax County Advertised Budget, education assistance is the highest net increase in his budget. Hill emphasized that the county would need an increase above the planned 4 cents to fund the superintendent's proposed School Operating Budget and provide the county flexibility in fulfilling its undetermined Metro and Connector responsibilities.

Hill based his balanced budget on a \$1.135 Real Estate Tax rate, which partially funds the school division's request and the employee compensation package.

The underperforming real estate market, combined with the substantial funding increase request from Fairfax County Public Schools, employee salary and benefits requirements, and other expenditure pressures, are creating a challenging Fiscal Year 2025 budget picture for the county.

## Fraley Is New CEO at United Community

FROM PAGE 1

for helping underserved communities. She brings a wealth of experience in the nonprofit sector having led Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of Northern Virginia as their Executive Director for the last 6 years. Leah has also held leadership positions at the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children and Holy Cross Health Foundation, where she led fundraising efforts.

"I could not be more excited that Leah is joining United Community as our next CEO. After a thorough, nationwide search, Leah stood out among candidates as the leader and executive to guide United Community into the next phase of the organization's vision of ending multigenerational poverty," said Garrett McGuire, Chair, Board of Directors.

"I look forward to joining the United Community team and getting to work to build on the legacy of so many," said Fraley.

Fraley brings a wealth of experience and a fierce dedication to advocating for families and children. Leah's personal and professional journey has been marked by a relentless pursuit of justice and support for those most vulnerable in our communities.

Leah's passion for family and child advocacy has

been evident throughout her career, including her most recent role as CEO of Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN) of Northern Virginia, her experience leading the Marketing and Development team at the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, her time helping all families access affordable healthcare at Holy Cross Health and leading the United Way in Western Maryland to bring about lasting change in education, income and health in families, children and communities.

She also served on the Board of Families Forward Virginia and co-chaired a Steering Committee to develop the strategic plan on the prevention of child abuse and neglect across the Commonwealth.

Outside of her professional endeavors, Leah finds solace in long walks with her husband and new granddaughter and navigating the joys and challenges of her four boys and two King Charles Spaniels.

United Community is an over 50-year-old nonprofit offering an array of human services that lifts families in Fairfax County out of poverty. Our mission is to build thriving communities and create equitable opportunities by providing supportive services and advancing community-driven solutions. To learn more, visit [unitedcommunity.org](http://unitedcommunity.org).

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Disappointed in Letter on Abortion

FROM PAGE 4

to push the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to change the zoning laws so abortion facilities are not permitted in our neighborhoods.

If Fairfax County does not change their zoning laws we need to lobby our state legislators to ban abortions and put an end to the largest human rights violation of our time.

The next statewide election is in November 2025 and if Virginia voters select one more pro life state senator and two more pro-life members of the House of Delegates, Virginia will become a pro life state and the weekly protests will end on Sherwood Hall Lane.

As a lifelong Alexandrian we should all be concerned about un-

born children losing their lives every Saturday morning in our neighborhoods. As the anonymous letter writer wrote, "the harassment affects all of us," this is true, especially how it affects the unborn children of Alexandria.

**Frank Fannon**  
Former member Alexandria City Council

### BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](http://ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

#### FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED

Interested in becoming a foster parent? There is always a need for caring foster parents looking to open their homes to foster youth. Get in touch to learn more. Visit [fcsvanow@gmail.com](mailto:fcsvanow@gmail.com) or [www.fcsva.org](http://www.fcsva.org). Or call 703-817-9890.

#### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**STEM VOLUNTEERS.** The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) needs scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the

Northern Virginia Area, during the 2016-17 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the numbers of STEM volunteers in Northern Virginia were: Fairfax County - 40, Arlington - 20, and Alexandria - one. Details of the collabora-

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 8

Be a part of our:

**Wellbeing** pages, the first week of every month.

Delight in our **HomeLifeStyle** sections, the second week of every month. Peek at the top real estate sales, glimpse over-the-top remodeling projects, get practical suggestions for your home.

Celebrate students, camps, schools, enrichment programs, colleges and more in our **A-plus: Education, Learning, Fun** pages, the third week of every month.

**Senior Living**, fourth week of every month.

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#### FINANCIAL

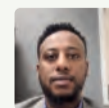
Sat . March 16, 2024  
12 noon- 2 pm

#### LITERACY

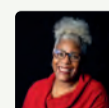
#### WORKSHOP

- Budget
- Savings
- Credit
- College Funding
- Investment

**Gum Springs Community Center**  
8100 Fordson Rd  
Alexandria, VA 22306



**Melaku Efriem**  
Vice Pres. - Truist Bank  
Senior Bank Manager



**Erica Moore**  
National Vice Pres. - Five Rings Financial  
N. Virginia Black Chambers of Commerce -  
Treasurer  
Wine, Women & Wealth



**Rev. Stanley Wright**  
CPA  
Pastor - Pilgrim AME Church, Wash. D.C.  
EPW Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. -  
Treasurer

Register at [www.vwhsca.org](http://www.vwhsca.org) or scan the QR Code



Register by **March 14, 2024**  
Register early as seating is limited



# Projects Dot the Map around Mount Vernon

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

Some planned, some under way and some complete around the district.

By MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

As Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon) rolls through the Mount Vernon District making improvements left and right, he's boiled it all down to a list. What is the status of the projects on this list?

