

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JUNE 27, 2024



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Entertainers perform as part of the Alexandria Jazz Festival June 21 at Waterfront Park. The music festival was slated to kick off the Portside in Old Town weekend celebration, which was canceled due to extreme heat.



Stephanie Vanputten, left, enjoys the jazz festival with her family June 21 at Waterfront Park.

## And All That Jazz

City hosts 46th annual Jazz Festival.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The Alexandria Jazz Festival celebrated 46 years June 21 at Waterfront Park as evening temperatures cooled enough for the show to go on while the remainder of the Portside in Old Town weekend of events were canceled due to extreme heat.

“There is nothing better to me than live music, being outside and being by the water,” said Stephanie Vanputten, who attended the festival with her family. “Tonight is the trifecta for me. There is actually a nice breeze so I am just enjoying the jazz and the people.”

Janet Barnett was coordinator for special events for the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and a founder of the festival that was originally held in Market Square on Memorial Day.

“I can’t believe that 46 years have passed,” said Barnett, who retired as Deputy of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. “The Jazz Festival was created by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities and is still as popular an event now as it was then. We had help from several city departments, including the police department.”

Vendors were on hand to provide refreshments while many attendees brought their own picnics to enjoy under the stars. Some were especially prepared for the extreme heat.



Soaring temperatures didn’t hinder the fun for friends at the Alexandria Jazz Festival June 21 at Waterfront Park.

**“There is nothing better to me than live music, being outside and being by the water.”**

— Stephanie Vanputten

“I have my own portable fan,” said Kolethia Clements, who was enjoying the evening with Shannon Strange. “It provides a misting of water as well so it keeps me cool.”

Added Strange with a laugh, “My lady is so smart.”



Kolethia Clements keeps cool with her portable fan while enjoying the jazz festival with Shannon Strange.



A young girl walks along the waterfront during the Alexandria Jazz Festival June 21 at Waterfront Park.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Janet Barnett was the director of special events for the city and helped establish the Alexandria Jazz Festival 46 years ago.

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OPEN SUN 6/30, 1-3

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OPEN SUN 6/30, 2-4

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Andy Evans gives remarks during a ceremony honoring Martin Luther King Jr. June 22 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



McArthur Myers sits atop the bench dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. June 22 at Charles Houston Recreation Center. Myers was a co-donor of the bench honoring the slain Civil Rights leader.



McArthur Myers, center, is joined by local dignitaries in unveiling a bench dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. June 22 at Charles Houston Recreation Center. Myers and former George Washington Masonic National Memorial executive director George Seghers, third from left, donated the bench in memory of the slain Civil Rights leader.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

# ‘I Have a Dream’ MLK Jr. honored with bench dedication.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The City of Alexandria honored the memory of slain Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. with a bench dedication, part of a Civil Rights Appreciation Day ceremony June 22 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

“Today we are paying tribute to the impact and the legacy of the Civil Rights movement,” said Mayor Justin Wilson of the ceremony that also honored the recently deceased Ira Robinson, the first African American elected to City Council since Reconstruction. “Ira Robinson was elected to the coun-

**“We must not let the great deeds of this truly great man slip into obscurity.”**

— George Seghers on Martin Luther King Jr.

cil in 1970 in the aftermath of the unrest and extremely difficult period for our city. In the issues we work on today the legacy of Ira Robinson lives on.”

Wilson presented a proclamation to two of Robinson’s children who were in attendance.

“It’s an honor to be here knowing that this is where Daddy did his work and made so many changes in the city,” said Robinson’s daughter Cary, who traveled from California to attend the ceremony. “He’s our hero and a hero to



Tanya Wilkerson sings Sam Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come” at the Civil Rights Appreciation Day ceremony June 22 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Alexandria. He’s a trailblazer and always has been and I feel like he is here with us today.”

The centerpiece of the day’s ceremony was the unveiling of an engraved bench dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. The bench was commissioned and donated by McArthur Myers and George Seghers, the former executive director of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial.

“Today is the result of a conversation between myself and brother Mac discussing the MLK birthday celebration and realizing that nothing in the city is dedicated to Rev. King,” Seghers said. “We must not let the great deeds of this truly great man slip into obscurity. We must remember and honor him and learn from what he said and what he did.”

Wilson praised the efforts of Seghers and Myers, a Living Leg-



Mayor Justin Wilson, left, presents a proclamation honoring the late Ira Robinson, a former member of City Council, to Robinson’s daughter Cary and son Marcus June 22 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

end of Alexandria.

“McArthur is a walking history book, a walking encyclopedia of Alexandria history,” Wilson said. “He is someone who doesn’t just talk about our history, he actually gets things done in an incredible way.”

Other dignitaries in attendance included Councilman Kirk McPike, City Manager James Parajon, Sheriff Sean Casey, and former Congressman Jim Moran.

“When I came to Alexandria in 1970, Martin Luther King had been assassinated, Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated,” Moran said. “After Martin Luther King had been assassinated, communities all over the country decided that they were



Former congressman Jim Moran, left, with George Seghers, Rosa Byrd, Peter Lawson and McArthur Myers at the dedication of a bench in memory of Martin Luther King Jr. June 22 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

not going to let this be the end of his mission. Men like Ira Robinson said we are going to stand up, we will take on that banner.”

Andy Evans was a close friend of Robinson and served as his campaign manager.

“Dr. King inspired me to be a community organizer,” Evans said. “His legacy inspired my work with Ira, who won as an independent candidate, the first African American elected to City Council since reconstruction.”

Moran, who served on City Council and as mayor prior to being elected to Congress, recognized the heroic efforts in Alexandria’s Civil Rights movement.

“There was a will that was determined to see justice for everyone, to make this a fully inclusive and diverse community,” Moran said. “I couldn’t possibly list all the heroic figures that stood up to make that difference. We are honoring some of them today but also honoring a movement – a movement that will be sustained. We point out heroes of the past to inspire the leaders of the future.”

Added Seghers, “At this tumultuous time in the history of our country, when we need his example and his knowledge more than ever, we can learn much from what Martin Luther King said and how he lived.”

## SENIOR LIVING

# Herralink Brings Connection, Joy, to Senior Citizens

**Centreville High grad is dedicated to improving their lives.**

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE GAZETTE

**I**sabella Solano is just 19, but she's owned her own business since October 2023. And her passion for improving the lives of senior citizens demonstrates how much good people can do when they truly care.

The 2022 Centreville High grad founded Herralink, a nonprofit volunteer organization that bridges the gap between generations by connecting high-school students with residents in retirement homes. The students receive community-service hours for school, and the seniors receive something even more valuable – companionship.

“The word ‘Herra’ has a Nordic background and means elder or senior,” explained Solano. “And ‘link’ is because we link elders with future generations to create connections that grow to feel like family. And our students are called Herrahelpers, meaning elder helpers.”

When Solano was 16, she was recruited to work at a tech start-up. But when it folded, two years later, she realized she was lonely. “I have an immediate family, but sometimes you need something more,” she said. “A friend at the time was a CNA [certified nursing assistant] at a retirement home and he told me that the seniors barely had any family nearby and never got visitors from the community.

“So that’s how I got interested in them, and they became my family. I felt warm and fuzzy and so happy that they welcomed me into their community. And I feel that warmth and love every time I’m with them – it’s never left me.”

Herralink now partners with four homes for seniors: the Dulles Health & Rehab Center in Herndon, Gainesville Health & Rehab Center in Gainesville, Potomac Falls Health & Rehab Center in Sterling, and Hunter Woods Fellowship House in Reston. The first three are skilled-nursing homes, and the one in Reston is a low-income, independent-living, senior community.

Herralink provides the student visitors and, together, they and the seniors enjoy one-hour activities



BONNIE HOBBS/THE GAZETTE  
**Isabella Solano.**

such as arts and crafts, and light and art therapy, plus social-fitness events, including chair yoga and tai chi. They also do one-on-one meetings between the students and the residents, on weekends, at times convenient to the students. They’ll do things such as playing board games, doing jigsaw puzzles, watching movies or making jewelry together.

“We have almost 400 volunteers, but only eight in the one-on-one program, and I hope that number will increase,” said Solano. “These are the students who really want to connect with the residents and change their lives. To participate in the one-on-one, they go through a personality quiz and an interview with me and are then matched with a senior by me and the retirement home’s director of activities. It’s important that they have something in common, like their personality or a hobby. I match them so they both benefit.”

“The students create their own schedule of the days and hours



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ISABELLA SOLANO  
**Isabella Solano is flanked by (from left) Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay, her parents Mario and Jessica Solano, and Supervisor Pat Herry.**

they visit,” she continued. “Some come in for a few hours on the weekend and some visit monthly. The main thing is that their visits are consistent. The students and seniors decide how to spend their time together. The goal is to create authentic relationships that come to feel like family.”

