

THE CONNECTION

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

Sujen Karki at Beltway Medical Group creates sound waves in a bowl, making the water inside bubble up and rise.

East Meets West for PT

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Are Pedestrians Safe?

PAGE 6

Raves for Great Falls Philharmonic

PAGE 13

Young Vienna Artists Honored

PAGE 15

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ❖ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 14

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

MARCH 20-26, 2024

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



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2023 (updated 1/14/2024)			
Crash Location	Number of Crashes Involving Pedestrians	Pedestrian Fatalities	Pedestrian Serious Injuries
Alexandria	48	0	6 (12.5%)
Arlington County	109	1 (0.9%)	17 (15.6%)
City of Fairfax	12	0	5 (41.7%)
Falls Church	12	0	6 (50.0%)
Fairfax County	233	10 (4.3%)	57 (24.5%)

SCREENSHOT NOVA SAFE STREETS

[HTTPS://NOVASFESTREETS.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2024/01/2023-KSI-SUMMARY.PDF](https://NOVASFESTREETS.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2024/01/2023-KSI-SUMMARY.PDF)

NOVA Safe Streets reports ten pedestrian fatalities in 2023 (updated Jan. 14, 2024) for Fairfax County, with 233 crashes involving pedestrians resulting in 57 pedestrians sustaining serious injuries.

2023 (updated 1/14/2024)			
Crash Location	Number of Crashes Involving Bicyclists	Bicyclist Fatalities	Bicyclist Serious Injuries
Alexandria	8	0	1 (12.5%)
Arlington County	52	0	2 (3.8%)
City of Fairfax	5	0	1 (20.0%)
Falls Church	5	0	1 (20.0%)
Fairfax County	74	0	10 (13.5%)
Total	144	0	15 (10.8%)

SCREENSHOT NOVA SAFE STREETS

In 2023 (updated Jan. 1, 2024), Fairfax County had zero bicyclist fatalities and 74 crashes involving bicycles.

Are Pedestrians and Bicyclists Safe?

Crashes involving pedestrians have been increasing over the last three years, up from 144 in 2021 to 191 in 2022 to 233 in 2023.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Part of an ongoing series.

The Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) Public Affairs Bureau posted on March 12, 2024, “Pedestrian fatalities saw a significant decline in 2023.” FCPD reported nine pedestrian fatalities in 2023, compared to 24 in 2022, based on “data collected by the crash reconstruction unit.”

The department recently issued its Year End 2023 Crime Report that covers Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2023. Insights include those findings in its “key highlights for traffic safety initiatives and fatal crashes.”

Virginia’s state-of-the-art comprehensive Traffic Records Electronic Data System, TRENDS, maintained by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, holds Fairfax County data, including the towns of Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna. TRENDS’ data concurs that pedestrian fatalities in Fairfax County decreased when comparing data from 2023 to 2022.

FCPD transitioned to TRENDS from January through May 2017. The Department of Motor Vehicles maintains the official record of all reportable crashes occurring within the Commonwealth and is responsible for disseminating these reports.

Yet FCPD’s records do not always agree with those of TRENDS. For instance, TRENDS reports that in 2023 (updated 1/14/2024), there were 10 pedestrian fatalities in Fairfax

County. FCPD currently reports nine pedestrian fatalities for 2023. For 2022, TRENDS reported 32 pedestrian crash fatalities, while FCPD reported 24 pedestrian fatalities.

The accuracy of pedestrian and cyclist safety statistics and whether they are publicly transparent influences residents’ and leadership’s perception of Fairfax County’s safety and needs. TRENDS’ current crash findings involving pedestrians and cyclists on streets, roads, highways, and parking lots maintained by state, county, or municipal funds throughout Fairfax County paint a somewhat different picture from the one FCPD presents.

Specific to Fairfax County, the 2023 Safe Streets Report, which uses TRENDS, reports that total crashes involving pedestrians have been increasing over the last three years, up from 144 in 2021 to 191 in 2022 to 233 in 2023. Additionally, according to TRENDS data in 2023, Fairfax County experienced an increase in serious pedestrian injuries — 57 serious pedestrian injuries in 2023 compared to 53 in 2022. FCPD did not draw attention to these statistics in its 2023 Crime Report and insights for traffic safety initiatives and fatal crashes.

FCPD also did not provide in its posted 2023 Crime Report and Insights elements of crash data relative to “key highlights for traffic safety initiatives and fatal collisions,” such as whether the collision killed a pedestrian or bicyclist, whether speeding was involved, whether the driver or the person killed by the driver was impaired by alcohol or drugs, or whether the driver was distract-

FATAL CRASHES		
	2022	2023
Driver Fatalities	12	11
Passenger Fatalities	4	4
Motorcycle Fatalities	5	5
Pedestrian Fatalities	24	9
Total Fatalities	45	29

DATA COLLECTED BY THE CRASH RECONSTRUCTION UNIT

[Source: FCPD
<https://fcpdnews.files.wordpress.com/2024/03/fcpd-countywide-crime-summary-q4-2023.pdf>]

SCREENSHOT NOVA SAFE STREETS

Note FCPD records Fatal Crashes in 2022 as 24 Pedestrian Fatalities and nine in 2023.



SCREENSHOT

Bruce Wright

tion-free.

FCPD’s Fatal Crashes Table, provided in the 2023 Crime Report, compares only two elements of crash data: the type of participants (driver, passenger, motorcyclist, pedestrian) and the years 2022 and 2023.

As for bicyclists, the 2023 Safe Streets Report using TRENDS data presented better news for bicyclists: no fatalities during 2023. Safe Street’s report also cited a decrease in crashes involving bicyclists sustaining serious injuries — 10 in 2023 compared to 14 in 2022.

“The caveat is that only the worst bike crashes get reported if there’s \$1500 in damages or serious injury,” said the Fairfax

Alliance for Better Bicycling founder Bruce Wright. “Minor crashes are not reported to the DMV, and many others are not reported to the police,” he added.

“Those numbers are unacceptable, and I don’t think police are doing enough to keep pedestrians and bicyclists safe. Speeding is out of control. Police have limited resources, and the Virginia state legislature has limited the use of speed cameras,” Wright said. Wright adds that Fairfax police do not issue speeding citations when motorists travel less than ten mph over the speed limit. “Motorists expect to be able to travel at those speeds without consequences.”

In May 2023, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Fairfax County reduced the speed limit along the crash-prone 7-mile stretch of Richmond Highway, also known as Route 1, between Mount Vernon and the Capital Beltway, south of the City of Alexandria, to “optimize safety and operations for pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and transit users,” according to the departments.

Nonetheless, a hit-and-run crash claimed the life of Eder Machado Aleman, 36, of Fairfax, who was attempting to cross Richmond Highway “outside of the crosswalk,”

SEE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY, PAGE 5

Expedited Data Center Zoning Amendments

Too late for Chantilly.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted a resolution presented in a board

matter by Sully Supervisor and Vice-Chairman Kathy L. Smith (D) with Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D) and Mason Supervisor Andres F. Jimenez at the board's March 19 meeting. The resolution directs staff to prepare zoning amendments to strengthen the current provisions for data centers and provide options for by right development and special exception permissions in

certain districts and over certain size thresholds and additional standards.

Staff should do so expeditiously, with the proposed amendment ready for an advertised public hearing before the board in July. "With the expedited timeframe, it is recognized that community engagement efforts must be largely centralized, with virtual meeting options to

maximize opportunities for citizen involvement," Smith said. She emphasized the importance of getting ahead of data center development to protect communities and address localities' concerns.

Smith said it may be appropriate later "to include new permissions and standards in the zoning ordinance for electrical substations to the extent permitted by law."

