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Centreville ❖ Little Rocky Run
CENTRE VIEW

WELLBEING
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At Springfest 2019**

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Children's Show**

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**Tragic Fire at Bent
Tree Apartments**

NEWS, PAGE 2

Laughing inside a horse trailer's cab at Springfest's touch-a-truck activity are the Granger siblings, Annabelle, 9, and Tommy, 10.

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/CENTREVIEW
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The fire at the Bent Tree Apartments displaced 30 people and killed one.



BONNIE HOBBS/CENTRE VIEW

Tragic Fire at Bent Tree Apartments

A fire last week at the Bent Tree Apartments in Centreville killed one person and displaced 30 others. Authorities identified the fatality as David Zimmers, 60, but no cause of death has yet been revealed.

According to the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, firefighters responded early Monday morning, April 22, around 1:30 a.m., to the three-story, apartment complex after neighbors called 911. The blaze damaged 13 apartments total in two, six-unit buildings, plus another building.

The two-alarm conflagration brought 60

firefighters to the scene, including those from both Centreville Fire Stations 17 and 38. As of press time, fire officials had not released a cause of the fire, but the tragedy displaced some 30 residents, who were initially given help by the Red Cross.

Flames engulfed all three floors of the buildings involved. And while firefighters were able to quickly extinguish the flames, they remained on scene until around 5 a.m. to make sure no smoking embers began burning again. Damages are estimated at more than \$610,000.

— BONNIE HOBBS

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Families enjoying themselves on a warm day at Springfest.

Celebrating Nature at Springfest 2019

Springfest, Fairfax County's official Earth Day and Arbor Day celebration, was held Saturday, April 27, at the Sully Historic Site in Chantilly.



Watching Pushti Sambher, 6, golf, are (from left) the Chopra siblings, Rohaan, 6, and Neeti, 10, plus Pushti's mom, Preeti Sambher.



From left, 4-year-old twins, Riku and Kai McDonald, have fun at Springfest.



Kai Jacob, 5, reaches out to touch an eastern king snake held by Kenny Monohan.



On right, Josh Smith, a Fairfax County park manager, tells children how humans impact local watersheds.



Musician Trevor Brown sings to children about farming.

PHOTOS BY
BONNIE HOBBS



Shanthi Saravanan, 8, doing the beanbag toss.



Emmett Craddock, 6, holds up a blue, paper fish he caught. With him are (from left) grandma Tricia Craddock, sister Brooke, 4, and mom Cheryl Craddock.



Avery Ingman, 4, walks carefully across a rope bridge.

WELLBEING



COURTESY PHOTO

Schar Cancer Institute rendering.

Schar Cancer Institute Opens to Patients May 13

Institute becomes a landmark for health care and research in Fairfax County

The Inova Health System will usher in a new level of medical treatment and patient care when the Inova Schar Cancer Institute opens to patients May 13 on its Merrifield campus.

“The Schar Cancer Center raises the already-high level of health-care facilities in Fairfax County,” said Catherine W. Riley, interim president and CEO of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. “As part of the Inova Center for Personalized Health it can make Fairfax County a destination for world-class research and clinical work.”

Dedication ceremonies took place Wednesday, April 24, for the \$150 million center for care and research that is anchoring the 117-acre Inova campus, fulfilling a vision that began with the acquisition of the former Exxon Mobil site. The institute was made possible, in part, by a \$50 million contribution from Dwight Schar and wife Martha, whose legacy will extend beyond Fairfax County-based NVR home builders.

MEMBERS OF THE SCHAR FAMILY were joined by others, including U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy and wife Marcelle, political commentator Cokie Roberts, and Lara Hopewell, a local hockey mom-turned-crusader for cancer research — all cancer survivors. Also participating in the ceremonies were U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova and Inova CEO Dr. Stephen Jones. The ceremonies featured more than 100 cancer patients and their family members, who became the first to walk through the front door of the newly-dedicated facility.

“We are so fortunate in Fairfax County to have access to such world class medical care and treatment,” said Bulova, who presented a proclamation from the Board of Supervisors congratulating Inova. “We have amazing facilities, doctors and cutting-edge technologies that are right here, literally in our own backyard, and that is so incredibly valuable.”

Riley echoed the importance of having a first-class cancer facility in the county, offering residents the highest quality care without requiring them to travel, often hundreds of miles for treatment. She also emphasized the importance of the research that will take place at the facility, creating a new horizon in the

diversification of Fairfax County’s workforce.