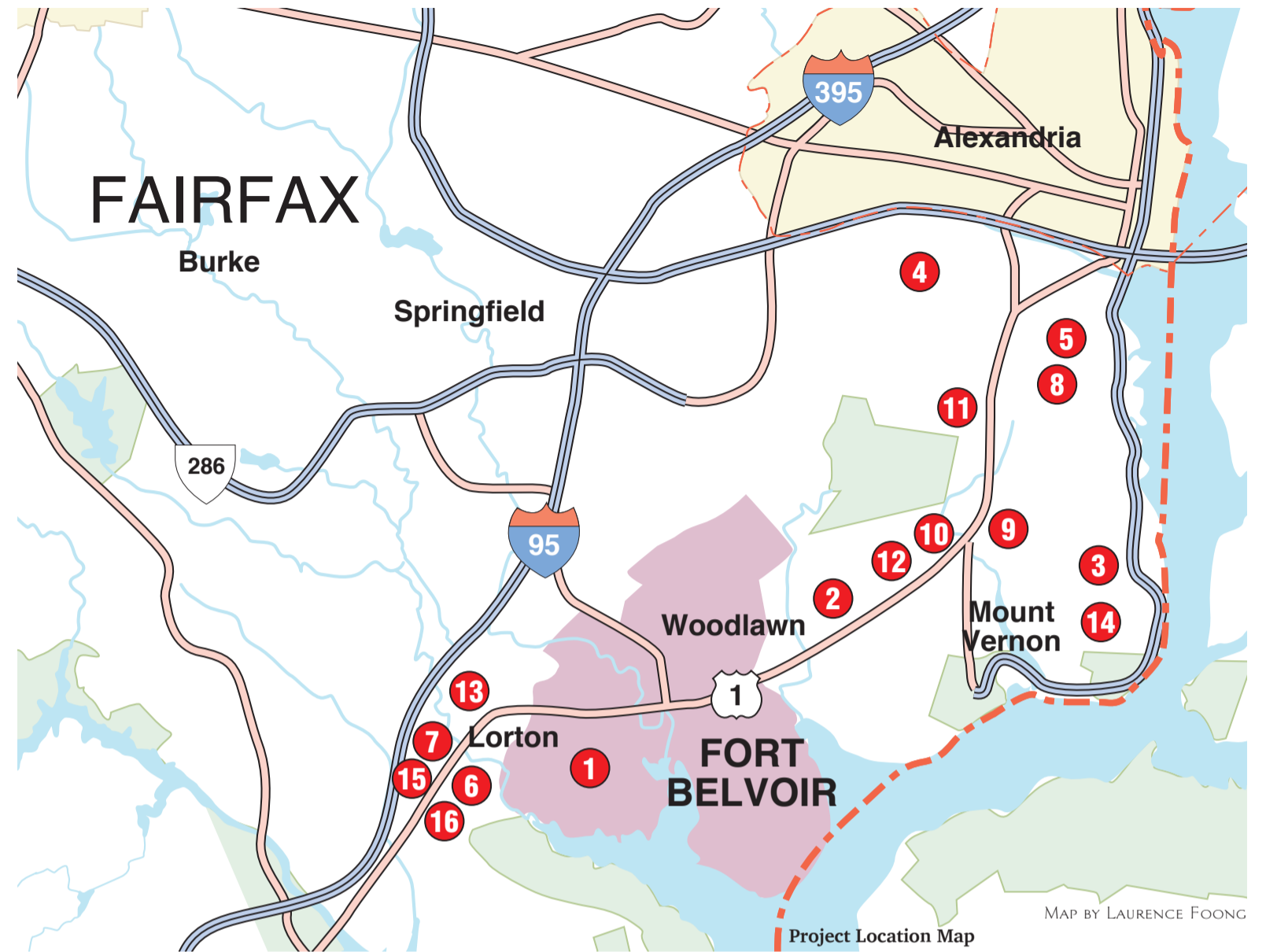


FILE PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON

MWAA is considering new flight patterns south of Washington National Airport to lessen aircraft noise over Mount Vernon and Alexandria Neighborhoods.



A 2019 meeting about traffic on the GW Parkway South. Changes were implemented last fall.



MAP BY LAURENCE FOONG

Project Location Map

**1. Airplane Noise Reduction:** Complaints about airplane noise have been coming into the supervisor's office for nearly 10 years so to address the issue, Congressman Don Beyer and Supervisor Storck organized a meeting with MWAA and the FAA to discuss the concerns. Out of that came the South Flow Alliance citizens group, Reagan National Airport Community Working Group. The FAA worked with MWAA and they established a new departure pattern to lessen the noise which is still in the testing phase. Next Meeting - April 25, 2024 - 6pm to 8pm (people may log-on at 5:45pm). <https://www.flyreagan.com/about-airport/aircraft-noise-information/dca-reagan-national-community-working-group>



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The American Horticultural Society 2024 Spring Garden Market will be held April 12 & 13 at River Farm



Mission accomplished: At River Farm, neighbors were out in full force to save the historic property.



FILE PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME

The Lorton Community Center opened in October 2022.

**2. Embark Richmond Highway:** Embark Richmond Highway is a multi-faceted project promoting revitalization along a 7.5 mile segment of the Richmond Highway Corridor by creating a series of mixed-use activity centers supported by a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. As part of this effort, new apartments, condominiums and townhouses have opened in the Huntington, Penn Daw and Lockheed Boulevard area. In addition, there are a few new murals along the corridor and some intersection improvements and officials continue to make progress along the corridor. In February 2022, the BRT was officially named "The One," and modern bus design was made public but they haven't started rolling out yet. According to Fairfax County, Section 1 is delayed from late 2026 to 2030 and section 2 from 2028 to late 2030. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mount-vernion/sites/mountvernion/files/assets/documents/embark%20fact-sheets.pdf>

**3. George Washington Parkway Study -** The National Park Service conducted a study of the George Washington Memorial Parkway called the "George Washington Memorial Parkway - Southern Section Road Diet Traffic Impact Analysis," and is divided into Concept 1, between Belle Haven Road and Morningside Lane, and Concept 3, between Morningside Lane and Stratford Lane. NPS gathered comments on this study through Oct 24, 2023. The National Park Service heard common themes about the Belle Haven and Belle View intersections from the public that included: high-speeds, confusion over who has the right-of-way, struggles to find gaps in traffic, and difficult sight-lines to see north-bound vehicles while turning left from the side streets. In September 2023, the National Park Service implemented a new traffic pattern at both intersections.