McKay said the county has "few data centers" and only "very few on the horizon," but there is urgency. "The board wants to move forward," he said.

"It's important that we get the protections right and the guidelines are right," McKay said. And the quickest way to do that is to approve these zoning amendments.

Jimenez agreed and added that communities should come first over data centers. The county should put the data centers "where they belong" and "the community has a quality of life that they came to Fairfax to have."

Amendments Too Late for Chantilly

Earlier this year, on Jan. 23, 2024, after more than three hours of debate and public comment, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved rezoning a 12-acre plot of property in Chantilly for a 110-foot-tall data center, voting 8-1. Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield) dissented.

The Board of Supervisors approved Project Description: PDCREF 2 Chantilly LCC Rezoning to I-5 District to permit the land use of a data center with a gross floor area (GFA) of 402,000 and a floor area ratio (FAR—building area ÷ lot area) of 0.8 to be located on the south side of Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, approximately 1,200 feet west of its intersection with Stonecroft Boulevard. The board approved the rezoning concurrently with a special exception already submitted. [Source: <https://plus.fairfaxcounty.gov/CitizenAccess/Cap/CapDetail.aspx?Module=Zoning&TabName=Zoning&capID1=REC22&capID2=00000&capID3=00GHV&agencyCode=FFX>]

Penzance's Chantilly data center will be Fairfax County's highest data center at 110 feet, nearly one-half the height of the Sheraton Tysons Hotel at 215 feet and 24 stories.

Lee Jackson Memorial Highway and Stonecroft Boulevard are the approved locations for the data center, placing it half a mile away from homes, close to Route 50, and near existing warehouses.

The Penzance affiliate applicant agreed to enclose the diesel generators, monitor water quality, do a noise study, and pursue LEED Silver certification, as detailed in the Jan. 22 Board Draft Proffer. The applicant will also dedicate a 67-acre resource protection area on the property as a park to create a "buffer" between the facility and residents. Dominion will also build a new substation to serve the data center, although the cost of the substation will be paid by ratepayers, not the data center.

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In 2023, FCPD motors and patrol officers participated in a High Visibility Enforcement to slow down drivers and not have them drive distracted.

Pedestrians And Bicyclists Safety

FROM PAGE 3

the Fairfax County Police Department posted on Oct. 7, 2023.

In the past, Fairfax County's pedestrian and bicyclist safety initiatives focused on altering road users' behavior and encouraging responsible parties.

In contrast, Vision Zero's Safe System approach considers how the people who design, build, and manage the transportation network, including VDOT, can prioritize the lives and health of users.

The responsibility for enhancing pedestrians' and bicyclists' safety is shared. It is not limited to drivers and cyclists complying with traffic and highway laws, not being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or not paying attention. Modifications and infrastructure construction are needed to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and drivers safely.

Kenneth Comer, chairman at large of the county Trails, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Committee, wrote in a letter on July 5, 2022, to Jeffrey C. McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, citing increasing urgency for pedestrian and bicyclist safety issues especially along the Route 1 corridor.

From Jan. 1 through March 14 of this year, drivers traveling on roads within Fairfax County have fatally crashed into four pedestrians.

A Feb. 15 pedestrian crash at Route 1 and Huntington Avenue in Belle Haven marked the county's first fatal pedestrian collision of the year. An adult man was crossing Richmond Highway outside a crosswalk when a northbound 2006 Toyota Camry struck him. He was pronounced dead at the scene, according to Fairfax Police.

The second, third, and fourth fatal pedestrian crashes in 2024 occurred in three separate collisions on Sunday, March 10.

The first deadly collision on March 10 occurred just after midnight that Sunday in Hybla Valley and involved a stolen Sonata, according to Fairfax County Police. An officer reportedly saw the stolen car on Buckman Road, near Russell Road. When the police approached, the motorist drove away, and "officers did not pursue." Fifteen minutes later, an officer saw the stolen vehicle speeding along Janna Lee Avenue. The driver sideswiped an occupied vehicle, crashed into a dumpster, and exited the vehicle and fled. "Officers then found a struck pedestrian in the grass nearby. James Johnson, 63, of Hybla Valley, was taken to

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the hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. Officers saturated the area but were unable to locate the driver," police said.

March 10's second fatal pedestrian collision occurred at 3:39 a.m. on the shoulder of 495's westbound lanes just east of Exit 176 where a person appeared to be changing a vehicle's tire, according to Virginia State Police. The driver of a passing truck struck the pedestrian, who died at the scene.

Less than 15 minutes later, troopers encountered a woman in the eastbound lanes of the same area of I-495 near Exit 176. A 2005 Honda Accord, heading eastbound in the right center lane on I-495, "was unable to avoid striking a female pedestrian who had stepped into traffic," the VSP said in an update on Tuesday, March 12. The woman, Vanessa Schwartz, 35, of Alexandria, died at the scene of the crash. The crash remains under investigation, with the assistance of the Virginia State Police Crash Reconstruction Team.

Even one death is not acceptable. In 2023, for the first time since the City of Alexandria's Vision Zero goal of eliminating roadway deaths and severe injuries was adopted in 2017, the city ended the year with zero fatalities. The program webpage provides more information on the city's Vision Zero Program. Additional resources include the Vision Zero Action Plan, the Vision Zero Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Work Plan, and the Vision Zero Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023.

Fairfax County Police responded to questions about traffic safety statistics with a statement: "Our 2023 crime report includes all the data relating to fatal crashes that occurred and were investigated by FCPD. The reason there is a difference between the TRENDS numbers and ours is that they do not make that distinction with jurisdiction, so the numbers can vary.

"The FCPD works hard all year long implementing traffic safety initiatives, public awareness, and safety tips through our social media platforms, Traffic Safety Division, and Crime Prevention Unit."

The Fairfax County Police Department and Virginia State Police will launch the Road Shark campaign for 2024. Road Shark is a high-visibility and coordinated enforcement and education effort to deter aggressive driving, reduce crashes, and change driving behavior, enhancing traffic safety on the roadways of Fairfax County. Last year, nearly 25,000 citations and warnings were issued over four waves

In-Person Public Hearing on the McLean Community Center's FY 2026 Programs

Wednesday, March 20, 6:30 p.m.

The governing board and staff of the McLean Community Center seek **input from residents** of Dranesville Small District 1A at a Public Hearing on Programs for FY 2026 (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026).

This is an opportunity for residents to suggest classes, events, performances and youth and teen activities.

Residents are encouraged, but not required, to call the center to be placed on the speakers' list or may submit written comments to feedback@mcleancenter.org.



McLean Community Center
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101
703-790-0123, TTY: 711
mcleancenter.org

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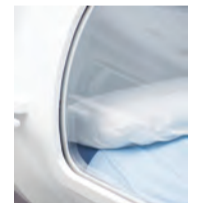
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Opposition to Animal Services Changes

Some say proposal not sufficiently studied; no one in the audience at 2 town hall meetings spoke in favor of the proposal.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

The Department of Animal Sheltering and the Fairfax County Police Department, hosting two town halls on March 11 and March 13, heard statements and responded to questions from residents on the County's proposal to eliminate the Animal Protection Police Officer (APPO) unit; to replace the law enforcement officers with civilian Animal Control Officers (ACOs). The new ACOs would come under the management of the Animal Sheltering Department. Fielding questions were Deputy County Executive Tom Arnold; Deputy Police Chief Bob Blakely; police animal services division commander Eric Ivancic; and Director, department of animal sheltering, Reasa Currier.

County Deputy Executive Tom Arnold, whose office oversees both units, made clear that the change primarily targets the "major challenge of the bifurcated [organization] model," of handling issues between the two separate units and their missions, animal law enforcement and domestic animal welfare and sheltering. Speaking at the town hall, Arnold prioritized the goal of uniting the units, saying there will be added public services and cost savings may be achieved over time.