“We’re very excited about the research and development aspect of the Schar Institute and the ways in which it will help diversify our local economy,” Riley said. “It will attract new doctors and scientists. In partnership with facilities like the University of Virginia Medical School, those researchers will be applying for new grants and developing the kinds of programs that will make Fairfax County known as a medical research and development center.”

“We are so fortunate in Fairfax County to have access to such world class medical care and treatment.”

Sharon Bulova, Chairman, County Board of Supervisors

DURING THE DEDICATION, Jones announced that Dr. John Deeken, who had been serving as acting president of the Inova Schar Cancer Institute, is named permanently to the president’s role. Deeken said the institute would continue stress its “patient-first” philosophy, building on its ability to provide one-stop care through teams of doctors, nurses, therapists, researchers and specialized counselors.

“The vision and the spirit is that the patient is at the center of everything we do,” said Deeken, who previously served as COO of the Inova Translational Medicine Institute. “Fundamentally, that’s the difference in the model of care at Inova.”

“This is the culmination of years of effort in planning and design and recruiting – to make real what we’d hoped to have for all the patients in Northern Virginia, which is expert care close to home. Nobody in Northern Virginia should think they need to go to Houston, New York or Baltimore to get world-class cancer care. We have it right here.”

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ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/MAY 3-4

Rock of Ages: High School Edition.

7 p.m. at Westfield High School in Chantilly. As the sun sets on the LA strip, Rock 'n' Roll comes alive inside the doors of the Bourbon Room. With impending demolitions and the struggles of young love, the people of the strip are still "looking for nothin' but a good time" in this electrifying tale of Rock of Ages. The cast and crew of Westfield Theatre's Rock of Ages will be collecting donations for Shelter House at each performance. Visit shelterhouse.org for a list of needed items. Tickets are \$10 at westfieldtheatre.com or \$12 at the door.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/MAY 3-5

Used Book Sale. Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1-4 p.m. at Chantilly Regional Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly. Gently used books, DVDs, CDs and audio books for children and adults. Sponsored by Friends of the Chantilly Regional Library to benefit programs and renovation projects at the library. Free admission. Call 703-502-3883 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/events.

SATURDAY/MAY 4

Annual Plant Sale by Centreville Garden Club. 9 a.m.-noon, near Giant, 5615 Stone Road, Centreville. Large selection of perennials, annuals, veggies, herbs and houseplants. Help us fund our civic projects. Learn more at CentrevilleGardenClub.blogspot.com or email: centrevillegardenclub@gmail.com.

"Farm Skills-Music Maker." 10-11:15 a.m. at Frying Pan Farm Park, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Music has always been an important part of rural community life, and sometimes all one needs are a few items from the tool shed to make fun and interesting sounds. Learn about different musical instruments, sing songs and make instruments from recycled materials on the farm. For participants age 7-adult. \$8 per person. Call 703-437-9101 or visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/frying-pan-park>.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/MAY 4-5

HO Gauge Model Train Show. Noon-4 p.m. at The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Potomac Module Group will have running HO gauge model trains. Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.



Members of the Fairfax Ballet Senior Company rehearse for "Carnival of the Animals" and other original works and excerpts from "Sleeping Beauty."

Ballet Performance

The Fairfax Ballet Company (FBC) presents "Carnival of the Animals," an original story ballet. Other Works performed at this show will include six fairy variations from the Prologue of "The Sleeping Beauty" by Tchaikovsky, set by Marcela Figueroa for the Senior Company. Naomi Widelski has set a contemporary/classical ballet piece for the Senior Company to music by The Piano Guys. Junior Company dancers will perform a piece entitled "Beyond the Within" choreographed by Hannah Locke. Saturday, May 18, 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, May 19, 4 p.m. at Centreville High School, 6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton. Visit fbccarnival2019.brownpapertickets.com for tickets.

TUESDAYS STARTING MAY 7

Program for Homeschoolers. 1-2:30 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Learn a new skill with Homeschool Animal Vets. Students get hands-on experience caring for animals in the visitor center and park. They will explore the lives of birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Feed and refresh tanks for exhibit animals and explore the park to see what staff does to assist wildlife. The program meets every Tuesday from 1 until 2:30 p.m. It is appropriate for youngsters ages 8 to 15. Call 703-631-0013 or visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/eclawrence>.

WEDNESDAY/MAY 8

Bike to School Day. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) will participate in Bike to School Day to promote physical activity and reduce traffic congestion and pollution near schools. Not only does biking to school help foster lifelong healthy habits, but it can also encourage active transportation in the early-life stage. Starting the school day with a bike ride, walk, or roll will ensure that students are awake and ready to learn. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children to school, and to work with their school and

PTA or PTO to assemble bike trains or walking groups for the event. Visit www.walkbiketoschool.org/.