Solano said the students often want to stay longer than they initially planned, and that’s fine. “It’s totally up to them,” she said. “It’s the most special part of Herralink and makes all the hard work worth

it. Recently, one of the residents thanked me and told me she felt like she had family. It almost made me cry because that’s all I want for them, and it makes me feel proud of what I do.

“Even if they don’t have real family, at least they know they have one person who’ll come in and show them the love they deserve. And there’s so much more I want to do; I’ve only just begun.”

Meanwhile, Solano’s work caught the eye of Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield), who

praised her for connecting thousands of students with senior citizens who, otherwise, would be alone. In May, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recognized volunteers throughout the county during its Volunteer Services Awards ceremony. Recommended by Herry, Solano was honored as the Springfield District Community Champion.

In nominating her, he wrote, “Isabella discovered that 60 percent of retirement-home residents na-  
SEE CENTREVILLE HIGH, PAGE 7



**Herralink volunteers (from left) Ashnil Dasan, Mischa Cho and Kelsa Boodal help nonprofit Reston Strong create a market for neighbors and residents in nearby independent-living homes.**



**From left, Herralink volunteers Medha Unnava and Maya Ptak do arts and crafts together with senior citizen Alicia Mackin in Herndon.**

# Celebrating a Century Lois Brooks turns 100.

By JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

**L**ois Brooks was born in the midst of the Roaring '20s and the height of Prohibition. She was barely a year old when her family moved from Durham, N.C. to Alexandria, where she has lived ever since and where she celebrated her 100th birthday June 13 with family and friends.

"The first house I remember living in was at 1321 Wythe Street," recalled Brooks. "It was an all Negro area and we called it Colored Rosemont since the other side of the railroad tracks was where the white people lived. Our houses were built specifically for Black people."

Brooks attended Parker-Gray and Lyles-Crouch, graduating from Parker-Gray before going to business school to get clerical training.

"I worked for the government at the Navy building on Pennsylvania Avenue," Brooks said. "I didn't really take to typing or stenography so I was a messenger. For two years I carried around a lot of top secret documents."

It was during this time that Brooks, then known as Lois Cross, met her future husband, Courtney Brooks.

"We were in the same social circle and



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET  
**Lois Brooks, with granddaughter Kira Russell, celebrates her 100th birthday June 13, 2024.**

went to the same parties," said Brooks. "I was only 20 when we married and he went off to serve in the war."

Courtney Brooks served in World War II and returned to Alexandria in 1946. Together the couple had one son, Ronald.

"I was so used to living at home with a house full of people," said Brooks. "Growing up with my mother and father, by the

time my mother finished having babies there were 11 of us living in that house."

Brooks moved into her husband's home when he left the service.

"I never did get used to living in houses by myself, even though I have been on my own now for years," said Brooks, who has been living in her current home in Seminary since 1963. "I have so many happy memories of just being with my family."

Brooks has outlived her siblings and husband and lost her son Ronald in 2015.

"Of course it was hard when my sisters and brothers died on me," Brooks said. "Then my son died on me and then Courtney died on me. But still I try not to let anything worry me. If I can't solve it – if it is something I just can't do anything about I leave it alone."

Brooks attributes her longevity to good genes.

"My daddy and momma both had good genes," Brooks said. "People died very young back then. My father worked at a place called the brickyard. They did the hardest work but my mother and father were in their 70s when they died and that was a miracle given how hard they worked."

While she no longer drives on her own, Brooks has family and friends that she is able to spend time with.

"I have a granddaughter and grandson and

lots of nieces and nephews," Brooks said. "They are very much in my life – all of them. I don't have anything to complain about."

Kira Russell helped celebrate her grandmother's milestone birthday.

"I have learned so much about life from her," Russell said. "She teaches me about how things were when she was growing up and how we have moved forward from then to now. She really is wonderful to talk to and I love her very much."

Brooks still enjoys getting out and seeing the changes in the city.

"I don't recognize Alexandria," Brooks said. "I ride around Alexandria like a tourist. It's so pretty but I don't recognize anything anymore. But I enjoy going to Old Town just to watch the people."

When asked if she had any advice for young people today, she recalled a message she recently heard from a special guest at a church service.

"There was a woman there who got the biggest applause when she repeatedly said 'don't get married,'" Brooks said with a laugh. "She told those young girls to go live your life and wait to get married. It was crazy that we got married so young back then. I'm not going to give advice to anyone but looking back I do wish I had choices that people have today."

## SENIOR LIVING

### 2024 Northern Virginia Senior Olympics: 83 Events, 26 Venues, Ages 50 to 100+

**T**he Northern Virginia Senior Olympics will take place Saturday, Sept. 14 through Sunday, Sept. 29. Eighty-three events will be held at 26 indoor and outdoor venues throughout the NOVA jurisdictions. NVSO Chairman Riley Geary said "The Committee has been hard at work since January planning the 2024 events. ... Last year we had well over 900 participants and we are anticipating even more this year."

Participants must be 50 years of age by Dec. 31 and live in one of the sponsoring jurisdictions including the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun and Prince William plus the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church. Most events are by gender and five year age groups.

More information is on the website at [www.nvso.us](http://www.nvso.us) and a complete schedule of events will soon be added. Registration is online only and opens July 1. The registration fee remains at \$20 which covers a multitude of events. Ten pin bowling, orienteering, cycling and golf, 9 hole, 3 par require additional fees.

NVSO is a non-profit, 501-c-3 thus making donations tax deductible. Revenues received from registration fees, Patrons and individu-



FILE PHOTO BY TOM MANNING

**Herb Levitan from Arlington gets ready to compete in the 100 yard backstroke for the 75-79 age group on Sept. 16 at the Claude Moore Recreation Center in Sterling. He came in first place.**

al donations are used for equipment, judges, event officials, T-shirts for participants and volunteers, graphics and flyers. There is no paid staff. Committee members include representatives and volunteers from the sponsoring jurisdictions.

2024 Gold Patrons thus far are Greenspring by Erickson Senior Living, Goodwin Home Health, The Woodlands, The Virginian, Johns Hopkins Health Plans, Adobe and Anthem. For information about volunteering or becoming a Patron, email [nvso1982@gmail.com](mailto:nvso1982@gmail.com).

Contact: Judy Massabny, [jmassa@arlingtonva.us](mailto:jmassa@arlingtonva.us)

## Amelia Heart & Vascular Center is pleased to introduce

### Dr. Daniel Gates



As the newest addition to our Cardiology team. Dr. Gates specializes in treating various cardiovascular conditions, including coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, and arrhythmias such as atrial fibrillation, supraventricular tachycardia, and premature ventricular beats. Dr. Gates is a member of the American College of Cardiology and holds board certification in Cardiovascular Medicine. Originally from Pennsylvania, Dr. Gates has called Northern Virginia home since 2011. He obtained his undergraduate education at Pennsylvania State University. Following his graduation from PSU, he attended medical school at Uniformed Services University in Bethesda and ultimately completed cardiology fellowship training at Walter Reed.

He served honorably for 26 years in the United States Army before retiring from military service, including positions as the chief of cardiology at Womack Army Medical Center and Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. He is pleased to continue serving the medical needs of the National Capital Region following his time in the military.



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## New Virginia Laws Effective July 1st

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

This week, I will continue my report to you on the new laws going into effect on July 1 that you may encounter in your daily life, including some that you might not know were even considered this session.

One law that garnered much amusement and quite a few puns throughout session was the “roadkill bill” brought by Del. Tony Wilt relating to claiming rights of deer, bear, turkey, or elk hit by motor vehicles. Current law allows only those who hit the animal with their vehicle to be able to claim the dead animal during the hunting season. This new law allows any person who discovers an animal to claim it for eating or as a trophy at any time of the year. If you happen to be in this position, make sure you still call to report it to law enforcement in the area!

The maximum duration of a DMV-issued temporary disabled parking placard will be extended from 6 to 12 months. The fee associated with



the issuance of this placard has also been eliminated. The DMV fee for the issuance of an original, duplicate, reissue, or renewal special identification card without a photograph will be reduced from \$10 per year with a \$20 minimum fee to \$2 per year with a \$10 minimum fee.

Moving violations in highway work zones will now be punishable by a fine of not less than \$300 for the first offense

and not less than \$500 for any subsequent offense. Another such offense in a 12-month period will be subject to a fine not less than \$750. Slow down and pay attention when driving through highway work zones. This is not only for your safety, but to protect our hardworking road construction workers and others that you share the road with!