His response to the union's suggestion of a labor-management committee to resolve conflicts and troubleshoot: "It could work." But Arnold countered that the need for change was not a labor-management issue. "It is not based on personal conflicts" but on mission conflicts between the units. Arnold further opined that linking services for residents under one organization model is "expected to create better relationships."

Though the actual disconnects go largely unspecified to the public, several police union representatives point to lack of police unit commander continuity as part of the issue due to the FCPD's frequent commander rotation. The Shelter director indicated that the once regular meetings between the two divisions after she first came to the Shelter two years ago are no longer held. The Shelter also came

to restrict APPOs from use of its Pet Point system, used to track animals in the Shelter; and from physical entry into non-public areas of the Shelter facilities. The director declined to explain the reasons saying, "We are unable to comment on personnel matters."

Currier indicated a consultant has been hired to develop a mission statement [for the consolidated unit]. The union representative asked, "Why can't we have the same mission and goals?" Arnold answered that "we could work together but animal services are evolving and ever changing." He noted the rapidly advancing technology now used in policing, including body cameras and drones. The only technology specifically mentioned for animal services was mobile microchip readers, which could be carried in responding police vehicles, but which the APPO unit does not have. Currier says her repeated request that they be added went without action. The chip readers would allow return of stray animals in the field, without need to bring them to the shelter.

The original consolidation plan called for moving the wildlife management program to Animal Sheltering as well. But people and groups with wildlife concerns voiced continued questions and issues. Not satisfied with Blakely's assurance "nothing will change," their questions continued about wildlife handling protocols, including knowledge of wildlife, State laws and local ordinances governing wildlife handling, networking with rehabilitators, and humane euthanasia handling, as Animal Control Officers, not trained Animal Protection Police Officers respond to future calls.

Renee Grebe (Nature Forward, EQAC) wrote, "I do not think wildlife-related issues should be handled by the shelter. In general, issues with wildlife (and their solutions) are, no pun intended, wildly different from issues (and their solutions) with domestic animals. I don't see too much overlap in them."

While Blakely has stated there are only two things ACOs can not do legally as non-law enforcement officers, custodial arrests and search warrant executions, internal police department com-



BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, Franconia District, Chair of the Public Safety & Security Committee, which heard the initial proposal, attended the town hall "to listen and understand the issue better."

munications obtained by wildlife advocates and shared with The Connection indicate the department is aware of several related State codes and local ordinances which could restrict ACO actions.

Dr. Clare Thorp has spoken about loss of networking critical to wildlife response, euthanasia handling, and other concern.

Rehabilitators say the County has misrepresented comparison reporting and organizational relationships relied on to recommend the change. They say that in a majority of jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, animal services report to police departments, not shelter management, or shelters report to the police departments along with their ACOs. They question ACOs legal ability to use firearms (needed for euthanasia in the field to prevent wildlife suffering) given existing State Codes restricting discharge waivers only to police.

The county has yet to share protocols and organizational placement for wildlife programs, since they are now not expected to be moved under Animal Sheltering.

The plan is for ACOs to receive the required three week training program for the ACO position developed by the state, supplemented with additional training, as needed. Also the county says their work will be assisted as needed by others for more complicated calls and investigations.

Rehabilitators note, although firearms are described as "an important tool for wildlife management", firearms training is not included in the State ACO training. Lone APPOs now can perform these required duties alone.

The Shelter director listed services intended to keep animals with their families, rather than being surrendered to the shelter. Programs include those, such as behavior training support, assistance



APPO 2nd Lt. K. Prucnal, with Wallace, outside the new Lorton Police Station and Animal Shelter after its opening in October 2023.

with housing, low cost veterinary care, and temporary boarding; all programs aimed at making surrender to the shelter a last resort. Currier said civilian shelter employees can better connect with communities. That, "Sworn law enforcement serving as the face of animal services can act as a barrier to accessing services for some residents."

Police union representatives at the meetings disagreed and spoke of their current work, providing many examples, in which they have assisted residents in need of help to keep their animals, connecting them to available shelter services, and examples of residents seeking out their help.

They say this includes allowing owners time to make needed corrections to avoid being charged with violations.

Immigrant and minority communities are often less trusting of police officers than civilians for a variety of reasons, and this is one of the reasons given for the transition away from APPOs.

Several current APPOs commented that many County statements suggested the proposal is based with a mistaken understanding of APPO work, as a result of failure to involve serving APPOs as stakeholders in developing the proposal. Lack of engagement of stakeholders is a sentiment echoed by the wildlife and conservation groups, as well as the APPO's union.

Residents attending the town halls included individuals and representatives of groups, such as Audubon of Northern Virginia;

licensed wildlife rehabilitators; animal shelter volunteers, past and present; members of the Animal Services Advisory Committee (ASAC), past and present; and those without affiliation; as well as a large contingent of off-duty APPOs, past APPOs, and officers of the SSPBA police union.

A former Shelter volunteer, Natalie, with financial analyst background, criticized the proposal's lack of firm personnel and other savings; the increase to four shelter director level positions; and lack of accounting for added costs, including need to support the less well rounded training of ACOs compared to APPOs.

Arnold replied that the proposal "is not a financial decision."

Dr. Larry Jackson, a former member of the police department and the ASAC, warned that the proposal was "a done deal." He suggested Arnold, who oversees the police department, has pushed acceptance of the proposal without prior engagement of the variety of stakeholders. Jackson noted that there were no decision makers at the head table. The ultimate decision makers are the Board of Supervisors on the Board, which could decide on the proposal as part of FY-25 budget deliberations.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, of Franconia District, attending the March 13 meeting, said that he "came to listen and understand the issue better," Lusk added, "I don't believe this is decided." While Lusk is the only Supervisor to attend the two

Animal Services Changes

FROM PAGE 6

March town halls, other Supervisors are taking meetings with individual residents and groups to hear stakeholder input and concerns.

Bill Beletsky, of Springfield, a dog owner attending without affiliation with an advocacy group, commented after the meeting. "The major issue I heard tonight is a "lack of communication" between the two [units]. The county executive 'fix' is to disband animal police, and grow the animal shelter organization. However, there is no mission statement, no effectiveness study, no cost study, no study of required training, nor authority or responsibility proposal for the new 'enhanced' animal shelter organization — all are to be determined. Because our county executives can't resolve operational disputes between the Animal Police and Shelter, they will disband the Police. The real issue, therefore, is a lack of county executive leadership."

Questions continued past the one hour scheduled meeting time; no one in the audience spoke in favor of the proposal. The Animal Services Citizens Advisory Committee previously voted 7 to 2 in favor of the proposal at a scheduled meeting this year.

The final decision of whether or not to implement the proposal lies with the Board of Supervisor, who are expected to consider it as part of the budget process.

For more background, see The Connections previous reporting ("Animal, Wildlife Reorganization Ready for Reorganization?", March 6, pg 4, 13; and "Animal Protection Police or Animal Control Civilians, Dec. 14, 2023, Springfield, pg 3,11); and the County's official statements at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/fairfax-county-ani-mal-services-consolidation-proposal>.

For information on providing input on this proposal, or other elements of the advertised budget, see: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form

NEWS BRIEFS

Car Seat Inspections on March 28

Parents may get their children's car seats inspected on Thursday, March 28, from 5-8:30 p.m., outside the Sully District Police Station. It's at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants should install the child safety seat so the inspection can be performed. The seat will be properly re-installed, and parents will be taught how to install the seat properly if necessary. Everyone is eligible. Another car-seat inspection is scheduled for April 11, at the same place and time.