<https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/management/southern-george-washington-memorial-parkway-safe-ty-study-next-steps.htm>

**4. Huntington Levee -** With Cameron Run right on their doorsteps, the residents of the Huntington area witnessed the flooding through the years and some have the high water mark in place on their wall just as a reminder. In 2009, the Army Corps of Engineers completed a study to evaluate flood damage reduction measures. In the Huntington community, more than 160 homes are in the floodplain and all are at risk of flooding. At the request of Fairfax County, the United States Army Corps of Engineers studied the best ways in which to protect the Huntington community from future floods. The study found that the most cost-effective and sustainable way to manage flooding risks in the area was to build a 2,800-foot levee and pumping station. In June 2019, they celebrated the completion of the levee and pumping station. In late 2021, the area protected by the levee was removed from the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area.

**5. Infill Development Task Force Neighborhood** representatives, the District Supervisor's office, state elected representatives, and developers serve on the task force to review and evaluate County and state options for better addressing the impacts on neighbors and neighborhoods of "by-right" residential infill redevelopment projects. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernion/infill-development-task-force-ldtf>

**6. Lorton Landfill Closure -** Construction and demolition debris was halted for the Lorton Landfill in 2018 and in 2021, the landfill was completely closed. Future plans include turning it into "Overlook Park," and this concept was discussed at the Lorton Landfill Summit which was held in September 2021. The property is now the largest grassland in Fairfax County and is home to pollinator meadows, areas for ground nesting birds, beehives and other environmental efforts.

**7. Lorton Community Center -** The Lorton Community Center opened in October 2022. The 30,000-square-foot facility is co-located with the Lorton Library and Lorton Park. The community center provides space for the Lorton Senior Center and Lorton Community Action Center, as well as services, programs and activities for individuals of all ages and abilities. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/lorton-community-center>

**8. Lorton Visioning 2040 -** Lorton Visioning 2040 is a community-driven visioning process to understand how Lorton residents move through and use their community, and how it could be strengthened in the future up to the year 2040.

The Lorton Visioning Steering Committee meets monthly to plan meetings and prepare information for this effort. <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2022/jun/10/proposal-landfill-park-land/>

**9. Opioid Disposal:** The Mount Vernon District Supervisor's office at 2511 Parkers Lane, Mount Vernon, VA, 22306, provides free drug deactivation kits. The Springfield District Office has a permanent opioid drop-off box, located at 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield, VA, 22152.

Walmart has also launched a first-of-its kind opioid disposal solution, available at no cost, in all company pharmacies. Fairfax County Police stations also offer permanent opioid drop off boxes.

**10. Original Mount Vernon High School -** At the old Mount Vernon High School building, the classrooms are gone but the space has been slated for "adaptive reuse," to include nonprofits, a teen and senior center, a gym and early childhood education. The site is being eyed for educational programs to support workforce development which includes business incubation spaces, visual and performing arts programs, a Welcome Center and the current library, which will be converted to an event space with



The Huntington Levee and Pumping Station, completed in 2019.



'Adaptive reuse' is the key term for the old Mount Vernon High School building.

this project, the county said.

The Original Mount Vernon High School was built in 1939, a classic example of Colonial Revival architecture. The county-owned facility is located at 8333 Richmond Highway on a 22-acre property that was once part of George Washington's estate. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/capital-projects/original-mount-vernion-high-school>

**11. Penn Daw Fire Station and Emergency and Supportive Housing -** On top of Beacon Hill, just off Richmond Highway is a spot that was home to the Hybla Valley Nursery which closed in 2020. Fairfax County stepped in and slated the site to co-locate a new Penn Daw fire station and supportive housing structure to take the place of the outdated Eleanor Kennedy Shelter now on Fort Belvoir land. According to the county,

construction could start this coming summer and be complete at the end of 2026.

**12. Richmond Highway Bus Rapid Transit** This project is a vital part of the overall "Embark" project. It will be built in two sections for the BRT, with six stations planned for Part I that stretches from Huntington to Hybla Valley, and Part II which stretches to Fort Belvoir. Section I is scheduled to begin in 2023 and be completed in early 2027, while construction on Section II will span from 2025-2029, project information said. See number 2 above.

**13. Richmond Highway Widening** from Napper Road to Jeff Todd Way Widening Richmond Highway is on the schedule at the Virginia Department of Transportation to begin in early 2027. The two-phased, \$465 million project will

ultimately widen the highway from four to six lanes from Jeff Todd Way in the south to Sherwood Hall Lane.

**14. Save River Farm, Mission Accomplished.** The possibility for River Farm to go up for sale with development looming, community involvement, zoning changes, funding from the state and major efforts inside the American Horticultural Society saved River Farm. Save the date for the annual AHS Spring Garden Market coming April 12 & 13.

**15. South County Police Station & Animal Shelter -** Due west on Lorton Road, a new South County Police Station and Animal Shelter opened in the summer of 2023. The new facility includes a 34,000 square-foot police station and a 23,000 square-foot animal shelter. Stop by and



adopt a dog or other pet.

**16. South County Site Specific Plan Amendment, a zoning process.** Fairfax County has gathered public input on proposals to change the Comprehensive Plan for 23 sites in southern Fairfax County, including residential, office, retail, and mixed use properties near places like downtown Annandale, the Huntington and Franconia-Springfield Metro Stations and Richmond Highway. See <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/plan-amendments/sspa/south>.



# 'The Odd Couple'

FROM PAGE 3

The ensemble cast is led by Dave Wright as Oscar and Bruce Rauscher as Felix.