FRIDAY/MAY 10

6th Annual Casino Night. 6-10 p.m. at Volkswagen Group of America Headquarters, 2200 Ferdinand Porsche Drive, Herndon. 6th Annual Casino Night fundraiser supporting the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington/Fairfax County Region. Hosted By LaVar Arrington with special guest "Secretary of Defense" Dexter Manley. Visit one.bidpal.net/casinonight2019 for tickets.

FRIDAY/MAY 17

Bike to Work Day 2019. Pit stop times vary, all over the region. Join more than 20,000 area commuters for a free celebration of bicycling as a fun, healthy and environmentally-friendly way to get to work. There are 115 Bike to Work Day pit stops to choose from. The first 20,000 to register and attend will receive a free Bike to Work Day T-shirt, enjoy refreshments and chances to win prizes. Visit www.biketoworkmetrodc.org.

Clifton Homes Tour and Silent Auction. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. The Clifton Community Woman's Club hosts the 47th Annual Clifton Homes Tour and Silent Auction on Friday, May 17. Proceeds are distributed to local

scholarships and charities. This Clifton tradition offers guided tours of four homes and two historic churches: Clifton Baptist Church (1910) and Clifton Primitive Baptist Church (1871). The silent auction (free admission) is from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Clifton Presbyterian Church. Tickets are \$30 in advance, \$33 online, and \$35 the day of the tour; \$10 to tour a single home. Tour tickets may be purchased in advance at local shops, online at www.cliftoncwc.org, or purchased the day of the tour at the Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton.

SATURDAY/MAY 18

Festival to Fight Cancer. 8-11 a.m. at Centreville High School, 6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton. The CVHS Wildcats vs. Cancer Club hosts their third annual Festival to Fight Cancer. This year's festival features a 1-mile fun run/race and an inflatable obstacle course. The festival will also include a selfie station, vendors, raffle prize drawings, a "Minute to Win It" game station, food, and more. Proceeds go to DC Candlelighters (www.dccandlelighters.org/), a non-profit organization supporting families affected by pediatric cancer. Tickets are \$20 at runsignup.com/Race/VA/Clifton/FestivaltoFightCancer19. Learn more

at wildcatsvscancer.wixsite.com/wildcatsvscancer.

Historic Marker Unveiling:

Mystery of the Centreville Six. 10 a.m. at McDonald's Restaurant, 5931 Fort Drive, Centreville. Speakers include the Honorable Michael Frey, Sully District Supervisor at the time of discovery and excavation, and a keynote address by Kevin Ambrose, who discovered the first soldier.

Ride4SPIRIT. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Frying Pan Farm Park, upper riding ring, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Ride for Spirit, a public presentation of equine assisted activities in therapy and education. For guests under 13. Junior Horsemanship Workshop (meet, greet and ride SPIRIT horses). Free. Call 703-600-9667 or visit www.spiritequestrian.org.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/MAY 18-19

Ballet Performance. Saturday, 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 4 p.m. at Centreville High School, 6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton. The Fairfax Ballet Company (FBC) presents "Carnival of the Animals," an original story ballet, as well as other original works and excerpts from "Sleeping Beauty." Visit fbccarnival2019.brownpapertickets.com for tickets.

SUNDAY/MAY 19

Red Shoe 5k. 7:30 a.m. (start 9 a.m.) at Bull Run Special Events Center, 7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville. Proceeds support Ronald McDonald House. Competitive and non-competitive runners and walkers are welcome. All registrants will receive a t-shirt and Kid's Fun Run participants will also receive a souvenir medal. Mixed gravel and pavement course. Strollers are welcome, but course may not be suitable for the average stroller. Children should always be supervised by parent or guardian. Dogs on leashes are welcome and free. \$25-\$40. Visit rmhcdc.org/red-shoe-5k/ for more.

NTRAK Scale Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Northern Virginia NTRAK members will hold an N gauge Model Train Display Ages 16 and older, \$4; 5-15, \$2; 4 and under, free. Visit www.fairfax-station.org or call 703-425-9225.

Wine, Whiskers and Wags. 1-5 p.m. at Paradise Springs Winery, 13219 Yates Ford Road, Clifton. Annual fundraising event for Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter will feature silent auction, adoptable pets and training demonstrations. Admission includes heavy hors d'oeuvres, beverages, a ticket for a glass of wine or a wine tasting, a keepsake wine glass, dog demonstrations, participation in the silent auction and access to exhibitors. Tickets are required and may be purchased in advance for \$45 at www.fccas.org; tickets may also be purchased at the event for \$55.