Woodlands Education Center Opens

The Woodlands Stewardship Education Center will open its doors at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park during spring break (March 24-31).

Visitors will be able to enjoy:

Interactive Learning: Dive into a world of wonder as you explore the Woodlands Stewardship Education Center, designed to captivate adults and children alike with its immersive exhibits and hands-on activities.

Discovering Environmental Stewardship: Learn about the principles of environmental stewardship that are shaping the way we interact with and preserve our natural environment, making a world of difference for future generations.

Interactive Experiences: Try out new activities and experiences, including the Learning Observational Outdoor Pod

(LOOP), where you can connect with nature in a unique and meaningful way. Plus, discover state-of-the-art digital screens in the kiosk that bring the natural world to life like never before.

Expert Guidance: Friendly staff will be on site to answer your questions, provide insights and guide you through your exploration of the Woodlands Stewardship Education Center.

The spring break schedule for the Woodlands Stewardship Education Center is as follows:

- Sunday, March 24, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Monday, March 25, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 27, 3-7 p.m.
- Thursday, March 28, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Friday, March 29, 3-7 p.m.
- Sunday, March 31, 2-6 p.m.

The Woodlands Stewardship Education Center is located at 5040 Walney Road in Chantilly. For more information and to plan your visit, please visit the Woodlands Stewardship Education Center website.

Affordable Housing For People with Serious Mental Illness

The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) plans to implement an increase in rental assistance to individuals with serious mental illness.

During their March 14, 2024 meeting, the FCRHA's commissioners approved a \$20 million agreement with the Virginia

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, PAGE 11

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2024 Annual Members' Meeting
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24 HOUR GOOD NEIGHBOR SERVICE

Saving the Parkway's Trees

National Park Service forests are at risk of failure in the national capital region and beyond.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

In just two hours, four Friends of Dyke Marsh volunteers rescued around 55 trees from invasive English ivy on Saturday, March 16. Ivy vines snake up many trees on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, attach to the bark and put trees at risk.

In an area between Park Terrace Drive and the parkway, just south of Tulane Drive, the volunteers cut a two- to three-foot “window” around the circumference of the trees to separate the vine from its roots. Eventually, the vines will dry out and die.

English ivy, brought to North America by English settlers, is one of the most invasive and destructive plants in the region. It creates a monoculture that has minimal habitat value, gives little support to native insects and other wildlife and destroys biodiversity. It forms a dense mat that smothers and outcompetes native plants for sunlight, water and nutrients. It blocks sunlight from the tree's bark and leaves and holds moisture that leads to rot. The vines' weight can help topple a tree in heavy wind or snow.

“While most people who buy English ivy have the best of intentions when they purchase it, what they might not know is that it often escapes into natural spaces and the dense monoculture it forms is really harmful to the environment,” said Mireya Stirzaker, the parkway's natural resource specialist. Nevertheless, retailers sell it.



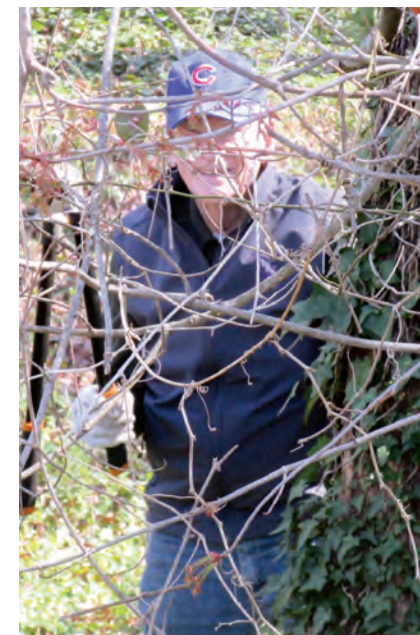
English ivy is rampant along the parkway, climbing up many trees.



Eventually the cut ivy will die on the tree.



Nancy Herrman is a dedicated invasive plant warrior.



Rick Johnston is not intimidated by a thick patch of vines.



Gunnar Lucko wants to recruit others to help control ivy on the parkway's trees.



Ivy's flowers turn into berries that birds disperse and spread the plant.

English ivy is one of the most invasive and destructive plants in the region.

are adequately stocked,” concluded the report.

“Threatened by large populations of hungry white-tailed deer, invasive plant crowding and other factors, seedlings struggle to grow into saplings that can eventually replace canopy trees,” the study asserts. “Over time, these stressors can reduce tree species diversity and density, negatively impacting forests and the plants and animals that rely on them.”

It takes many years for seedlings to grow into saplings and saplings to grow into young trees. In cooperation with Virginia Tech foresters, GWMP is developing a plan for managing its forests, including both natural forests and planted trees.

Friends of Dyke Marsh volunteers work twice a month to control invasive plants. Sign up at www.fodm.org. People can also help by not planting and controlling invasive plants on private property. Invasive plants escape into forests with seeds spread by birds, wind, shoes and other methods.

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com



English ivy smothers trees, blocks sunlight and puts trees at risk.



Before and after — Volunteers cut a “window” in the ivy at the base of the tree.



Before and after — Volunteers cut a “window” in the ivy at the base of the tree.

wide. The prospect of a patchwork of laws requires small business owners and garden enthusiasts to navigate complex legal landscapes. The most effective approach to addressing this issue is education and allowing the market to determine what is best for Virginians.”

But there is more at stake than what's available at the garden store.

Delegate Krizek responded, “I am very disappointed that the Governor saw fit to not just veto this bipartisan legislation but to make it one of his first vetoes. This bill would not have stopped English ivy but it would have allowed local governments to have the option to ban its sale and thus educate people about its harm to the environment as one of the worst invasive plants still being sold. It takes down full-grown trees and harbors rats and mosquitoes.”

Another bill, SB306, introduced by Delegate Holly Seibold and Senator Saddam Salim would require retailers to post signs indicating that plants are invasive. Youngkin has until April 8 to act.

Virginia's Natural Heritage Program has so far confirmed 90 invasive plants in the state (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/nh-invasive-plant-list-2023.pdf>).

GWM Parkway Is a National Park

When the Parkway was planned, designers envisioned a unique roadway to preserve and enhance the Potomac River valley, to keep both banks of the river in public ownership and to create a grand

gateway to the home of first U.S. President George Washington, Mount Vernon, at the road's southern terminus. They integrated the road's design with the undulating terrain following natural contours and winding in gentle curves, featured natural areas, scenic vistas, some forested areas and some grassy areas.

Forests Are in Trouble

Studies of National Park Service forests concluded that forests in almost all of NPS's 39 eastern parks are at risk due to invasive plants and overabundant white-tailed deer browsing (April 2023) (<https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.2837>).

National park forests in the eastern U.S., including the George

Washington Memorial Parkway's forests, are regenerating at low levels. In 90 percent of Washington, D.C.-area parks, the tree regenerating rates are so low that researchers anticipate widespread forest loss in the next few decades. Threats include invasive insects and plants, deer browse and climate change.

Healthy forests sustain themselves when seedlings and saplings fill a gap in the canopy after a tree dies. NPS uses a measurement called a “stocking index.” NPS says, “A park is considered to have healthy regeneration if the stocking index shows that 67 percent of its forest plots are adequately stocked with seedlings and small saplings. Since monitoring began, no [National Capital Region] park has reached 67 percent or even exceeded 30 percent. For the GWM Parkway south of the Potomac Gorge, only eight percent of plots

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Youngkin Vetoed Bill

Del. Paul Krizek, Mount Vernon, introduced a bill, HB1167, in the recent General Assembly, to allow localities to ban the sale of English ivy. The bill passed in the House of Delegates 54-45, and passed in the Senate 21 to 18. But on March 14, Gov. Glenn Youngkin vetoed the bill.