Relief is here for those who have been a victim of predatory towing. This new law will require a towing operator to post written notice on a vehicle providing at least 48 hours’ notice to a resident prior to removing a resident’s vehicle from the parking lot of a multifamily dwell-

ing for the purpose of an expired registration or expired inspection sticker. Any towing operator who fails to comply with these requirements shall be required to reimburse the resident for the cost of the tow and shall be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$100.

Localities in Northern Virginia will now have the ability to require written authorization of the owner of the property from which a vehicle will be towed, as well as to regulate the monitoring practices used by towing and recovery operators, to crack down on the use of “spotters” to enable “smash and grab” tows of vehicles parked for as little as 3-4 minutes. Victims of an unlawful tow are entitled to a payment of 10 times the total amount charged for removal, towing, and storage. Towing and recovery operators will also be prohibited from requiring an individual who appears to retrieve a vehicle towed to provide, in addition to payment of fees, any document not otherwise required by law before releasing the vehicle to the individual.

As always, you can find a full list of newly Chapterized laws on the General Assembly’s Division of Legislative Services (DLS) website, as well as a more detailed review in the annual In Due Course chronicle prepared by the DLS.

### LETTER

## Veterans: Make elections in Virginia Peaceful

Dear Editor,

I served in the United States Navy and am part of a national coalition of veterans who value country over politics. As July 4th approaches, we urge all your readers of the Alexandria Gazette Packet to consider the mood of the country today.

The overwhelming majority of

Americans -- Republicans, Democrats, and Independents fear this year’s elections will again descend into violence.

Veterans from every state of this great Republic and every political background swore an oath to the Constitution and are proud and honored to have defended it.

Across the country we are asking

everyone running for public office to pledge to:

- ❖ Renounce threats of violence and voter intimidation. Use all your platforms to do the same..
- ❖ Respect certified results of the election, and where necessary, the verdict of the courts in adjudicating any election disagreements.
- ❖ All Americans running for

office, please affirm that you will honor our history of peaceful transfers of power, as the framers intended.

No more January 6ths!

Alexandria - spread the word.

In Service,

**Andrew A. Anderson, PMP**

Alexandria

Veteran and

former Civil Servant

### 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 the event.

#### LEADERSHIP ALEXANDRIA

The Chamber ALX is excited to bring Leadership Alexandria, a dynamic nine month civic-based leadership development program to new and established leaders in Alexandria. This program features three components that provide participants with an extraordinary experience:

#### Alexandria Up Close and Personal:

Participants will have the opportunity to hear from and speak candidly with the elected officials, public and private sector heads, change makers and innovators who make Alexandria run.

#### Leadership Development Training:

Leadership Alexandria utilizes the Work of Leaders framework to give cohesion and continuity to the developmental component of the Leadership Alexandria experience. The culmination of six years of research and development, The Work of Leaders presents a unified model of leadership—Vision, Alignment, and Execution—that neatly captures the complexity of contemporary leadership.

Connections to last a lifetime: Due to the small class size, participants build strong and lasting bonds with

their classmates.

The class will meet once a month on a Friday for a full day of programming from September 2024-May 2025. The application deadline is Sunday, June 30th. Visit: <https://thechamberalx.com/program/leadership-alexandria>

#### WANT TO BE A CHANGE-MAKER?

A shout-out to young people who are aspirational change-makers is wanted in a new youth-led initiative to help address high rates of illiteracy within the community. The Youth Ambassador role in Alexandria provides a young person with a platform to advocate and talk about the falling rates of reading skills and create increased community education and awareness about the vital importance of foundational literacy skills for lifelong benefits. Registration for the Youth Ambassador Program is now available. The 4-month youth leadership development initiative will provide training and support, plus connection to 600 other young people around the world. Email: [Ambassador@worldliteracyfoundation.org](mailto:Ambassador@worldliteracyfoundation.org)

[worldliteracyfoundation.org](http://worldliteracyfoundation.org)

#### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help

coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. [www.volunteeral-alexandria.org](http://www.volunteeral-alexandria.org)

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10

## Submit a Letter to the Editor

To submit a letter to the editor, email [editors@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:editors@connectionnewspapers.com) or via the following form <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/contact/letter/>

Ideally, letters will be original, about local issues and less than 300 words. Please submit letters by noon Friday before publication week, although letters received on Mondays can be considered. Letters must include your first and last name, home address and a phone number. Letters are routinely edited for libel, length, grammar, good taste and accuracy.

Your name and town will be published with your letter, other personal information will not be shared. If you are a student, your school name, age and grade will also be published.

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A Connection Newspaper



## SENIOR LIVING

# Dedicated to Improving Lives

FROM PAGE 4

tionwide don't have visitors. This motivated her to start her nonprofit to connect an underserved population with high schoolers looking for service hours." Mentioning Herralink's four partnerships, Herrity said Solano organized several events for the seniors from short, one-hour gatherings – including craft making, game sessions and karaoke – to one, large, community event each month.

"These larger events have included a Halloween event with a bouncy house, balloon animals, face painting and a magician, and a Thanksgiving event where she recreated Cox Farms and brought farm animals like a baby cow, baby horse, chickens, goats, and pigs to the retirement home," wrote Herrity. "She also coordinated with service dogs to ensure bed-bound residents weren't excluded. She even held a masquerade ball at the Jim Scott community center [in Fairfax], which attracted over 200 people. Thank you, Isabella, for your incredible work."

The seniors are grateful to Solano, as well. Just ask Alicia Mackin and Erica McCorry, both residents at the Dulles Health & Rehab Center. "Isabella has a wonderful program," said Mackin. "She's altruistic, a beautiful woman inside and out. I can't express the growth in elderly activities because she draws in more people than she knows."

And, said McCorry, "I love my volunteers. They are so sweet, polite and fun. They enjoy a good discussion. We've done a lot of movie-watching, and I've even taught them to play Scrabble."

The residents at the Gainesville location are also pleased. Alex Afari considers Solano "the heart of this place," and Cynthia "C.C." Cabbage called her the "kindest, laughiest, smartest person in the world."

"Isabella helps people and is a nice person with a positive personality," said Mike Kelsor. And Connie Munczki is glad to see the volunteers Solano brought to them. "I like the high schoolers," she said. "They make me feel very happy because they come to visit and stay with us for a little while."

Volunteers such as sisters Kaelyn and Kelsa Boodal, both rising seniors at Paul VI High, are enjoying their experiences, too. "Herralink is a way for students to connect with senior citizens," said Kelsa. "Isabella hosts various events that aren't only fun for the seniors, but also for the volunteers."

"Herralink and Isabella have provided us with a wonderful opportunity to do activities with seniors that they wouldn't normally get to do," added Kaelyn. "Isabella makes volunteering fun and memorable for high-school students like me."

Solano said many teens and young adults don't realize they need real, in-person connections with other people. "The love of a community has so much strength and power, and so many people take it for granted," she explained. "But talking with older adults and learning about them gave me a purpose in this world. I try to enrich their lives and will spend the rest of my life doing that."

She'd eventually like to study cognitive

science with a focus on aging so she could someday design technology to enhance seniors' lives.

For example, it could be applied to help seniors find their room number, or the rooms of their friends, when they can't remember these numbers on their own.

Solano would also like the nursing assistants to realize that "if they'd interact more with the seniors as people, they'd both feel that warmth of human connection. The

senior population is often an afterthought and ends up being dehumanized. But if you can do something to improve that, why not? Right now, I'm interacting with these people and learning as much as I can, so I can really help change their quality of life."

And the differences she's already made for so many seniors are both obvious and welcome. "Isabella has created a remarkable nonprofit that bridges the gap between high-school students and nursing homes,"

said AnaLucia Rojas, activities director at Dulles Health & Rehab Center. "Through her organization, Isabella and her team of volunteers bring joy and warmth to our facility, enriching the lives of our residents with laughter, compassion and affection."

In fact, Solano has made such a positive impact there that, as of June, she's that location's new admissions director. For more information about Herralink, go to [www.herralink.com](http://www.herralink.com).



**CALENDAR**

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# Dividing Lines: Reviewing School Boundary Adjustment Policy

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

Fairfax County Public Schools' Policy 8130 governs the school division's boundaries, program assignments, and school closings. Policy 8130 determines a student's school assignment based on their residence address. Boundary lines and policies can change over time through review and adoption by the school board.

Thirty-eight years have passed without a comprehensive review of Policy 8130. In 2018, the Facilities Planning Advisory Council (FPAC) presented recommendations to the school board, and the board began reviewing them. This link provides historical information about the Fairfax County School Board review: <https://www.fcps.edu/facilities-planning-future/school-boundary-adjustments/boundary-policy>.