ROUNDUPS

Native Plant Society Speaker

The Cub Run Stream Valley Park Volunteer Team will meet Thursday, May 2, from 7:30-9 p.m., in the Centreville Regional Library's meeting room No. 1. A representative from the NOVA Native Plant Society will be the guest speaker, and the team will be updated on its successful turnout to clean up the watershed.

Coffee with a Cop

Police officers from the Sully District Station will be at the Starbucks in the Colonnade at Union Mill Shop-

ping Center, on Saturday, May 4, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. They'll be participating in Coffee with a Cop, an event which lets residents chat with and ask questions of local police in a relaxed, informal setting.

Opioids in Fairfax County

Opioids in Fairfax County is the topic of the next meeting of the Sully District Police Station's Citizens Advisory Committee meeting. It's set for Wednesday, May 8, at 7:30 p.m., in the Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Det. Jeremy Hoffman will talk about the Overdose Unit and its mission, county drug-case

statistics, the increasing prevalence of fentanyl, opioids on the Dark Web and pending legislation.

Native Plant Society Speaker

The Cub Run Stream Valley Park Volunteer Team will meet Thursday, May 2, from 7:30-9 p.m., in the Centreville Regional Library's meeting room No. 1. A representative from the NOVA Native Plant Society will be the guest speaker, and the team will be updated on its successful turnout to clean up the watershed.

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NEWS

'Funny, Family-Friendly' Children's Show

**Chantilly High
presents 'Little
Red Riding Hood
& the Power
Mutants.'**

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When Chantilly High puts on a children's show written by its former, longtime theater director, Ed Monk, there's no doubt it'll be hilarious. And the upcoming "Little Red Riding Hood & the Power Mutants" is no exception.

The curtain rises Friday, May 10, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, May 11, at 2 and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, May 12, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$5 at the door or via www.chantillyhsdrama.com.

In the story, a grandma who's lost all her money on lottery tickets is hungry. So her daughter, a TV anchorwoman, calls Little Red, a caterer, to bring her mother some food. But on the way, Little Red is met by wolves and rescued by Power Mutants – The Burper, Nerf Man and Rubber Chicken Girl – who have weird and unhelpful special powers. Meanwhile, hunters chase the wolves, while rangers chase the hunters.

Guest Director Ryan Sellers said so many talented actors auditioned for this show that it was double-cast. "They're such smart, adept and theater-aware students that rehearsals are moving at a brisk pace," he said. "Their comic timing almost needs no refining, at all. It's so natural that I can talk to them about techniques, instead, and that's a gift."

THE CAST AND CREW number more than 40, and scenes take place in Grandma's house, a news station and the forest. And the costumes will include fur for the wolves, plus bright, Superhero-type costumes with eye masks and gloves for the Power Mutants.

"This show is a twist on a classic that people already know and love," said Sellers. "The humor is so light, family-friendly and accessible that it'll appeal to everybody. And the performers will be having so much fun that the audience will, too."

Freshman Alyssa Dausch portrays Little Red. "She's eager and outgoing and sees everyone she meets as an opportunity for new business and/or a friend," said Dausch. "She has two modes – heroic, determined to save Grandma from starving, and saleswoman, always promoting her business and trying to get new clients."

Enjoying her role, Dausch said, "I get to switch between Little Red's two personalities. And she's over-the-top, especially in her heroic mode, so she's fun to play. And because it's a children's show, I get to make big motions and play a distinctive character."

She said audiences will like the play's goofiness. "It's a classic story of the protagonist on a journey, with helpers and obstacles," said Dausch. "But it's also silly, ridiculous and funny, so it'll really appeal to children. And we have fun props and physical-comedy bits, too."

Classmate Julien DaSilva plays Earl, a hillbilly farmer. "He and his hillbilly friend, Merle, try to go



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

A spunky Red Riding Hood, Alyssa Dausch, is menaced by wolves on the left and protected by Power Mutants on the right.

hunting and bag a wolf," said DaSilva. "They've been trying for 17 years and have never gotten one; so they're dumb hillbillies, but with a positive spirit. Earl's joyful and bubbly and tries to keep Merle from freaking out."

DaSilva is excited that, since his character is such a stereotype, he can do so many things with it. And, he added, "The great thing about being in a children's show is that we have to act bigger and goofy onstage, which exposes us as actors."