His veto statement said, “While the intent to regulate invasive species is praiseworthy, this bill proposes a prohibition on a single species, potentially establishing a precedent for banning other legal plant species in the future. Such a precedent could sow confusion and inconsistency in regulations state-



Cutting the ribbon are (in back, from left) are Doug Church, Roy Dimuna, Josh Yauger, Drew Turney, Vijay Shrestha, Dr. Folasade Bangali and Jennifer Rose, and (in front, from left) Marjorie Oboite and Martha Gebru.



Sujen Karki creates sound waves in a bowl, making the water inside bubble up and rise.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

East Meets West at Beltway Medical Group

New physical-therapy clinic opens in Fair Oaks.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

East meets West at Beltway Medical Group, a new physical-therapy clinic in the former Bank of America building across from Fair Oaks Mall. Although it opened in November, it held its official ribbon cutting March 6 and invited the public to see what it has to offer.

“We want to introduce our physical therapy, plus yoga, meditation and sound-therapy services to the community,” said Dr. Folasade Bangali, the lead physical therapist. “We use all these things to promote healing, restoration and wellbeing.”

The three owners – Drew Turney, Vijay Shrestha and Josh Yauger – are all certified surgical assistants with at least 10 years’ experience each in hospital operating rooms. “It’s a full-circle moment for myself and my business partners,” said COO Turney. “We’re used to dealing with patients intraoperatively. But over the years, we developed a passion for patient care after accidents and surgery. We know the transformation that rehabilitation and recovery bring, and it’s truly a blessing to witness it firsthand.”

So they decided to open their own outpatient, orthopedic, physical-therapy clinic. And this one offers the additional bonus of sound therapy – via “singing” bowls, gongs and flutes – in a tranquil environment, during patients’ individual journeys to wellness. It also deals with sports-injury treatment and prevention, plus chronic pain management, and helps people regain strength and mobility.

Located at 12011 Lee Jackson Memorial Hwy, Suite 103, Beltway Medical Group is open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.; phone 703-223-5980. It accepts all major insurance plans, as well as Medicare and self-pay.

So far, said Turney, “Business has been good and, every month, we’ve doubled in



Dr. Bangali



Josh Yauger



Drew Turney



Vijay Shrestha

patients, due to social media and word of mouth. And as we continue expanding our number of patients, we hope to add one more physical therapist and another physical-therapy assistant. On average, most physical-therapy clinics have a 6-8-week wait just for patients to receive an initial evaluation. With us, you can be seen right away, with or without a referral; email us at bmg22033@gmail.com.”

Shrestha, the company’s CEO, explained why he wanted to participate in this venture. “After 16 years of working in the healthcare industry, as a veteran working with the military, going through Hurricane Katrina – and also surviving a rare tumor in 2015 that almost cost my life – the only thing that kept me going was the therapy,” he said. “So I wanted to give back to people and pay it forward with BMG.”

Company CFO Yauger said that, like Shrestha, “I also had a traumatic medical experience in the past, and that’s why physical therapy is so important. I had a heart transplant and I lived with an artificial heart. And if you guys have ever had a medical emergency, you know very well that having surgery is just step one – and it’s the fastest part. The real journey begins when you go to physical therapy.”

Unfortunately, though, he continued, “The way the market and the economy are, it’s usually done in a small, gym-like envi-

ronment. But at BMG, we strive to make it different – more of an experience for people and our staff for continuity of care. That way, you look forward to going to physical therapy and to getting better and feeling better.”

Yauger said that continuum is critically important and is why they’re all there. “This is why we’re investing so much time, money and effort,” he added. “And it’s the reason we cultivated so many different relationships – and why, so far, we’re very successful. A lot of things define who I am; but what I am right now is someone who wants to support my fellow partners, Dr. Bangali and the staff. They’re all integral to what we’re trying to do and achieve.”

Agreeing, Turney told attendees, “We are here today to witness our vision, its execution and the hard work and dedication our staff has put into the development of Beltway Medical Group.” He then individually praised Bangali, physical-therapy assistant Roy Dimuna, and administrative staff members Marjorie Oboite and Martha Gebru.

Yauger then spoke about the intensive renovation of the building itself, transforming it from a bank to a medical clinic. Pointing at a particular spot, he said, “That’s where the vault was – and we had to pay someone to cut up the vault door and haul it away for us. Then, removing all the concrete rebar was also a huge effort. Construction took 10

months; but thankfully, it all worked out and came together really nicely.”

However, he said, opening Beltway Medical Group’s newest location is “just the beginning for us. We want to impact everyone in this region, so our goal is to eventually create a franchise, opening 10 different locations throughout Maryland, Virginia and [Washington], D.C. This one is our flagship location and is going to set the standard of who we are and what we’ll be doing in the future. What you see here will be replicated, over and over again.”

Basically, said Yauger, “We’re trying to help the community, help people and follow our patients from the operating room to physical therapy for continuity of care. They can always come back, and we’ll be here with open arms, waiting for them.”

Next, Bangali noted that, besides being the clinic’s director, she’s been a physical therapist in outpatient orthopedics for more than a decade. She’s also worked in skilled nursing, home health and telehealth. And during the recent ceremony, she gave kudos to Beltway Medical Group’s three owners.

“Without their vision, leadership and guidance, I wouldn’t have had this opportunity,” she said. “I like to call myself a change agent, and that’s why I’m here – to create a space for everyone to thrive and be well.” She, too, thanked Oboite and Gebru, for their office help, as well as “Sujen [Karki], our holistic guru.”

“He has 20 years’ experience, and he and all his sound-therapy equipment came from Nepal,” said Bangali. “He’s extremely talented and good at what he does. We’re so happy he’s here and a part of the team, and we’re looking forward to a long-term partnership.”

Karki leads patients in guided meditation, teaches them how to meditate on their own and introduces them to sound therapy. Giving visitors a demonstration of how

SEE BELTWAY MEDICAL GROUP, PAGE 11
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

NEWS BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 7

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to increase access to supportive, affordable rental housing options for individuals with serious mental illness. The additional funding is expected to help prevent homelessness among individuals with serious mental illness, as well as reduce census at state psychiatric hospitals.

“Increasing access to affordable housing reduces homelessness. To be successful, we need to think about the individual’s whole life and what is needed to get them back on their feet. That is why this funding is so important – it provides critical support services along with rental assistance needed for people to be successful in their new home,” said Tom Fleetwood, Director, Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development.

Beginning in May 2024, the approved Memorandum of Agreement between the FCRHA and DBHDS will: Add 300 new supportive rental assistance vouchers available to Fairfax County residents over three

years; Create three new staff positions at the FCRHA to operate the program.

Through a separate partnership with Pathways Homes, 50 participants will receive critical supportive services such as psychiatry, case management, and skill-building services with psychosocial rehabilitation. They can also gain access to funds for moving expenses, security deposits, and other expenses needed to lease a unit. The remaining 250 participants will be coupled with two Supportive Housing Teams under a separate contract.

The Fairfax County Community Service Board (CSB) will be coordinating referrals from various stakeholders such as state hospitals and the homeless Continuum of Care.

The program prioritizes individuals experiencing long-term or repeated episodes of homelessness, individuals and those whose housing instability frequently leads to crisis, hospital visits, or contact with criminal justice systems. It also emphasizes those who are leaving state psychiatric hospitals, and people residing in congregate care settings with a high concentration of individuals with serious mental illness.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

SHEPHERD’S CENTER OF MCLEAN-ARLINGTON-FALLS CHURCH SEEKS ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

Have some extra time to help a Neighbor? Check out Volunteering with The Shepherd Center. They need Volunteer Drivers. The best part is not only do drivers help those in

need, they get to meet wonderful folks, often with very interesting backgrounds and stories to tell. If you would like to drive for them, once a week, once a month you pick your schedule. Shepherd’s Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church (SCMAFC), is an all-volunteer organization. Its mission

is providing free transportation to seniors for medical and dental appointments or run errands to grocery stores and pharmacies. For detailed information or to apply, visit the Center’s website <https://scmaf.org/volunteer> or call (703) 506-2199 and leave a message.