As part of the process, on Dec. 9, 2021, MGT Consulting, hired by Fairfax County Public Schools, submitted its "Boundary Policy Best Practices Review Final Report." In it, MGT stated, "School districts should use enrollment projections (meaning capacity) as a primary consideration when governing school boundaries."

MGT added in 2021 that three overriding principles must always take precedence in determining the priorities of boundary

policies: equity, stability, and efficacy. The One Fairfax Policy, adopted in 2017, commits the county and schools to intentionally consider equity when delivering policies, programs, and services.

According to MGT, the current Policy 8130 indicates that appropriate program staff members should review school and program capacity as part of the first step in a boundary adjustment process. This process allows for an accurate assessment of school and program capacity while incorporating other critical factors that may impact capacity, such as planned renovations or staffing adjustments.

As of early 2024, the Fairfax County School Board had referred Policy 8130 to its Governance Committee for review and directed the superintendent to assist with committee work. Four school board members serve on the committee: Rachna Sizemore Heizer, chair; Sandy Anderson; Kyle McDaniel; and Ilryong Moon. The staff liaisons are Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent, and Christina K. Setlow, clerk of the school board.

In an emailed News From School Board Member Marcia St. John-Cunning (Franconia) received May 25, St. John-Cunning wrote that the committee has been reviewing Policy 8130 and "updating to address



Marcia St. John-Cunning,  
Franconia



School Board Chair  
Karl Frisch

a range of community concerns, including instructional program locations, overcrowding, temporary classrooms (trailers), and transportation."

The 2023-2024 School Year Fairfax County School Board Annual Meeting Calendar lists Policy 8130 as an agenda item for the board's work session on Tuesday, June 25, from 1 to 4:30 p.m. According to the agenda item, "On Feb. 13, 2024, the School Board held a forum on the possibility of reviewing Policy 8130, Local School Boundaries, Program Assignments, and School Closings and referred the review of this policy to the Governance Committee. Since February, the Governance Committee has been reviewing potential changes to the policy, and on June 18, 2024, the Governance Committee voted to send the attached draft to the full School Board for a Work Session." Christina Setlow, the School Board Clerk, is the staff contact.

The full board will discuss the five-page, 6-18-24 - Policy 8130 - FINAL Governance Committee - UPDATED is available online.

A Final Draft Boundary Policy PowerPoint 6\_25\_24 Work Session.pdf is also available online.

"For the policy to be adopted, a motion will need to be listed on new business at a future regular meeting and then voted on at a subsequent meeting," said Karl Frisch, school

board chair, in an email to this reporter on Friday, June 21. Public engagement and public hearings are part of the normal process. The School Board Annual Meeting Calendar does not indicate a date as of yet.

According to St. John-Cunning, if the board passes the policy with a majority of votes, "the board hands the baton to the superintendent, who will use the updated policy to review and propose any future changes to school boundaries... The superintendent will then return to the board with her recommendations."

Even small policy changes at hyperlocal levels are pivotal adjustments that significantly affect parents, students, and their community in shaping student access to opportunity. The One Fairfax Policy, adopted in 2017, commits the county and schools to intentionally consider equity when delivering policies, programs, and services. As of Tuesday, June 25, the Fairfax County School Board is not considering any school's boundary changes.

## Town Hall Webinar with School Board Member Robyn Lady

Hard questions on boundary policy answered.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

The Great Falls Citizens Association welcomed Fairfax County School Board Representative Robyn Lady (Dranesville) to its virtual town hall, open to the public and held Monday evening, June 17. Following its June 11 membership meeting, GFCA wanted to create a platform for Lady to clarify issues and hear public feedback concerning the draft revision to Fairfax County Public Schools Policy 8130, school boundary adjustments. On June 11, community members expressed "significant" concern over FCPS Policy 8130, including the lack of clarity on the implementation of redistricting policies, as well as the ambiguity and broad discretionary authority in the policy itself.

The policy is currently under review by the school board's Governance Committee, which would meet the next day, Tuesday, June 18, and be open to the public. Four of the school board's 12 members serve on the

committee, but not Lady. The committee would continue to work on Policy 8130.7.

"School boundary policy affects all county residents one way or another, whether or not you have school-age children," GFCA president John Halacy said.

GFCA often weighs in on issues beyond its geographical boundaries because they affect community members. Jennifer Falcone, GFCA secretary, moderated the two-hour town hall meeting on June 17 with 482 registered attendees. Lady delved into one of the current policy's significant issues: school board members, not operational specialists, must raise boundary issues. Lady said she heard from the principal of Lutie Lewis Coates Elementary School that they added two kindergarten classrooms this year.

Coates ES is located in the unincorporated area of Herndon, close to the Silver Line Innovation Station and within the Dranesville District. Lady stated that the school is 33 percent overcapacity for the next year and described the boundary change as an "emergency" requiring triage.

"They're literally turning custodial closets into classrooms," Lady said. "There's no stone unturned over there because we're out



Robyn Lady



GFCA president  
John Halacy



Jennifer Falcone, GFCA  
secretary and moderator  
of virtual town hall

**"In this conversation, it's evident that some people have created a pecking order ... of our schools, but all of our schools are good."**

— Robyn Lady,  
Dranesville School Board member

of room for modular [classrooms] and trailers." According to Google Maps, the nearest Great Falls Elementary School is on Walker Road, 23 miles away, with a driving time of 46 minutes.

Lady said state law would enable the school district to shift 15 percent of those

youngsters out of Coates ES, but the county's current boundary policy limits it to 5 percent. "I talked to operations about that and said, 'Well, 5 percent is going to cut a neighborhood in half .... I think that's absolutely wrong,'" Lady said.

Lady noted that the superintendent may revisit an adjustment that did not satisfy requirements if staff evaluations significantly change its impact or determining factors. Current Policy 8130, Section VII, describes accelerated school boundary adjustments.

When an "emergency" or other pressing public need requires the school attendance area to change quickly, the superintendent can expedite the change if it won't affect more than 15 percent of each school's enrollment and will improve the school system's operating efficiency according to a staff analysis. Before implementing it, staff

SEE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE, PAGE 10  
[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)



# Position Paper Calls for a Pause

**GFCA provides alternative facility and educational management considerations.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

**O**n June 17, the Great Falls Citizens Association's executive board sent its two-page adopted position paper to all Fairfax County School Board representatives, requesting that the board pause its policy review process for county-wide school boundary adjustment policy changes.

The executive board stated that the county has had to build new schools, renovate existing ones, adjust school and program assignments, and address increased financial burdens, adding that it appreciates the efforts.

The position paper asserts that the best ways to meet school needs are transparent capacity analysis methodology, defensible data on school capacity and student population projections, and prioritizing staff and financial resources. The executive board proposed seven principles for the school board consideration to "best manage school facilities and educational spaces for current and future students."

- ❖ Decisions should be based on accurate



Children at Great Falls Elementary School, a Fairfax County Public School, participate in a tree planting program on Jan. 13, 2023.

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE GAZETTE

and defensible data about school facility resources and assignments to develop each school's objective capacity.

- ❖ In student enrollment forecasts and program capacity calculations, methodologies must be transparent.

- ❖ Priority choices should be communi-

ty-based K-12 schools.

- ❖ Recognize the importance of not breaking up communities to address capacity imbalances.

- ❖ Prioritize construction, refurbishment, and maintenance; renovate based on need, not the length of time since the last renova-

tion; and use life-cycle costing to maximize budget resources.

- ❖ Consider innovative program placement and personnel.

- ❖ Include the community in all planning and policy modification processes.

The GFCA established a school task group in December of 2023, with the executive board reaffirming its commitment to "a high level of awareness of issues relative to school facility funding and boundary adjustment policies." The Task Force reviewed the FCPS Capital Improvements Program from earlier this year and assessed "the pulse of the community" to see how anticipated investments and school boundary revisions will affect that concept and the school community. According to the position statement, the Task Force took this action because the executive board "views our schools as the foundation of our community."

Located within the Fairfax County Dranesville Magisterial District, highlights of the U.S. Census Bureau, July 1, 2023 report that Great Falls is a Census Designated Place, with a population of 15,953 (April 1, 2020 census), its white population makes up 66.4 percent of Great Falls; Asian alone 24 percent, and Hispanic or Latino 3.8 percent of the population. Less than 2 percent of Great Falls' population is Black. The median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2018-2022 \$1,246,100 and median household income (in 2022 dollars), 2018-2022 \$250,000+.