"It's easy to just classify Oscar as being the messy one, but there's more depth there," Wright said. "He likes to portray outwardly that he doesn't care about anything and

loves his messy life, but I think it's a bit of a front. Secretly, he's a lonely man who would rather make jokes than face up to his own mistakes. Even though Felix drives him crazy, he also learns a lot about himself through this relationship."

Added Rauscher, "If I or anyone even remotely familiar with the

character had to describe Felix Unger in one word, it would simply be 'neurotic.' His excessiveness is due to his extreme insecurity about himself but underneath it all, there really is a true heart of gold. He is a man who'd do anything for anyone despite his low opinion of himself and his abilities. I'm hop-

ing he'll not only come off as a bit aggravating, which he is, but also someone you can't help but fall in love with."

Rounding out the cast are Steve Rosenthal as Murray, Charles Boone as Vinnie, Joel Durgavich as Roy, and Peter Halverson as Speed.

"Comedy is my favorite theatrical genre," said Page. "In many ways it's the most challenging, yet the most rewarding."

Halverson, who plays one of the poker playing friends, said he hopes the audience sees beyond the humor of the play.

"Beneath the humor, of which there's plenty, I think 'The Odd Couple' is all about relationships, and the work it requires to main-

tain them," Halverson said. "It takes vision, and empathy, and compromise, and the wisdom to accept changes in yourself and others and adapt accordingly. If seeing our production gives audience members just a touch of that grace, we'll have done our job."

Added Rosenthal, "I hope audiences will have a good time, empathize with the characters, and appreciate what a major playwright Neil Simon was."

"The Odd Couple" is playing March 8 through March 24 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA 22308. For tickets or more information visit [www.actonline.org](http://www.actonline.org).

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

tion are worked out between the teacher and the volunteer, and may involve giving demonstrations, assisting in lab experiments, lecturing on special topics, assisting with homework, etc. The hours are flexible, and volunteers attend a one-day training in September before being assigned to schools. To see how volunteers are assisting their teachers, view the video clips at [www.seniorscientist.org](http://www.seniorscientist.org). To volunteer, contact [donaledge@aol.com](mailto:donaledge@aol.com).

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

United Community (formerly UCM), 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, seeks volunteers for Food Pantry assistance, Early Learning Center teacher aides, basic needs counselors, youth tutors and mentors, office administration/data entry, and community outreach. Flexible hours and schedules. Opportunities for all ages to serve, including community service hours. More info at [ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities) or email [volunteer@ucmagency.org](mailto:volunteer@ucmagency.org).

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil ([Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov)) at 703-324-4547.

Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia based 501(c)(3) organization seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See [www.ophrescue.org](http://www.ophrescue.org) for information and all volunteer opportunities.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors

seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at [chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org](mailto:chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org) or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit [www.rsvpnova.org](http://www.rsvpnova.org).

Line Dance Instructor needed for the Gum Springs Senior Program once a week on either Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Volunteer Solutions, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711.

Volunteer Fairfax makes it easy for individuals and families, youth and seniors, corporate groups and civic clubs to volunteer. Fulfill hours, give back, or pay it forward through a variety of service options. Visit [www.volunteerfairfax.org](http://www.volunteerfairfax.org) or call 703-246-3460.

Fairfax County's Community Services Board is seeking volunteer office assistants. Volunteers are needed to assist CSB staff with greeting guests, making reminder phone calls, data entry, filing, shredding, stocking shelves, and other duties as needed. Hours are flexible, but would be during normal business hours. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm) for more.

Yoga Teachers are needed. Help improve a person's well-being by teaching yoga classes to adults who are staying in a residential facility. The day/time is flexible, but would be during the week. Prior yoga instruction is required. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb/viva/volunteers.htm) for more.

The Northern Virginia Long Term Care Ombudsman Program needs volunteer advocates for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Contact Lisa Callahan at 703-324-5861, TTY 711 or email [Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Respite Care volunteers give family

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10

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# ENTERTAINMENT

## NOW THRU APRIL 15

**Exhibit: "Searching for Truth in the Garden" at Freedom House Museum.** At Freedom House Museum, 1315 Duke Street, Alexandria. Gonzaga High School's groundbreaking research on slavery, "Searching for Truth in the Garden," found new life at the Freedom House Museum. The traveling exhibition, on view through April 15, 2024, delves into the life of Gabriel, a teenager enslaved at Washington Seminary (now Gonzaga) in 1829. Gabriel's story offers a poignant lens through which to examine the complexities of slavery and its lasting impact.

## WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

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

## NOW THRU MARCH 31

**Christine Ruksenas-Burton Exhibit.** At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Christine Ruksenas-Burton's body of work is composed of hard-edge color field linear abstractions, a style rooted in a movement that began in New York City in the 1940s and pioneered by Mark Rothko, Josef Albers, Carmen Herrera, Fanny Sanin, Barnett Newman, Ellsworth Kelly and Clyfford Still.

## MARCH 1-30

**March Luck.** At Van Landingham Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria. March Luck explores the serendipitous forces that drive artistic expression. Join us to reflect on the role of luck in shaping both art and life in the Van Landingham Gallery. The Torpedo Factory Artists' Association presents a group exhibition including jewelry, paintings, photography, mixed media work, hand pulled prints, and more during the month of March.

## MARCH 1-31

**Woodlawn Needlework Show.** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Woodlawn Plantation. Tuesday, February 27th at 10:00am - 1:00pm - Lotus Leaf Mat Workshop with Youngmin Lee (Fee \$165, includes materials) Learn traditional Korean needlework techniques at this in-person workshop conducted by renowned textile artist, Youngmin Lee. This workshop will teach you how to construct a lotus leaf shape Sangbo (covering bojagi) that you can use in daily life. Gamchimjil and Kkojipgi techniques and the Yeonbong (Lotus Bud Knot) technique will finish this simple and organically-shaped bojagi with raised line composition.