SOBRIETY CHECKPOINTS SCHEDULED

The Fairfax County Police Department is committed to ensuring the safety of our community by conducting sobriety checkpoints across district stations throughout the year. These checkpoints, hosted by DUI squad and district stations, will take

place between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. The primary goal is to identify and remove impaired drivers from the streets, contributing to safer roadways.

SCHEDULE:
3/22/24 – 11:00 PM-2:00 AM at Anandale Rd and Walnut Hill Ln
4/13/24 – 11:00 PM-2:00 AM at Little River Tpke and Woodland Rd
4/20/24 – 11:00 PM-2:00 AM at Arlington Blvd and Graham Rd

Beltway Medical Group Opens in Fair Oaks

FROM PAGE 10

his “singing” bowls, gongs and bamboo flutes produce different sounds, he explained how they work to enable people to relax and be less stressed in their daily lives.

“What I do has been practiced by Eastern Nepali and Tibetan monks for years and years,” he said. “I learned from a great master when I was 20 and he was 70.” Karki said the sounds he makes with his instruments produce frequencies which go into the body and are used by the mind to “take us to a different level and a different journey, helping us begin to understand who we are.”

“Our body is 70-80 percent water, and it has seven energy points, or chakras – seven frequencies, seven notes of music,” he continued. “When we listen to the pure

sound of music, without lyrics to distract us, it evokes emotions because of the musical notes existing inside our body, so we relate to the music we’re hearing.”

Karki then rubbed a mallet around the outside rim of a bronze bowl containing water, and that action yielded a wave and a sound as the water bubbled up inside the bowl. “It looks like magic, but it’s not,” he said. “This does happen inside our body [in response to sound].”

The way it works, said Karki, is that “sound creates a wave inside you that helps you calm down, inhale deeper, get more oxygen and relax your entire body. That’s why we also teach special breath work here. When you take in more oxygen, you’re able to sleep better at night.”

For more information about Beltway Medical Group, go to www.beltwaymedicalgroup.com/.

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ENTERTAINMENT



The Capital Art & Craft Festival takes place March 22-24, 2024 at the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly.

FORB'S ANNUAL

NATIVE PLANT SALE

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

THE MCLEAN

TREES FOUNDATION, NEIGHBORHOOD TREES

PROGRAM, WANTS TO HELP YOU PLANT A NATIVE TREE IN YOUR YARD!

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

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/>



An Easter Egg Hunt/Craft and Bake Sale takes place on Sunday, March 24, 2024 at the Clifton Presbyterian Church.

BONITA LESTINA FAIRFAX OLD TOWN HALL PERFORMANCE SERIES

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

SCHEDULE

March 22: James & Victor – Jazz Duo/Steel Pan

April 5: Francesca Hurst – Solo Piano

April 19: Sylvan Waters Duo – Harp/Brass

MARCH 9 TO APRIL 14

"Every Brilliant Thing." At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center Performing Arts, announces its newest production, Every Brilliant Thing, a heartfelt one-person play that celebrates the little things that make life brilliant. "Every Brilliant Thing" is an interactive solo performance piece that explores the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity to find joy in all the little things. Showtimes are Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets are on sale now and range from \$25 to \$35. For more information, visit the website (www.workhousearts.org).

THURSDAY/MARCH 21

Film, "Kenyatta: Do Not Wait Your Turn." 5-7:45 pm. At Johnson Center Cinema, GMU, Fairfax. The Visiting Filmmakers Series is pleased to welcome filmmaker Timothy Harris to campus for a free public screening of his new documentary, followed by a post-screening discussion. Executive produced by Al Roker, Kenyatta: Do Not Wait Your Turn tells the story of Malcolm

Kenyatta, a self-described "poor, gay, Black man from North Philly," currently a Pennsylvania State Representative, during his historic run for the Pennsylvania Democratic nomination for the United States Senate. This event is free and open to the public, but registration is required.

THURSDAY/MARCH 21

Summer Job Fair for High School Students. 4-6 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The McLean Citizens Association, with support from McLean, Langley, and Marshall High Schools, is hosting a summer job fair. Students do not need to sign up -- just walk in. Recommend students bring copies of their resume to leave with potential employers. Students will have the opportunity to fill out applications on the spot! If you have questions regarding this event, send them to e_y_committee@mcleancitizens.org.

THURSDAY/MARCH 21

Author Grace Jun to Speak. 7 p.m. At Foxcroft School. Grace Jun is an assistant professor at the University of Georgia, where her research and teaching focus on design and disability processes, has been named Foxcroft's 2024 Alison Harrison Goodyear '29 Fellow. Jun will speak to the community about her career journey and research. This event is open to the local community. Admission is free, but seating is limited. Call 540-687-4510.

FRIDAY/MARCH 22

Oil Painter Denise Shamoun Phalan. 11 a.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Art Society is honored to host local artist, Denise Phalan, who will share her personal sketch books that serve as an important component in her pro-



The Fiesta Del Sol: Latin American & Caribbean Festival takes place on Saturday, March 23, 2024 at the McLean Community Center.

cess of oil painting, creating mixed media and collage. Ms. Phalan earned an MFA in drawing and painting from The Catholic University of America in Washington DC, is a member of the Oil Painters of America and Austin Plein Air. Her studio is located at The Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton. She has received numerous awards for her paintings and mixed media works.

MARCH 22-24

Capital Art & Craft Festival. At Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly. The Capital Art & Craft Festival will feature 260 juried artisans in more than a dozen mediums including glass, jewelry, leather, paintings, prints, photography, pottery, wearable art and wood. Attendees may buy directly from the artisans who create the work, all of which is crafted by hand. Times: Friday, March 22 and Saturday, March 23: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Sunday, March 24: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Tickets: \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Senior discount available; children under 12 free. Ticket information: www.CACFart

SATURDAY/MARCH 23

Winterguard and Drumline Competition. At South County High School, Lorton. On March 23, South County High School will host The Atlantic Indoor Association (AIA) Winterguard and Drumline Championships. The winterguard incorporates flags, sabers, mock rifles with dance. The drumline is composed of several types of drums divided into the pit, battery and front ensemble with cymbals, xylophones, snare drums, and base drums rounding out the sound.

SATURDAY/MARCH 23

Workhouse Wonderland Exhibition and Fundraiser Event. 7:30-10 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, McGuireWoods Gallery, Building W-16, Lorton. "Every adventure requires a first step," says the Cheshire Cat. Join in a whimsical night at Collect 2024 -Workhouse Wonderland! Enjoy Wonderland activities, libations, and treats, and be part of why "we're all mad here." The Collect exhibition features 50+ original creations by the acclaimed community of artists at the Workhouse. Artwork on display can be won in an exciting raffle at the end of the evening.

SATURDAY/MARCH 23

Appraisal Roadshow. 10:45 a.m.-12 p.m. At Reston Association

Headquarters, Reston. This event delivers a treasure hunt experience in a fun, educational and rewarding forum. Bring one personal item such as jewelry, coins, a timepiece, artwork or other heirlooms, and the appraisal expert will educate you and the other participants with information on what it's worth and what you can do with your treasure. Contact Member Services at 703-435-6530.