# Highlights of Boundary Policy and Assignment of Students

**Boundary assignments' overarching goals are excellence, efficacy, equity; capacity is the primary benchmark.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

**T**he Fairfax County School Board is conducting a comprehensive review to consider updates to its Policy 8130 on boundary adjustments. It seeks a clear roadmap for any potential changes to the attendance zone boundary (AZB) to balance the district's projected enrollment of 181,701 for FY25, compared to 179,952 for FY24. The board initiated this review due to severe overcrowding at several schools, insufficient bond funding to address capacity demands, reliance on over 750 trailers, planned growth in specific county areas, and increased demand for additional preschool classrooms. The school board last revised the policy on October 19, 2015.

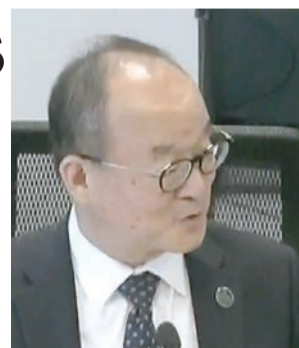
The Fairfax County School Board held a work session on June 20 with its Facilities Planning Advisory Committee (FPAC), pronounced "F-pack." FPAC's 2023-2024 Annual

## Criteria

Priority criteria for boundary changes that "shall be used" are access to programming, enrollment/capacity, proximity, and transportation. Additional criteria that "may be used" are school pyramids, minimizing disruption, supporting family involvement, reducing temporary space use, promoting stability, and minimizing costs.

al Report outlined parameters and methods for responding with recommendations to its boundaries and processes.

FPAC proposed a four-step process. 1) Use capacity as the primary benchmark for the initiation of a boundary study; 2) support the current implementation timeline by fall 2026 after notifying the public by January 2026 to allow families to plan for any necessary adjustments; 3) consider future coun-



Ilryong Moon, at large



Michelle Reid, superintendent



FPAC's school board liaison is Mateo Dunne

ty-wide facility strategic planning and capital investment timelines; and 4) adopt an open communications policy and outreach plan for future boundary studies.

Ilryong Moon, one of three school board representatives at large, asked staff if capacity should be the key benchmark when initiating a boundary study.

The staff person said, "Yes, that's our recommendation. ... Every conversation I've been following for a decade seems to come down to capacity. We have high schools next to each other; one is severely overcrowded, and one is severely under. ... We have schools that can't field academic teams because there isn't the capacity. You've got ten trailers here and none here."

Thirteen citizens serve on the Facilities Planning Advisory Council (FPAC), one from

SCREENSHOTS JUNE 20 SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

each Fairfax County magisterial district, one from the City of Fairfax, and three at-large members. FPAC's school board liaison is Mateo Dunne, Mount Vernon District School Board member. Staff liaisons are Janice Szymanski, chief of facilities services and capital programs, and Jessica Gillis, executive director of capital improvements and planning.

FCPS says that the advisory council may look at a range of facilities-related issues, such as school program capacity, enrollment and projections, transportation and operating efficiencies related to facilities planning, Capital Improvement Program (CIP) prioritization, creative financing and construction strategies, the scope of renovations, school closures and new schools,

SEE BOUNDARY POLICY, PAGE 10

# Governance Committee Continues Policy Review

FROM PAGE 8

would meet with sending and receiving schools to explain the expedited adjustment and solicit public comment.

“We will give the affected school community at least ten days’ notice before the meeting. The superintendent may reconsider an adjustment that previously did not meet the above criteria if staff members’ evaluations indicate a significant change in the adjustment’s impact or determining factors,” Lady said.

Falcone brought forward a community statement requesting Lady to halt the policy review process until she gathers public feedback on the proposed changes. This would allow the school board to collect the necessary data to support these changes. “If you don’t have a policy, there’s no directive in terms of how to evaluate data to operationalize it,” Lady responded. She added that there are many reasons why a new boundary policy would be beneficial, such as budget optimization, student well-being, and sleep time. If the policy is approved, Superintendent Reid and her team will implement the regulations.

Falcone read an inquiry stating that the census data for Herndon indicates a 35 percent Hispanic community, yet nearly 50 percent of



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

**Crowds pack the Fairfax County Schools Board’s Governance Committee as members look into changing school boundaries, Policy Document 8130.7, during its meeting on Tuesday, June 18.**

the student population identifies as Hispanic. “Why is this so different?” Lady answered, “If you live within those boundaries, then that is the school’s demographic makeup.”

Lady said that while some of the county’s public schools look different demographically, they’re very similar regarding academic opportunities and course offerings, which are interchangeable among schools. “AP classes taught at one school are taught at

another school,” Lady said.

She added, “In this conversation, it’s evident that some people have created a pecking order ... of our schools, but all of our schools are good.”

Asked why families were not enrolling in Fairfax County Public Schools, Lady said they only know that when a student withdraws from the division, there is a withdrawal process where the parents must doc-

ument where they’re taking their children. The division cannot access the information if the code selection doesn’t represent where the student is going. She added that the division could better capture the information.

One of the inquiries addressed the assertion that redistricting students from McLean High School to Langley High School and the subsequent transfer of Great Falls High School students to Herndon High School do not create diversity or equity at Langley.

Lady replied, “I haven’t thought about it that way, because nowhere in this policy does it say anything about ethnic diversity.”

Falcone read an inquiry that asked Lady to empathize with a family whose children have attended the same school for years. “How would you feel if your school changed, and, more specifically, that change led to your children being in a less safe environment based on the Virginia Department of Education’s reported statistics regarding the number of incidents?”

“I think it’s very difficult ... I understand that change is hard, but it is not impossible. And I understand what you are sharing in terms of incidents,” Lady said.

To view the GFCAs YouTube video of the Town Hall, click this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZmM5mY43U>.

# Boundary Policy and Assignment of Students

FROM PAGE 9

and planning for student housing (building additions, modular relocations, and review of school boundaries). 6-18-24 - Policy 8130 - FINAL Governance Committee - UPDATED Title.pdf (170 KB)

On Tuesday afternoon, June 25, at the Connection’s press time, the Fairfax County School Board will hold its Forum and Work Session, during which, from 1 to 4:30 p.m., the board will discuss Policy 8130: Local School Boundaries, Program Assignments, and School Closings.

According to the Boundary Policy Review, June 25, 2024, available online via BoadDocs, the priority criteria for boundary changes that “shall be used” are access to programming, enrollment/capacity, proximity, and transportation. Additional criteria that “may be used” are school pyramids, minimizing disruption, supporting family involvement, reducing temporary space use, promoting stability, and minimizing costs.

Boundary Policy Review, June 25, 2024, is also called Final Draft Boundary Policy PowerPoint 6\_25\_24 Work Session.pdf (582 KB). It is one of two posted meeting materials. The other is 6-18-24 - Policy 8130 - FINAL Governance Committee - UPDATED Title.pdf (170 KB).

The board will only discuss the policy on Tuesday, as the Governance Committee must finalize it after the board discussion. After public notice and finalization of the draft, the full school board will cast its vote. Once the school board adopts the policy, the superintendent implements it with community engagement before making boundary adjustments.

The 18-page Boundary Policy Review states that a better, current policy would help address community concerns about temporary classrooms (trailers), instructional program locations, overcrowding, facility renovation timelines, and transportation.

According to Boundary Policy Review:

❖ The impact summary of the proposed policy changes, Draft Policy 8130, states it benefits the community by assigning implementation to the division superintendent. It requires full school board approval of any adjustments except temporary emergencies, prioritizes proximity, provides a 5-year cyclical review, and strengthens public input and engagement.

❖ It compares the current and draft policies. In the current policy, “The superintendent is responsible for implementing the policies. The new policy makes this explicit.

❖ In a side-by-side view of the overarching goal of the assignment of students, the current policy states, “The basic policy of the Fairfax County School Board shall be to assign pupils to the schools and programs that serve the areas of their residences in accordance with the local school boundaries and service areas established by the School Board.”

❖ The new draft states that the goal is “to maintain or improve operational excellence and efficiency to sustain a world-class education system. ... FCPS is committed to providing facilities across the division that are equitably equipped and funded to provide safe and accessible school settings.”

❖ In a side-by-side comparison of adjustment types, the current policy is that the superintendent may recommend, after public meetings in affected communities and consultation with affected school board repre-

sentatives in an emergency, that less than 15 percent of students are affected; a board vote is required, but public comment/hearing is not required.

❖ In the new draft, during off-cycle adjustments, when the need is “expedited,” the superintendent is authorized to act after public meetings and requires a board vote.

❖ The current policy highlights the criteria for boundary changes, which include factors such as proximity to residences, projected school enrollment and capacity, walking and busing safety, natural and man-made geographic features, neighborhood impact, school feeder alignments, contiguous school attendance areas, long-range capital plans, the socioeconomic characteristics of school populations,

the distribution of programs and resources, and adjustments made without regard to magisterial districts or postal addresses.