Every Wednesday and Friday at 2:30pm in March - Special Tours of 61st Anniversary Woodlawn Needlework Show (Fee: \$18,

includes Needlework Show Admission) Join the special tour for a brief history of Woodlawn while discovering the unique stories behind many pieces of the Needlework Show as a Woodlawn guide and Nelly's Needlers expert lead visitors through the house.

Saturday March 16th, Monday March 25th, and Wednesday March 27th

at 3:30pm - Beginners Needlework Techniques (Fee: \$25 per class or \$65 for all three, includes Needlework Show Admission and supplies)

Join members of Nelly's Needlers to learn the basics of three fundamental needlework techniques; counted cross-stitch, canvaswork (needlepoint), and surface embroidery.

March 16- canvaswork coasters

March 25 - cross-stitch towel

March 27 - embroidered hat

Virtual Programs

(All virtual programs are free, with a suggested donation to support Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House)

Saturday, March 23rd at 4:00pm ET -What Linens Know with Ruth Tabancay

Enjoy a fascinating virtual presentation by multi-disciplinary artist Ruth Tabancay as she discusses "What Linens Know" on exhibit at the Woodlawn Needlework Show. Ruth's exhibit is an unique spin on this year's theme, "Needlework in Everyday Life" as she examines the uses of vintage linens in everyday living and embroiders a lasting memory of the remains.

## MARCH 1-30

**"The Power of Two" Exhibit.** At Del Ray Artisans gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features art that showcases two related items in one piece of art; for example, two-of-a-kind, complementary items, double-exposures, duos, twins, or multiple generations. "Double your pleasure, double your fun." Opening Reception: Friday, March 1, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed Sunday, March 31). Details: [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

## MARCH 5 THRU APRIL 28

**Mosaics by Nina Tisara and Photographs by Steven Halperson.** At Green Spring Gardens, 4601 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. The Opening Reception is Sunday, March 10, 1-3 p.m. The mother-son team had worked together at Tisara Photography in Old Town for three decades. Steven now manages the Alexandria portrait studio as well as creating painterly photographic images and unique etched copper art. Nina creates intricate mosaics of unglazed porcelain tile which are widely exhibited and collected. Their work may also be seen by appointment at Serenity Place Gallery, Nina's in-home gallery,

## FRIDAY/MARCH 8

**Women's Leadership Forum.** 7:45-10:30 a.m. At The Westin Alexandria Old Town, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria. The forum will bring together women (and



The 2024 Spring Garden Market at River Farm takes place April 12-13, 2024.

men) at all stages of their careers for an interactive, "straight talk" panel discussion filled with inspiration and insight. Cost is \$80 for Members | \$105 for Prospective Members.

## SATURDAY/MARCH 9

**Write Like a Woman Networking Workshop.** 1-3 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Enjoy an afternoon of engaging conversation and writing! Facilitated by poet, author, and Poet Laureate of Alexandria, KaNikki Jakarta, this workshop welcomes amateur to professional women writers ages 18-100. Each workshop centers on uplifting and inspiring through writing and allows participants to enhance their writing styles. Space is limited, please RSVP to [greatpublishing@yahoo.com](mailto:greatpublishing@yahoo.com)

## MARCH 12-18

**Spring Book Sale** - At Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria. The Friends of Beatley Central Library will hold their Spring Book Sale from Tuesday, March 12 through Monday, March 18. Members' Preview on Tuesday, March 12, 3:00 -7:30 p.m. (\$15 memberships available at the door); Wednesday, March 13, 10:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 14, 10:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; Friday, March 15, 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Saturday, March 16, 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday, March 17, Half Price Day, 1-4:30 p.m.; Monday, March 18, \$10 Bag Sale, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. \$4 or less, unless specifically marked: hardbacks, paperbacks, children's books, and media. All genres. Visit [www.beatleyfriends.org](http://www.beatleyfriends.org)

## WEDNESDAY/MARCH 13

**Potomac Harmony Chorus Concert.** 7:30 p.m. At The View Alexandria (formerly The Hermitage), 5000 Fairbanks Avenue, Alexandria. The Potomac Harmony Chorus invites you to their upcoming free performance as they prepare for regional competition. This will be the first competition for Potomac Harmony following the hiring of their new director, Allison Lynskey. As part of their preparation, they will host a Friends & Family night to hone their skills in full costume and make up in front of a live audience. Contact Jackie Bottash, [backrowlead@aol.com](mailto:backrowlead@aol.com)

## TUESDAY/MARCH 19

**March Madness at Lena's Wood Fired Pizza & Tap:** Hoops Hour Happy Hour. In Del Ray/Alexandria. Lena's is kicking off Hoops Hour Happy Hour on March 19 with Happy Hour prices all day. Lena's Wood-Fired Pizza & Tap located in the heart of the Del Ray section of Alexandria has your March Madness watching covered. With 7 TVs and Happy Hour prices extended 4 - 9 p.m. on game days, Lena's Tap Room is your college hoops headquarters! \$6 Select Beers, \$6 Lena's House Wines, Great Prices on Snacks and Small Plates. For more information, visit <https://www.lenaswoodfire.com>.

## THURSDAY/MARCH 21

**2024 General Assembly Breakfast.** 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. At The Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King Street, Alexandria. Join in a timely conversation with our General Assembly delegation where they will discuss the 2024 session and the opportunities and challenges currently facing the Commonwealth. Sen. Adam Ebbin and Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker will attend.