SATURDAY/MARCH 23

Mr. Vaudeville. 2 p.m. At Reston Community Center's Center Stage, Reston. Mr. Vaudeville finds himself in a predicament of theatrical confusion that creates a hilarious afternoon of magic, mayhem and vaudeville comedy.

SATURDAY/MARCH 23

Fiesta Del Sol: Latin American & Caribbean Festival. 5-10 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Enjoy the tastes and sounds of Latin America and the Caribbean with live bands, quality artisan exhibitors, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and sumptuous food. Learn how to dance the salsa, meringue or bachata from the best of dance instructors throughout the evening.

SUNDAY/MARCH 24

Easter Egg Hunt/Craft and Bake Sale. 11:30 to 1 p.m. At Clifton Presbyterian Church, Clifton. The Clifton Betterment Association, partnering with the Clifton Presbyterian Church will host an Easter Egg Hunt/Craft and Bake Sale at the Clifton Presbyterian Church. All kids welcome, no need to be a church member. The Bunny will be there.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 27

"Saving Claire" Documentary. 11 a.m.-noon. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "Saving Claire" is an innovative new tool for fall prevention which tells the story of denying gravity. "Saving Claire" works. It is tested, repeatable, and a scalable model. There will be a panel discussion following the documentary viewing.

THURSDAY/MARCH 28

"The Tales of Beatrix Potter." 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. With dancers of The Royal Ballet. This live-action film adapts the animal

OPINION



Meet the Great Falls Philharmonic as it performs in an intimate venue featuring the next generation of orchestral professionals.



Derek Maseloff, founder and artistic director of the Great Falls Philharmonic

'Brilliant Performance' by New Great Falls Philharmonic Orchestra

BY KATHRYN TIDYMAN OF RESTON
IA FACEBOOK; THE POST IS LIGHTLY EDITED.

The Great Falls Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of conductor Derek Maseloff, performed brilliantly on Sunday, Feb. 4. Northern Virginia, take note that this young orchestra and its music director, Derek Maseloff, are cast in the solid mold of classical music's finest symphonic orchestras. They have arrived.

I attended as a Sunday afternoon whim and left as a passionate supporter. The program opened with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw's "Entr'acte." From the downbeat, Maestro Maseloff had me sitting up straight and mesmerized by the prizing, prancing, and utterly delightful sounds he lifted from his top-notch instrumentalists, many of whom had graduated from the University of Maryland and had received instruction or coaching from members of the National Symphony Orchestra.

Catherine Clarke Nardolillo, soprano, followed, filling Mahler's Rückert-Lieder with smooth, dark luster. Then came Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 5 in D minor, the Reformation Symphony. In my front-row seat, just feet from the players, I watched Maestro's baton and his articulating arms, hands, head, and torso transform the interior of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls into pure, radiant sound.

In a pre-concert presentation, Maestro Maseloff brought in soprano Melissa Mino to perform works by the wives of Mahler and Mendelssohn, Alma Mahler and Fanny Mendelssohn. Mino was marvelous, as well. Her pure, agile voice was yet another delight of the afternoon.



The Feb. 4 event, Mendelssohn Symphony No. 5 and Rückert Lieder, sold out.

Upcoming Event April 16: Join the Great Falls Philharmonic String Quartet at its intimate venue, Christ The King Lutheran - Great Falls, VA, for an enchanting evening featuring a three-course meal with wine included and a performance of highlights from the French repertoire. See <https://www.gfphil.org/upcoming> for the menu. The dinner is a fundraiser to support upcoming programming, including the Children's Concert and Honey Harvest Festival Concert. Tickets are \$225. The meal value is \$160; ticket amounts above \$160 are a donation to the Great Falls Philharmonic.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 12

stories of Beatrix Potter into a full-fledged ballet performance danced by various stars of the Royal Ballet. An ideal film for both children and adults. Rated G.

THURSDAY/MARCH 28

Maundy Thursday. 7:30 p.m. at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, McLean. This service commemorates Jesus Christ's institution of the eucharist during the last supper. The Rev. Dr. Scott Ramsey will preach, reflecting on 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and John 13:1-17, 31b-35.

There will be two services on Good Friday, March 29. One at Noon

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and one at 7:30 pm, both in the Sanctuary. These services will focus on the Passion Narrative from the Gospel of John. Good Friday services commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus and his death on the cross at Calvary. The service will be led by the Rev. Layne Brubaker. Both evening services will also be live streamed on our website and our YouTube Channel. Join us as we observe these important days in the Christian year and as we prepare for the joy of the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

SATURDAY/MARCH 30

Easter Egg Hunt. At Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, at corner of Chain

Bridge Road and Great Falls Street in McLean.

- ❖ Hunt #1 will be for pre-school children ages 2 through Kindergarten age 5 from 9:30 to 10:15 am.
- ❖ Hunt #2 will be for grades 1-3 at 11:00 to 11:45 am.
- ❖ And Hunt #3 will be for children grades 4-5 held at 12:30 - 1:15 pm.

Each hunt will begin in the Pavilion (the garden area to the north-east of the main parking lot) with activities and games. Egg hunts will follow in the garden surrounding the Pavilion.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 15

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

MCC Governing Board Meeting

MAR 20

Monthly Meeting + Public Hearing on FY2026 Programs
Wednesday, March 20, 6:30 p.m.

All Governing Board meetings are open to the public.

The Old Firehouse Friday Night Trip

MAR 22

Washington Capitals Game
Friday, March 22, 4-10 p.m.

\$70/\$60 MCC district residents



Special Events

MAR 23

Fiesta Del Sol: Latin American & Caribbean Festival
Saturday, March 23, 5-10 p.m.

Free admission. Drink and food tickets sold onsite. Patrons must be 21 years old or older to purchase alcoholic beverages.

The Old Firehouse Center

MAR 25-29

Spring Break Trips
Monday, March 25-
Friday, March 29,
8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Destinations and fees vary.

Seniors in Action Program in Partnership with Marymount University

MAR 27

"Saving Claire" Documentary
Wednesday, March 27, 11 a.m.-noon

Registration not required.

Presented by The Alden

MAR 28

Performing Arts Movie
"The Tales of Beatrix Potter"
Thursday, March 28, 1 p.m.

Free admission

Youth Activities

MAR 30

Spring Fest
Saturday, March 30, 10 a.m.-noon

Free admission



The McLean Community Center
mcleancenter.org

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aldentheatre.org

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ART



National Winner - 3rd Place, Junior Category
Eric Shen – Vienna, VA



National Winner 2nd Place, Intermediate Category
Iris Xie – Vienna, VA

Virginia Represents the US in International Art Competition

Two Virginia students have been selected to represent the nation in the International Aviation Art Contest sponsored by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale. It is the second time in as many years that the Commonwealth's young artists have qualified for this global event.

Eric Shen and Iris Xie, both from Vienna, VA, were among nine winners selected by the Virginia Department of Aviation (DOAV) in the state-level competition. Their art was among 150 pieces sent on to the national contest in Washington, DC. Now, they will go on to compete against artwork from

around the world in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Greg Campbell, director of the DOAV, said: "For the second year in a row, the Commonwealth's students are national models for aviation and the arts. Nothing expresses 'Virginia is for Aviation Lovers' better than our next generation representing our country on the international stage. The Department of Aviation could not be prouder of them, and we wish them the very best."

This year's theme for the aviation art contest was "Air Sports for a Peaceful World," and students were allowed to depict the subject matter with minimal conditions on their artistic vision. Judges from the DOAV

selected the winners based on color, composition, originality, and relation to the theme. Selected for their experience in aviation, art, design, and media, the judges weighed the art pieces utilizing a blind numbering system for the most objective scoring possible. The artwork submitted to the DOAV was so exceptional that several students were also selected for "honorable mention" awards.