❖ The proposed criteria for boundary changes prioritize access to programming, enrollment/capacity, proximity, and transportation. Additional criteria may be used, including school pyramids, minimizing disruption, supporting family involvement, reducing the use of temporary space, promoting stability, and minimizing costs.

For more detailed information, visit [https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/D6FSRL73F2DF/\\$file/Final%20Draft%20Boundary%20Policy%20PowerPoint%206\\_25\\_24%20Work%20Session.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/D6FSRL73F2DF/$file/Final%20Draft%20Boundary%20Policy%20PowerPoint%206_25_24%20Work%20Session.pdf).

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

**ALIVE!** Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralixandria.org/ALIVE>

**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).

**Join Friends’ Board.** Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City’s most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria’s top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email [FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com).

**Volunteer Drivers Needed.** Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11

# Workhouse Arts Foundation Appoints Keith Gordon as New President and CEO

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

**O**n Monday, July 1, McLean resident Keith Gordon steps into his new position as the President and Chief Executive Officer at the Workhouse Arts Foundation, Inc., which operates the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton. Gordon brings over 20 years of leadership experience in the non-profit and private sectors, most recently at Fight For Children, and as President for the NFL Players Incorporated, a subsidiary of the National Football League Players Association.

Gordon is a graduate of Arizona State University, and he started his career in advertising in New York City before joining the National Basketball Association driving collaboration amongst teams, sharing best practices, refining team marketing strategies, and increasing team and league revenues, the Workhouse said.

"We are very excited to welcome Keith Gordon as our new President and CEO," said Caroline Blanco, Chair of the Board of Directors at the Workhouse. "With his significant experience as a leader in the non-profit sector and engaging personality, I have no doubt that Keith has what it takes to turn the potential of this wonderful organization into a reality," she added.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Keith Gordon

Keith was introduced to the arts beginning with his mother, an artist and later a professor of art history, and his older brother, a television and film actor in New York City.

Keith resides in McLean, Virginia with his wife Mary and their two children, Matthew and Mia. When not in the office he enjoys traveling with his family, outdoor adventures, family paint nights, tennis, and learning new songs on the guitar.

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 10

Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to [cancer.org/drive](http://cancer.org/drive).

**STEM Professionals Needed.** Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, [stemvolunteers.org](http://stemvolunteers.org), during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or [donaldrea@aol.com](mailto:donaldrea@aol.com).

**ALIVE!** offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit [www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm](http://www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm) or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteers@alive-inc.org](mailto:volunteers@alive-inc.org).

**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).

**Mentors Wanted.** Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria's preteens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for "Space of Her Own," and "Space of His Own," serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult role models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit [www.spaceofherown.org](http://www.spaceofherown.org) and [www.spaceofhisown.org](http://www.spaceofhisown.org). For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at [sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov](mailto:sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov) or phone at 703-746-4687.

**Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed.** To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

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# Mount Vernon and Alexandria Independence Day Festivities

**F**riday, June 28: Soak up a performance from the National Concert Band and 18th-century entertainment before the pyrotechnic party begins during Independence Fireworks at George Washington's Mount Vernon. Note: Tickets for Saturday, June 29 are sold out.

## Thursday, July 4:

Return to the first president's home on Independence Day itself for An American Celebration at Mount Vernon, complete with daytime fireworks, a moving naturalization ceremony and interpretation surrounding Mount Vernon's enslaved laborers.

Make Alexandria your home base during Washington, D.C.'s iconic evening fireworks show, visible from

vantage points throughout the city.

## Saturday, July 13:

The City of Alexandria celebrates its milestone 275th birthday and the USA's 248th birthday with a grand fireworks display at 9:30 p.m. at Oronoco Bay Park. Experience special programming and activities at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial and Waterfront Park, plus live jazz from the Yellow Door Quartet and an art show opening at Canal Center Plaza, among ten vantage points for fireworks viewing. The big birthday experience includes cupcakes, local vendors and live music from Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. Plus, Port City Brewing Company will offer its special edition ALX275 brew at Oronoco Bay Park.



GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT VERNON

## COMMUNITY NEWS AT A GLANCE

— COMPILED BY Y MERCIA HOBSON

### FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE



SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Fairfax County Sheriff's Office is recruiting deputy sheriffs.

### SPRINGFIELD AND ACROSS THE COUNTY



SCREENSHOT @PATHERRITY

## County's Sheriff's Office Is Recruiting

The Fairfax County Sheriff's Office is recruiting for positions as Deputy Sheriff with a \$15,000 hiring bonus. According to the office, upon the date of Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy graduation, "All new Deputy Sheriffs are assigned to a Confinement squad in the Adult Detention Center on a shift for approximately 12 weeks where you shadow the deputy, work calls together and ultimately be evaluated at the end of the training period. Upon successful completion of the Field Training period, you will be assigned to a shift where you will work either a fixed-day schedule, beginning at 6:30 a.m. and ending at 7 p.m., or a fixed-night schedule, beginning at 6:30 p.m. and ending at 7 a.m." <https://fcsocareers.org/recruiting/become-a-deputy/>

## National Night Out 2024

Fairfax County Supervisor Pat Herrity, Springfield District, reminds everyone that National Night Out returns on Aug. 6 to Fairfax County. All district stations are sharing information about the event to encourage participation. Support the county's police officers and sheriff's deputies by signing up to host an event, cookout, ice cream social, light on campaign, and the like in your local community at <https://form.jotform.com/FCPD/nno-2024-registration>.

## FCPS' Summer Meal Program Underway: No-cost meals offered

Supervisor Dan Storck (Mount Vernon) reposted an announcement by FCPS that during summer break, no-cost breakfast and lunch are available to all children 18 years of age and younger at FCPS sites across the county through Aug. 16 through its Summer Meal Service Program. Meals are provided on a first-come, first-serve basis. Visit <https://www.fcps.edu/family-resources/student-safety-and-wellness/food-and-nutrition-programs/summer-meal-service>



SCREENSHOT FCPS

All children under 18 are eligible for no-cost breakfast and lunch this summer through FCPS.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board is reviewing School Boundary Adjustment Policy 1830. The board's final decision may ultimately change which school a student attends.

# ENTERTAINMENT

## POTOMAC HARMONY OFFERS HARMONY & LEARNING!

School may be out in June, but the learning gets started on Wednesday nights at Potomac Harmony chorus rehearsals! Learn the art of 4-part harmony treble singing while experiencing the joy of ringing chords! Together, guests and members will rehearse new music and create harmonies lead by the expertise of our talented director Allison Lynskey. Potomac Harmony members are women and nonbinary individuals from all walks of life, live around the DMV, and have various levels of musical and singing experience. Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings, 7-9 p.m., at The View Alexandria, 5000 Fairbanks Avenue, Alexandria. Questions? Contact Jackie Bottash, [backrowlead@aol.com](mailto:backrowlead@aol.com).

## 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/>

## 34TH SEASON OF THE LYCEUM CHAMBER SERIES

The Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association (WMPA) announces the 34th season of its Lyceum Chamber Series, under the guidance of Music Director Laureate Ulysses James. Hosted at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum, located at 201 South Washington Street in Old Town Alexandria, this series promises to offer an array of exceptional weekly performances throughout the summer. All concerts are at 3 p.m.; no tickets required. Suggested donation \$25.

## LIVING. BREATHING. MUSIC.

Featuring Anna Binneweg, Music Director, Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic  
Ulysses James, Music Director Laureate, Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic  
Alberto Rodriguez, Music Director, Washington Metropolitan Youth Orchestra  
Martin Garfield-Levine, Music Director, Washington Metropolitan Concert Orchestra  
Caroline Mousset, Executive and Artistic Planning Director

## MUSIC SCHEDULE

August 4: Alexandria Baroque  
Michael De Sapio, Baroque Violin  
John Armato, Lute, Baroque Guitar  
August 11: Tapestry Cello Ensemble  
August 18: Quodlibet, Flute/Clarinet/Bassoon  
August 25: Samuel Runolfson, Cello  
September 1: Michael De Sapio, Violin  
September 8: Hai Jin, Piano  
September 15: John Sutherland Earle: Piano & Friends

## LYCEUM CHAMBER SERIES SUMMER 2024 CONCERT SCHEDULE

June 30: Luke Ratcliffe, piano  
July 14: Crystal Lee, Flute | Brittany

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Del Ray Artisans Gallery presents "All About Love" for the month of June in Alexandria.