## SUNDAY/MARCH 24

**Ides of Bark Dog Festival.** 1-4 p.m. At Grist Mill Park, 4710 Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria. The day features treats from local canine businesses, playtime in the dog park, pet care and delicious food from local Mount Vernon District business, Chalkboard Wings & BBQ. The Festival is a paw-sitively wonderful way to connect with our community, meet new friends (4-legged and 2-legged) and enjoy a day in the park.

Activities:

Meet & Greet with the FCPD K9 Section in the field: 2:00 p.m.

PetTech demos: 1:30, 2:30, 3:30 p.m.

## THURSDAY/MARCH 28

**Jane Franklin Dance Presents Prime.** 7 p.m. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Prime journeys through the visual art of exhibiting artist Christine Ruksenas-Burton whose "paintings are conversations of colors inspired by her homeland (Australia) as well as modern art, minimalism, modernist architecture, and design." Jane Franklin's work positions solo dancers in conversation with color, duets in

conjunction with line, and trios in hard edge abstractions of color and mood.

## APRIL 12-13

**2024 Spring Garden Market at River Farm.** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. At 7931 E. Boulevard Dr., Alexandria. Celebrate the start of gardening season with the American Horticultural Society's annual Spring Garden Market at River Farm. This much-anticipated outdoor event, one of River Farm's largest and most popular fundraisers, brings together plant, seed and garden accessory retailers, nature-focused artists and authors, gardening experts, food vendors, and fun for the whole family. Proceeds from the Spring Garden Market directly contribute to the maintenance, beautification and preservation of River Farm, headquarters of the AHS since 1973. Entrance to the Spring Garden Market may be purchased online beginning in March at [www.ahsgardening.org/springgardenmarket2024](http://www.ahsgardening.org/springgardenmarket2024).

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

### Historic Garden Week Old Town.

Take a behind-the-scenes peek into the spectacular homes and gardens of six historic Old Town Alexandria properties kicking off the Garden Club of Virginia's historic annual statewide tour. Offering a glimpse into the town's storied past, the tour features homes dating from 1785. Expertly updated, tastefully furnished, and filled with spectacular floral arrangements designed by blue ribbon garden club members, each property features lovely, curated gardens filled with bountiful Spring flowers timed to bloom in concert with the tour. Tickets include admission to five private homes and gardens, Lee-Fendall House, a one-time private home with a rich history that now houses a museum and garden, as well as six nearby public properties, including: Mount Vernon, River Farm, Carlyle House, Gunston Hall and Green Spring Gardens. Advance tickets are \$55 online at [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org) and may be purchased four day at the Alexandria Visitor's Center located at 221 King Street. The Garden Club of Virginia's (GCV) eight-day statewide tour from April 20 to 27 includes 170 private properties throughout Virginia. The Old Town Alexandria tour is hosted by the GCV's two local garden clubs, Hunting Creek Garden Club and Garden Club of Alexandria. For more information, visit [www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org)

## SATURDAY, APRIL 20

**Third Annual ALX Dog Walk.** 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. A 2-mile dog walk and celebration is back in Old Town Alexandria. Walkers meet at Oronoco Bay Park in Alexandria for an unforgettable experience. Walk and spread awareness about the importance of plastic-free and sustainable living. It's time to educate the community and make a positive impact. Pre-event registration check-in on Wednesday April 17th, from 12 pm to 7 pm to check-in and collect your sustainable Goodie Bag, t-shirt and doggie bandana, treat, and more. Register now! [www.alxdogwalk.com/register](http://www.alxdogwalk.com/register)



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**Obituary**

**C. Richard Bierce, AIA**



Longtime Alexandria, VA resident **Richard Bierce** passed away December 26, 2023 in Tucson, AZ after a long struggle with leukemia. He was 79. He was the beloved husband to Violet for 56 years, brother to Rose of Alexandria, Virginia, and Bill (deceased). He is also survived by two sons and their families: Jonathan and Hillary and their sons, Grant and CJ, and Matthew and Diana Alkire and their son, Victor.

He graduated from the University of Arizona School of Architecture in 1967 and earned his M.S Architecture/Preservation from Columbia University in 1968.

He worked as a Historical Architect and Preservation Consultant in Alexandria, Virginia for 38 years. He came to Alexandria in 1973 to manage 2 projects for the 1976 Bicentennial: Carlyle House Museum and Gadsby's Tavern. He was Alexandria's first Historic Resources and Preservation director. He later served as Architect for the Properties for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. As a private consultant, he worked on many public and private historic sites, including St Paul's Church, Alexandria Academy, Lloyd House, Bank of Alexandria, and Huntley Manor in Fairfax County.

Although he specialized in preserving old buildings, Rich believed that modern architecture was the heritage of the future, and so was equally passionate about his work on the Frank Lloyd Wright house in Woodlawn, VA as James Madison's home in Montpelier.

He was the Design and Preservation Consultant for the City of Annapolis for 20 years and volunteered for the Architectural Review Board of Fairfax County for 33 years. Rich was one of the founding members of the Alexandria Society for Preservation of Black Heritage.

He received many awards for his work in historical architecture, including, in 2017, the Award for Distinguished Achievement from the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects. The award citation praised him as a "quintessential historical architect...and a citizen architect who generously shares his expertise."

Generosity was a constant thread of his life, from his time in the Peace Corps with Violet in 1968 to volunteering with his sons' Scout troops and with the Disciples of Christ churches. He served as a congregational Leader at Springfield Christian, First Christian in Alexandria, the Capital Area Region and Disciples of Christ Historical Society. After retiring to Tucson in 2018 he helped raise funds for scholarships through the Tucson High Badger Foundation. He was inducted into the Tucson High Badger Foundation Hall of Fame in 2021.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, March 16 at 6 pm at Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal Street, Alexandria. Memories may be shared online at Dignity Memorial/East Lawn Palms of Tucson site. In lieu of flowers, Rich would be honored by donations in his name to Historic Alexandria, the Tucson High Badger Foundation scholarship fund, or any historic, humanitarian, or environmental group of your choice.