If your students missed out on this year's aviation art contest, they can prepare to enter the annual competition next year. Check in periodically for 2025's theme when it is announced by the Virginia Department of Aviation at doav.virginia.gov.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

EASTER SERVICE

Celebrate the joy of Easter with us at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church. They will have three services of worship:

The sunrise service will be held at 6:30 a.m. in the cemetery and will be led by the Rev. Layne Brubaker. This will be a small, informal worship setting in the location which has provided a final resting place for members of the Tysons-McLean community for more than 175 years.

Our 9:00 am and 11:00 am Services of Worship will be a traditional Easter service in the sanctuary featuring commissioned music by David Conte, with Brass, Organ & Tympani. Lewinsville Choirs will provide glorious music of the season.

The Rev. Dr. Scott Ramsey will preach at both services, reflecting on Isaiah 25:6-9 and Mark 16:1-18. The 9 am and 11 am services will also be live streamed on our website and on our YouTube channel.

SATURDAY/MARCH 30

Spring Fest. 10 a.m. to noon. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Join your neighbors to celebrate the changing of seasons with self-guided arts and crafts, entertainment and the opportunity for your children to get a photo with Bunny. Bring your camera and smartphone for photos! An

MCC staff member will be on hand to take a photo of you and your family.

ENJOY EGG-CELLENT SPRING CELEBRATIONS AT FAIRFAX COUNTY PARKS!

Spring is in the air and the Fairfax County Park Authority is gearing up for a season of family-friendly fun with all sorts of egg hunts and spring celebrations at several locations throughout the county. Enjoy festive activities for all ages in the park – the perfect setting for creating lasting spring memories:

Spring EGG-stravaganza at Lake Fairfax Park on March 23 from 3:30-5 p.m. Cost \$8.

Baskets & Bunnies at Burke Lake Park on March 30

Amusements tickets, 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. Cost \$10 (online ticketing open until March 28. Limited day-of sales).

Egg Hunt Ticket (1-4 years). Choose times between 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Cost \$5 (online ticketing open until March 28. Limited day-of sales).

Bubbles and Bunnies at Cub Run Rec Center on March 30, 9-10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Cost \$20.

Easter Egg Hunt at Colvin Run Mill on March 30. Choose times between noon to 3:45 p.m. Cost \$8.

Mini Golf Egg-plorations at Oakmont Rec Center on March 30. Choose times between 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Cost \$15.

Egg-speriments at Hidden Oaks Nature Center on April 6, 1:30-2:30 p.m. Cost \$10.

SATURDAY/MARCH 30

"Empowering Women for Their Future." 2-4

p.m. At Cabell's Mill, 5235 Walney Road, Chantilly. Sponsored by the Fairfax County Women in NAACP. This event promises to be an inspiring gathering celebrating the contributions of women throughout history and exploring ways to empower women for the future. Guest speakers who will share their insights and experiences:

Jatrice Martel Gaiter: Executive Vice President, External Affairs for Volunteers America

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

Not Great News



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

"Not Great News." What kind of a moron am I? "Why," as Curly of The Three Stooges asked years ago in a typical two-reeler, "is there more than one kind?" If you've been following along recently (reading my column regularly), you might recall that I'm in a bit ('bit.' Isn't that the understatement of the year?) of trouble. After reviewing, my most recent scan, some tumors grew, some remained stable. In addition, my regular monthly lab work showed some kidney function at disappointing levels (another understatement). As a result, both my oncologist and nephrologist are beginning to use the dreaded "d" word: dialysis in our conversations/emails. And so, the prospect of kidney failure and dialysis loom large as the possibility of spending multiple hours a day, multiple days a week hooked up to a machine that will function as my kidneys moves ever closer to becoming my reality. 'Not great news' for sure. In fact, one might describe it as the worst possible news (considering my medical circumstances).

To be honest, I don't yet have the details. Never had I been told that dialysis was inevitable (given the side effects of the anti-cancer medicine I have been taking for three-plus years). What I have been told in the last two days by both my oncologist and nephrologist (kidney doctor) is fairly discouraging (yet another understatement). The likelihood that I'll be moving off this slippery slope and into a Barcalounger (at the dialysis center), a fear I've been compartmentalizing for years, may very well be in the offing. It seems the only straw that would suspend/re-think this treatment is if my thyroid cancer tumors began growing and moving and causing all sorts of complications. Since I'm presently not taking any anti-cancer medicine due to the adverse side effect to the kidneys, this seems likely. Inevitable? One more prediction the doctors can't/won't make.

And so, my body/organs, left to their own medical devices, have succumbed quicker to the cancer than they otherwise had. In this situation, no medicine means no luck. Even with my wife hanging horseshoes right-side-up (so the luck doesn't run out) at the horse barn she frequents, it may be that after 15 years of being my oncologist's "third miracle," the tide or the worm, depending on your preference, has turned. And turning in an unfavorable direction.

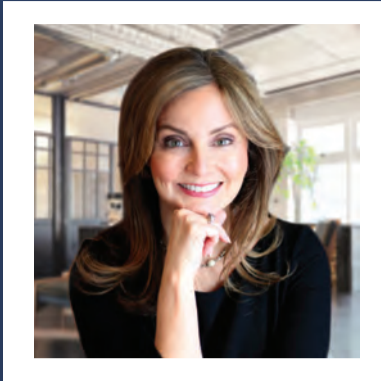
But so, what? I'll approach this next phase of my cancer journey as I have with all the others. I will remain positive about the negative. Throughout my years of treatment, I have often surprised my oncologist by my much-better-than-anticipated reaction to whatever he was prescribing.

Moreover, I've lived so much longer than the experts - who provide the figurative handbook of AMA-approved steps and procedures, expect their patients diagnosed with non-small cell lung cancer stage IV to live. Having exceeded my original "13 month to two-years" prognosis by over a decade, the standard steps sort of don't apply to me/haven't applied to me for many years. The "Hippocratic oath," (do no harm), has been invoked a time or two by my oncologist as I was no longer the norm, and so a lot of my treatment was common sense type measures/don't make the patient worse. And we all succeed beyond any of our wildest dreams to the point where I am now still living into year 16.

I can understand - and imagine, how certain medical treatment/protocols aren't necessarily suitable for long-term exposure, especially when you're diagnosed with cancer. As such, your orientation becomes more short term.

The present matters most. What happens in 15 years? The doctors are more concerned about what happened today and tomorrow. Considering how the patient's body will react to non-stop chemotherapy - while living so much longer than doctor's training and experience would have led them to believe, is sort out of the doctor's purview. By surviving so long, I may have become my own worst enemy (sort of outkicked my punt coverage, if you know football?). As for the medical side of it, certain organs aren't/weren't structured to endure so much chemotherapy. And because I am still an active patient, up until recently, having been on chemotherapy, targeted therapy and so forth for 15 years nonstop, I can speak from experience. And when I was asked regularly by my oncologist if I wanted to take a break from treatment, I always said "No." I was too afraid of what the cancer might do if left untreated. Well, I sure am going to find out now. Unfortunately, due to the kidney complication, I might never be able to re-start my cancer medicine. If that happens/continues and I'm off my thyroid cancer medicine for an extended period, I will be grateful for the extra time that I've earned, but I wouldn't bet the over. Having stage IV papillary thyroid cancer is bad enough, especially after having been treated for non-small cell lung cancer, also stage IV, for 10 years previously. I can't say it's totally been fun while it lasted. Nor will I say how much fun it's going to be living forward, given these recent complications. Nevertheless, it (life) has always beaten the alternative: death. With no guarantees, especially with respect to cancer treatment, one must be open to a maybe. I have been, and I still am. No maybe about it.

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



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