Pemberton, Clarinet | Eunae Han, Piano  
Works by Emanuel, Debussy, Saint-Saëns, and Coleman  
July 21: Sasha Beresovsky, Piano  
July 28: Maxim Pakhomov, Piano  
Works by Schubert, Dvorák, Poulenc, and Rachmaninoff

## JUNE 1 TO AUG. 31

**Creative Summer Programs** is a series of workshops exploring the arts. Learn techniques in drawing, stone carving, jewelry, resin, mosaics, and more from local artists. Delve into creative exploration solo or with friends. Free and paid programs are offered. Sign up for what inspires you! Held at Del Ray Artisans (2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria) unless noted. Details: [DelRayArtisans.org/creative-summer](http://DelRayArtisans.org/creative-summer)

## MOUNT VERNON NIGHTS Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30 p.m.

At Grist Mill Park  
4718 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria  
Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

## JUNE

28 The Artimus Pyle Band - Honoring Ronnie Van Zant's Lynyrd Skynyrd (Lynyrd Skynyrd Tribute Band)

## JULY

5 Cecily (Soul, Jazz)  
12 Strutman Lane (Funk/Pop)  
19 Doc Robinson (Rock and Roll)  
26 Bio Ritmo (Salsa)

## AUGUST

2 Eastern Standard Time (Ska and Reggae)  
9 Project Loceca (World Music)  
16 Burn the Ballroom (Alternate Rock)  
23 Deanna Bogart (Blues, R&B)  
30 Melissa Qinn Fox (Country/American)

## AT WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.

## JUNE

29 Workhouse Fireworks Festival (Ticketed event. Visit [www.workhousearts.org](http://www.workhousearts.org))

## JULY

6 EU Sugar Bear (Go Go/Funk)  
13 Robin and Linda Williams (Folk)  
20 Fast Eddie & The Slowpokes (Blues)  
27 Bela Dona Band (Funk/Jazz)

## AUGUST

3 The U.S. Air Force Strings (Alt-country/Roots rock)  
10 Ocho de Bastos (Latin/Pop)  
17 Alex Hamburger (Jazz)  
24 The U.S. Army Band Country Roads (Country)

## JUNE 6 TO AUG. 26

"Nature's Spirit." Nina Tisara's mosaics and Steven Halperson's photographs and etched copper will be exhibited in the Estate House at River Farm, 7931 East Boulevard Drive, Alexandria. The public is invited to an Opening Reception on Sunday, June 23, 2-4 p.m. (RSVP: [ninat@ninatisara.com](mailto:ninat@ninatisara.com)). The Estate House is open to the public 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday - Friday and 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. on Saturdays. Since the Estate House will occasionally close for rental events the public is encouraged to call 703-768-5780, ext. 137, to be certain the exhibit is open for viewing.

## JUNE 7-30

"All About Love" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features art that explores love broadly: romantic love, love of family, love of pets, strong friendships, etc. Works by dozens of local artists will be on display and available for sale. Opening Reception: Friday, June 7, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

## JUNE 29 TO JULY 21

"American Psycho." At Ainslie Arts Center, 3900 West Braddock Road, Alexandria. Monumental Theatre Company will stage Duncan Sheik and Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's "American Psycho." Based on Bret Easton Ellis's 1991 novel of the same name, the musical follows protagonist Patrick Bateman. A



Historic Pohick Church in Lorton will host an Independence Day Program on Thursday, July 4, 2024. (Pictured): Rev. Tom Costa and his wife Susan of the Historic Pohick Church Docent Guild.

suave young Wall Street banker, Patrick enjoys the finer things by day with his elite friends, but as night falls, his taste for darker pleasures threatens to uproot his normal facade. Tickets are: \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door, and \$10 for students using code STUDENT (must show ID). Visit <http://www.monumentaltheatre.org>.

## SATURDAY/JUNE 29

**Fireworks at Workhouse. 6-10 p.m.**  
At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Bring a chair or a blanket to relax on the lawn and enjoy a display of vibrant colors, brilliant lights and ground-breaking explosions, while also providing amazing and fun entertainment for all ages. The DJ leads the party on the Workhouse Quad with special performances from local music and dance groups. Food trucks and beverage options (food, soft drinks, craft beer and wine available). Price starts at \$40 per vehicle in advance; \$45 on-site. <https://www.workhousearts.org/fireworks>

## SATURDAY/JUNE 29

**Fireworks, Food and Family Fun at Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston.** Fun starts at noon, with fireworks starting at 9:15 p.m. Enjoy food trucks, live performances and fireworks at the annual celebration. The park will close to new arrivals at 8:45 p.m. Admission is free. Parking: \$15 ahead of the event date; \$20 at the gate. The park is the location of the Water Mine Family Swimmin' Hole. Tickets for the Water Mine, which will be open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., are sold separately.

## SUNDAY/JUNE 30

**Angels and Demons: Violin Masterworks performed by Michael DeSapio.** 2 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Angelic sweetness and demonic fury have both been part of the violin's personality for ages. Violinist Michael De Sapio takes you down some lesser-known byways of the repertoire for solo violin. Hear works by Pierre Rode, Benjamin Godard, Arthur Honegger, Richard Rudolf Klein, and Eugène Ysaÿe's spectacular and haunting Solo Sonata No. 2 to mark the centenary of its composition.

## THURSDAY/JULY 4

**Independence Day Program.** Noon to 1 p.m. At Historic Pohick Church, 9301 Richmond Highway, Lorton. Featuring a Special Reading of the Declaration of Independence. As part of the 250th Anniversary Celebration of Historic Pohick Church, the community is invited to a free public reading of the Declaration of Independence at Historic Pohick Church by historical re-enactor, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Costa, portraying the Rev. Mr. Massey, the Rector of Pohick Church in 1776. The reading will take place at 12 noon, with free docent tours of the Colonial church of George Washington, George Fairfax, and George Mason following the presentation. Visit the website at [www.pohick.org](http://www.pohick.org).

## SATURDAY/JULY 6

**Used Book Sale:** 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 15

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**BULLETIN**

FROM PAGE 11  
brianmorreale@gmail.com

**SUPPORT GROUPS**

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at [suzdoyle@gmail.com](mailto:suzdoyle@gmail.com) or 571-403-0673.

The Parkinson's Disease Support Group of Alexandria meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. At the Hollin Hall Senior Center, Room 109, 1500 Shenandoah Road. All Parkinson's patients and caregivers are welcome.

The Caregiver Support Group is facilitated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center, 1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email [DAAS@alexandriava.gov](mailto:DAAS@alexandriava.gov).

FACE Center Support Groups provide parents with a space to share their daily parenting frustrations and triumphs while offering new strategies for helping parents to cope, build positive parent-child relationships and best support their children's learning.

- \* Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.
- \* Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, 614 Four Mile Road.

Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free. Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or [krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us) for more.

Divorce Workshop for Women. Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King St. The workshops are designed to provide education on the legal, financial, family and personal issues of divorce in a logical, yet compassionate way. The workshop fee is \$25. Visit [www.novasecondsaturday.com](http://www.novasecondsaturday.com) for more.

**ONGOING**

Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program. The City of Alexandria has reinstated its sewer Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program for homeowners in designated areas that historically experience basement back-ups or flooding. The program reimburses homeowners for up to 50 percent of the cost of installing a BFP device by a licensed plumbing contractor, up to a maximum of \$2,000. The current program period is through Dec. 31, 2019. Alexandria homeowners should call the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services at 703-746-4014 or visit [www.alexandriava.gov/tes](http://www.alexandriava.gov/tes).

# ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

## THURSDAY/JULY 11

**July Coffee & Connections.** 8:30-9:30 a.m. Above ALX, 277 S. Washington Street, Penthouse, Alexandria. Presented by the Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network. Hear from ALX Community Founding Partner & COO Kelly Grant who will share her incredible story!

## SATURDAY/JULY 13

**Celebrate 275 years with Alexandria!** The City of Alexandria will celebrate its 275th and the USA's 248th birthday at Oronoco Bay Park (100 Madison St., Alexandria). The event includes live music by the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra and ends with the grand finale -- a fireworks display at 9:30 p.m. Admission is free.

## JULY 18-21

**The Lost Weekend Exhibit.** At Nepenthe Gallery, 7918 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Featuring the photography of May Pang, John Lennon's companion and lover. Few people knew John Lennon as intimately as May Pang. She was Lennon's lover during the infamous "Lost Weekend" which lasted 18 months during late 1973 through 1975. During this highly creative time for Lennon, Pang took candid photos of Lennon in a comfortable, relaxed environment. Pang will be in attendance at the Nepenthe Gallery, meeting customers and telling stories behind these photos for sale of John Lennon. Thursday, July 18 from 6-8 p.m., artist talk and opening reception. Visit the website [www.NepentheGallery.com](http://www.NepentheGallery.com)

## JULY 18-20

**250th Anniversary of the Fairfax Resolves.** History enthusiasts and patriots alike are invited to participate in the 250th Anniversary of the Signing of the Fairfax Resolves, a founding document authored by George Mason and adopted at a meeting chaired by George Washington on July 18, 1774. Events are hosted by the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) and are scheduled to take place in and around Alexandria, Virginia, where the resolves were adopted.