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**BULLETIN**

FROM PAGE 8

caregivers of a frail older adult a break so they can go shopping, attend a doctor's appointment or just have coffee with a friend. Volunteers visit and oversee the safety of the older adult for a few hours each month. Support and training are provided. Contact Kristin Martin at 703-324-7577, TTY 711, or [Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Fairfax County needs volunteers to drive older adults to medical appointments and wellness programs. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The Gum Springs Senior Program in Alexandria is looking for a Line Dance Instructor. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The Kingstowne Center for Active Adults in Alexandria needs Instructors for the following classes: Country-Western Line Dance, Hula Hoop and African Style Dance. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The Hollin Hall Senior Center in Alexandria needs instructors for the following classes: Basic Woodworking, Italian and Ballroom Dance. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The Mount Vernon Adult Day Health Care Center in Alexandria needs front desk volunteers and patient Card Players. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults) and click on Volunteer Solutions.

The Advisory Board of the Joe and Fredona Gartlan Center for mental health is looking for volunteers. The board meets the second Tuesday of the month from 9-11 a.m. at Gartlan Center 8119 Holland Road.

Mount Vernon At Home is a community Village, providing support, services, and community to seniors in the area. Volunteers are needed for a variety of services, with transportation to medical appointments are greatest need. They can also use help with in-home handyman work and handling IT problems. If you are interested in volunteering, contact us at [info@mountvernonathome.org](mailto:info@mountvernonathome.org) or call 703-303-4060.

Volunteer Advocates for Nursing Home & Assisted Living Residents needed throughout Northern Virginia. Contact the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/ltombudsman/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/ltombudsman/), or email [Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov) or call 703-324-5861, TTY 711.

Hollin Hall Senior Center is looking for a DJ ballroom and dance instructor. The Hollin Hall Senior Center, 1500 Shenandoah Road.

The Mount Vernon Adult Day Health Care Center is looking for social companions for participants on Fridays from 3-5 p.m. and front desk volunteers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11 a.m.-noon and 3:30-4:30 p.m. Located at 8350 Richmond Highway. For these and other volunteer opportunities call 703-324-5406 or visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults).



# Can Prospective Public School Employees Afford Fairfax?

## School pay scale for emerging professions hurts recruitment.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

**A**mid nationwide teacher shortages, with school districts competing for applicants, Fairfax County Public Schools reported on March 5 that it is looking to fill instructional vacancies anticipated for the 2024-25 school year. Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, said on Feb. 9, speaking about the FY 2025 Budget, that the division must “attract and retain a world-class workforce.”

The school division is facing a perfect storm of high-priced rent roadblocks as it prepares to offer contracts to full-time applicants whose annual income, according to the FY2024 Pay Scale effective Jan. 1, may not be sufficient to live comfortably in the county. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, Fairfax County is the ninth least affordable district for beginning teachers to rent a one-bedroom home.

Many teachers and other applicants, particularly those in one-or-two-person households, would benefit from having accessible, affordable, and easy-to-navigate housing options. This could lead them to choose Fairfax County Public Schools over another offer, and without extra help, signing onto Fairfax County Public Schools could be a significant hurdle.

According to Best Places, the average rent for a two-bedroom unit in Fairfax County is \$2,280 per month. Fairfax's average one-bedroom rent is \$2,000.

According to Best Places, candidates with offers in hand must also consider that in addition to high housing costs, Fairfax County's cost of living is 42.4 percent higher than the national average and 37.7 percent higher than the Virginia average. “To live comfortably in Fairfax, a minimum annual income of \$125,280 for a family and \$80,000 for a single person is recommended,” states Best Places.

Looking at Fairfax County Public Schools FY 2024 Unified Scale, 260-days (12-months), effective Jan. 1, 2024, provides a good overview of sample base salaries from lowest to highest. According to the division, the lowest income is \$35,930, which falls within HUD.gov's definition of “very low income.” It is for administrative and operational employees in Step 1 (Grades 001 and 002). At \$35,930, it falls at the lower end of the 40 percent Area Median Income (AMI), just a few thousand dollars more than the “extremely low” poverty level at 30% AMI. According to the division's Teacher Salary Scale, beginning teachers with a Bachelor's degree earn \$67,501. According to HUD guidelines, this is within 70



Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools

percent of the area median income.

Without considering the superintendent's salary, the highest Fairfax County Public School pay, effective Jan. 1, 2024, is \$269,191 for leadership team members. Pay for Dr. Michelle Reid, division superintendent, rose from \$380,000 to \$387,600 starting Jan. 1, 2024.

The first challenge for Fairfax County Public Schools applicants on the lower end of the division's 260-day, 12-month pay scale is that a household should spend no more than 30 percent of its gross monthly income on rent. A single teacher earning \$67,501, would be forced to stretch their budget \$300 a month beyond 30 percent to afford a one-bedroom rental in Fairfax County, which costs an average of \$2,000.

It would be unlikely for a one-person administrative and operational employee candidate, with an income of \$35,930, to qualify for a one-bedroom apartment in Fairfax County without some form of rental housing assistance.

Therein comes the second challenge to prospective Fairfax County Public Schools applicants whose pay scale would be low to moderate: navigating, finding, and obtaining rental housing assistance.

The county offers a detailed online overview of its affordable rental housing programs and privately owned affordable rental housing options with links to more specific program details such as eligibility requirements, applications, and waitlists. However, the county announced that waitlist applications are closed.

Applicants could check out the county's magnet housing program for contracted teachers, bus drivers, public safety recruits, and some Inova employees. It offers affordable rental housing with seven properties. Legato Corner Condos in Fairfax offers a one-bedroom apartment for \$905, and Wescott Ridge offers a one-bedroom apartment with a den for \$905.