Organized by the Fairfax Resolves Chapter of the SAR, events will highlight locations significant to the signers of the Fairfax Resolves document and will foster a deeper understanding of this document and its significance in shaping the United States as we know it today. For more information about specific events, visit [www.fairfaxresolvessar.org/public250](http://www.fairfaxresolvessar.org/public250)

## SCHEDULE:

### Thursday, July 18th

9:30 AM: Gunston Hall – George Mason Plaque Dedication Ceremony  
11:30 AM: Mount Vernon – Wreath Laying Ceremony and Program at the Tomb of George Washington  
3:00 PM: Pohick Church – 250th Commemoration of the Fairfax Resolves, Program and Plaque Unveiling Ceremony for the Signers with remarks by the historical figure Rev. Lee Massey  
6:00 PM: Market Square in Alexandria, Virginia - Alexandria 250 Commemoration of the Fairfax Resolves, Virginia 250 Road to Revolution Plaque Unveiling for the Fairfax Resolves, Keynote by Virginia 250 Chair Carly Fiorina, Mayoral Proclamation, George Washington and George Mason interpreters, Fife & Drum presentation

### Friday, July 19th

3:00 PM: Christ Church – Program, Plaque Unveiling for the Signers, and presentation of the

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Workhouse Arts Center will have fireworks on Saturday, June 29, 2024 in Lorton.

Governor's Proclamation for the Fairfax Resolves 250th by the Secretary of the Commonwealth on behalf of the Governor of Virginia  
**Saturday, July 20th**  
10:00 AM: George Washington Townhouse Alexandria, VA – Program and George Washington Plaque Dedication Ceremony

## SATURDAY/JULY 20

**Second Annual Best of the West.** 1-5 p.m. At Patrick Henry Recreation Center, 4653 Taney Ave., Alexandria. Best of the West is a community event showcasing West End Business Association members and restaurant tastings! This event is open to everyone. It is a great opportunity to enjoy a day out in the community, get to know local business owners, and sample some of the best food that the West End has to offer.

## SATURDAY/JULY 20

**Mount Vernon Flea Market and Arts and Crafts Fair.** 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At Mount Vernon Masonic Lodge #219, 8717 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Up to 45 vendors, inside and outside, great variety, refreshments on site and inside the lodge. Crafters, Artisans, Antique, Vintage, Collectibles, and neighbors downsizing with practical items/household, furniture, misc. This event takes place every third Saturday of the month from March to December. Next Dates: July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, November 16, December 21 (+ bonus holiday market Dec 7 or 14). Visit the website: <https://mountvernonfleamarket.wordpress.com/>

## SATURDAY/JULY 27

**Beats, Bites & Brews - Summer Extravaganza.** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At John Carlyle Square, 300 John Carlyle St., Alexandria. Featuring Live Beats: Groove to the sounds of summer with live music performances that will set the perfect tone for your sun-soaked day; Delectable Bites: Indulge your taste buds with a variety of summer-inspired bites from local food vendors; Refreshing Brews: Quench your thirst with an array of cold beverages, including craft beers and refreshing summer cocktails in the Beer Garden; Summer Shopping: Explore local artisans and vendors offering a curated selection of summer goodies, from fashion finds to unique crafts.

## SATURDAY/AUGUST 17

**Del Ray Bands & Brews Bar Crawl.** 12:30- 6 p.m. At Del Ray Business Association, 2308 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Join the fun and vibrant Del Ray community for a special summer event, featuring live music in outdoor restaurant venues along the Avenue! Bands & Brews. This event is being brought to you by the Del Ray Business Association and will benefit a local non-profit. The first 250 registrants

will get a swag bag with a 16 oz souvenir collectors cup! Advance tickets are \$15 (\$25 at the door), and include specials on cocktails, beer, and food at each of the 20+ participating restaurants, live music at every venue, trolley transportation, 50/50 raffles, a photo booth, and many more fun giveaways. You must be 21+ to participate in the crawl, but children and families are welcome at family friendly establishments and at the main stage at Pat Miller Square. Visit [visitdelray.com](http://visitdelray.com).

## SATURDAY/AUG. 24

**Around the World Cultural Food Festival.** 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. At Oronoco Bay Park, 100 Madison Street, downtown Old Town Alexandria. Come and enjoy delicious foods from around the world while watching a diverse folk show with singers and dancers from different countries, then take a break and go shopping from the ethnic artisans and crafters participating in the festival.

## THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com). Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or [www.Birchmere.com](http://www.Birchmere.com).

## JUNE

Fri. 28: Bela Dona Band \$39.50  
Sat. 29: Gary Puckett & The Union Gap \$45.00

## JULY

Wed. 3: Three Dog Night \$85.00 SOLD OUT!  
Fri. 5: Magical Mystery Doors – A Tribute to The Beatles, Led Zepplin, & The Doors \$35.00  
Sat. 6: Donnell Rawlings \$49.50  
Sun. 7: J. Holiday \$45.00  
Wed. 10: Los Lobos w/ Chad Hollister & Primo \$69.50 SOLD OUT!  
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## "It Doesn't Have Me Yet"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

How I closed last week's column is how I open this week's. Why? Because attitude, anecdotally writing, is how I can - without offering any guarantees, control my universe and secure my future. Not hardly. However, if I don't think it, it surely won't happen. The dilemma/trick is rolling with the punches that cancer inevitably land and trying to shake them off somehow. And that 'somehow' is complicated by the fact that there's not exactly a neutral corner. Moreover, there's no place to hide, no place to run, and no place to go for a quick remedy for what ails you (meaning me). Which as you regular readers know is papillary thyroid cancer with chronic kidney disease on the side.

The problem/reality is that cancer isn't simply a disease - and often a terminal one at that; depending on the type of cancer you have and how far along (what stage) you are, it's a lifestyle, too. Moreover, it's the predicament which keeps on "predictamenting. It's like having the sword of Damocles hanging over your head, or for the more modern readers, it evokes Linus from the comic strip "Peanuts," having that dark cloud following him everywhere. Cancer is one seriously dark cloud. What's worse is that cancer permeates your entire body. It affects, in one way or another, your brain, your heart, your lungs, your entire being. In its own insidious way, cancer takes over and rearranges everything, figuratively speaking. And unfortunately, despite the best medical care, often, (once again, depending on the type and staging of the cancer) there's nothing - to invoke a classic baseball description: "You can't stop it. you can only hope to maintain it." I ought to know, I've been maintaining it for years.

My intention over these past 15+ years of being a cancer patient has been an attempt at being one for a long time. During this experience, I have been as "compliant" as the doctors would have wanted. I've never missed an appointment. I've always attended my miscellaneous scan appointments and such, I've always had ample supplies of medicine, among other responsibilities. In summary, I have done what the doctors have told me. They have described me as 'compliant,' a real compliment as I've come to understand. I figured that if I was going to take on something as daunting as cancer, I better be clear in my head as to how I was going to do it. And knowing there were no guarantees made it an even a greater challenge. Could I be "the one" (who survives) we asked my oncologist. "Sure, you could be the one." (Although I didn't take him literally. I have come to find out that cancer is a big dog who wants very much be the only one to on your porch. And though cancer survival rates are improving, thousands of people are still dying.)

Having been through the cancer wars, going back nearly 15 and half years, I do feel that experience does give me a sort of emotional foundation as we navigate yet again through this minefield of inevitability. And though I have mostly been there and done that, unfortunately, it doesn't give me much control. Just because I know the dos and don'ts and understand the perimeters of what's reasonable to expect, it doesn't mean I have any sort of advantage over my cancer. All I can control is how I respond to doctor's orders and the interpretations of the miscellaneous scans that I undergo. After all these years, these reactions/assessments are like muscle memory.

I've endured so much for so long; I can't help but wonder if my inventory of positivity and humor has been drained. To take on cancer requires your best effort. Any sign of weakness, however slight might be enough to open the floodgates. The body can only take so much. As I witnessed with my mother-in-law and with my own father, sometimes new complications are just too much for the patient to bare and the patient succumbs to their disease. That's what I worry about: succumbing. I don't even like the sound of it, let alone the meaning. I guess I'll just invoke Scarlet O'Hara from "Gone With The Wind" and "think about that tomorrow."

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



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