Another rental option would be federal low-income housing tax-credit community apartment complexes like Arrowbrook at Ovation in Herndon, which opened in the spring of 2023, and One University in Fairfax, which will open in 2024. These complexes participate in a housing program that



New teacher in August 2023, Sandra Benitz started her first day as a high school teacher four years after graduating from Annandale High School.

provides low-income tenants with affordable housing at a set rent. As an affordable housing/tax credit property, they set rents based on the current market at 30, 40, 50 and 60 percent of the area median income.

“One University is a powerful demonstration of this county's determination to provide more affordable and accessible housing opportunities in every corner of the County,” said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay.

According to Jan Haub, affordable housing policies differ by community and can affect eligibility and obligations. She oversees the low-income housing tax credits and affordable housing compliance for Paradigm, which manages Arrowbrook at Ovation, owned by SCG Development, and One University, also managed by Paradigm but owned by the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

“Things vary tremendously from property to property .... It's very different at One University; it's different at the community down the street that has affordable housing, and every single community is going to be different,” Haub said in a mid-January interview.

One University is accepting online applications and has apartments priced for people at 50 and 60 percent AMI. Haub said Fairfax County will fill the positions based on the lower-income 30 percent and 40 percent AMI.

Kayde Morton, leasing professional Ovation at Arrowbrook, wrote in late February, “Currently, we do not have any availability. We are 100 percent leased. Should an apartment become available, we offer it to our waitlist applicants first .... Please keep in mind that the waiting list is about 6-12 months long.”

Ultimately, attempting to navigate Fairfax County's rental housing market for those at the lower 2024 pay scales offered by Fairfax County Public Schools may cause qualified applicants to look outside the county. As Haub said, referring to the units provided at more modest rents, such as 30 percent AMI, “My point is that these things are very complicated. And it is easy to get confused.”

## Locked Up ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... but not freaked out. It's happened again, and I'm sure it won't be the last time, given it's me manning the controls. Not to worry though. I have a neighbor who, among many neighborly attributes, unlock my computer with his eyes closed (bit of an exaggeration but you get the point). The point being that all is not lost or all that could be found won't be delayed a week or so if I must take my computer to a store, where a computer professional will unlock the damage, I have “mouse-clicked.” What a resource for a person who if his (my) life depended on computer knowledge, like so many of us of a certain age I'm sure, it would be a life soon forgotten. Moreover, one of my greatest fears if ever I needed to be computer literate for my income/daily bread. Fortunately, I am not dependent on too much technology for food, shelter, dollars, and sense. However, being frozen out from my computer does present challenges that can be hard to overcome – without paying through the nose at your local repair geek.

Thankfully, I, as does everyone else in the neighborhood, have Robert to rely on. He's a middle-aged man who works out of his house along with his mother and sister, in an E-Bay world of buy and sell. Some of their recent purchases have been prom dresses, and bucket and buckets of hand sanitizer. Two purchases which cost pennies on the dollar, almost literally, and according to them are sure to return a profit. From the various items they've bought and sold/sold and bought, I imagine they could provide a layman's “Art of the Deal.” They may not have the panache of the original author, but they might have some prime examples of deals getting done – at the non-corporate level.

If not for Robert's expertise and/or my new relationship with my smart phone I can now (after a 90-minute phone call with Verizon) retrieve my emails which comes in quite handy after you've been locked out of your main computer. Meaning, I am not stuck, like I used to be. Can you imagine, as an example, that had I no other resource than my desktop, on the day, as it so happens that I'm waiting for an email from my oncologist to update me on my most recent PET scan. A PET scan which will indicate if there's been any growth in the papillary thyroid tumors in my lungs since I've been off my cancer medicine for two months. This is “... Kind of a big deal” to invoke Wayfair, Red Lobster and KFC advertisements. The anxiety I'm likely experiencing while waiting for the result – with commentary posted by the doctor, would be exponentially worse if I didn't have access to my computer/emails for more than a minute. Yes, when you're a cancer patient, sometimes, minutes matter, in your head anyway. As I've said to my oncologist on more than one occasion, time is of the essence and waiting for medical results can be excruciating. Whether they are good, bad, or indifferent, their substance can't be overstated. We need to know, we must know, we better know – do you know what I mean?

In this context, you can guess how important access to our computer/phone is. It's everything, and if cut-off from your doctor while awaiting results from a medical procedure which might indicate whether you're in medical trouble or not, it would be impossible to sit still, remain calm even breathe normally regardless of where your seat tray is. These kinds of rubber-meet-the-road moments matter way more than when rubber actually meets the road. That's transportation. This is life and/or death. But having a resource like Robert a phone call away, within walking distance no less and often available for an immediate rescue is to invoke a Jack Nicholson movie: “As Good As It Gets.” And when you're a dope like me, when it comes to computers, who is afraid sometimes to even stroke a key for fear of the consequences to the computer and by association your life that day on said computer is a problem; especially, if on that particular day, you're waiting to hear back from your oncologist concerning a recent medical scan which quite possibly could spell the kind of trouble you've rarely had in the previous 15 years of “cancer hood,” well; the impolite description is initialed s.o.l., the polite version is you're screwed. There really isn't an appropriate way to describe the level of fear, anxiety, and impatience that one might experience – when your life may be hanging in the balance and you're waiting to hear, and now you have no means of computer access to learn your fate. Eliminating all this drama is what Robert provides. If there was a neighborhood award for knowledge and availability above and beyond the call of neighborliness. I would nominate Robert. I am forever in his debt. I just wish I would hear back from my oncologist. I've eliminated the problem on my end. Now I need him to eliminate the problem on his end. It's been three days since my scan was completed. As my late mother would say: “It's enough already.”

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





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