"There are so many different characters for people to connect to that audiences will have a great time," continued DaSilva. "It's a spinoff of 'Little Red Riding Hood,' but with new and interesting things. And it's a joyful, comedic show that people will really enjoy."

Portraying Killer, one of the wolves, is sophomore Griffin Williams. "He's aggressive and insane, with a wild expression and shaky hand motions," said Williams.

He really wants to impress Oswald, who teaches the wolves to steal baskets and scare people. He also likes scaring people and wants to be feared."

Williams said it's a fun role because "Killer is a high-energy character, and I get to be loud and aggressive. With children's shows, you can be as over-the-top as you want, and I'm excited to see the children's reactions. It's a really fun show for kids."

Besides that, said Williams, "There are lots of good jokes for all ages and the story's really interesting. There aren't any pauses and the audience will be really into it."

Freshman Owen Chambers plays a Power Mutant called The Burper. "He was born with strange, mysterious powers," said Chambers. "He's the epitome of grossness in a Superhero. His super power is burping at a supersonic speed. He's friendly, but not very bright. But we Power Mutants protect the meek and innocent from danger."

STUDENTS Aidan Ramee and Anna Anderson portray Nerf Man and Rubber Chicken Girl, respectively, and Chambers likes acting with him. He's also made The Burper unique by "crawling around on all fours like an animal."

Even the wolves are on two feet, so I like his physical comedy. And I talk with a voice like Kermit the Frog and Yoda combined."

Chambers likes being in a children's show because "You get to be funnier and more out there, and it's nice to hear children's laughter. And the audience will like the jokes, storyline, colorful costumes and excellent actors."

BULLETIN BOARD

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

SATURDAY/MAY 4

Neighborhood Yard Sale. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. in the Gate Post Estates neighborhood. Neighborhood Yard sale, multi-family; too many address to list. Follow the signs in the neighborhood. Children's items, furniture, household items, tools, clothing, collectibles and more. Email lovefelts@aol.com or call 703-447-1781 for more.

District Supervisor Candidate Meet and Greet.

4-6 p.m. at Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Meet the candidates who are running for the Fairfax Board of Supervisors: Dranesville District; Hunter Mill District; Providence District; and Sully District. Free. RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/o/naacp-fairfax-county-12397167937.

SUNDAY/MAY 5

Low Cost Rabies Vaccine Clinic. Noon-2 p.m. at Mount Vernon Governmental Center, 2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria. Cost is \$15 per pet, cash and check only. Dogs, cats, and ferrets may be vaccinated at the clinic. Dogs must be on leashes; cats and ferrets must be in carriers. All pets will receive a 1-year rabies vaccination. To obtain a 3-year vaccine, bring pet's rabies certificate (not tag) showing the current rabies vaccination expiration date. 2019 county dog licenses will be sold for an additional \$10 per license. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/communityassistance/rabiesclinics for more.

WEDNESDAY/MAY 8

Fairfax County Park Authority Board Meeting. 7:30 p.m. in the Herrity Building, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 941, Fairfax. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/boardagn2.htm or call 703-324-8662.

FRIDAY/MAY 10

Digital Citizenship: Tips for Parents. 10 a.m.-noon at Dunn Loring Center for Parent Services, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 - Room 100, Dunn Loring. As parents in the digital age, being aware, alert and involved in a child's use of the internet is crucial. Digital Citizenship can be described as the norms of appropriate, responsible behavior, its positive and negative impact on self and others, with regard to technology use. Free to parents, educators and community members. Call 703-204-3941 or visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center

SATURDAY/MAY 11

Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive. Letter carriers will pick up donated food. Leave donations before your typical mail delivery time. All food stays in the local community. The top requested non-perishable food items are: cereal, pasta, pasta sauce or spaghetti sauce, rice, canned fruits and vegetables, canned meals (such as soups, chili and pasta), 100 percent juice, peanut butter, macaroni & cheese, canned protein (tuna, chicken and turkey), beans (canned or dry). Questions regarding the Food Drive should be directed to 202-662-2489.

Family Caregiver Expo. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Richard J. Ernst Community Cultural Center at Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale Campus. Capital Caring will host its first Caregiver Expo in partnership with AARP and Virginia Hospital Center. The expo is free and will feature information highlighting resources and support programs available to family caregivers, including home care services, financial and estate planning, elder law, and information sessions on such topics as Alzheimer's and Dementia, Preservation of Assets, and Caring for the Caregiver. Free health screenings will be offered as well as free massages. Contact Amy Shields at ashields@capitalcaring.org or call 703-531-6095 for more.

Fairfax Board of Supervisors Chair Candidate Forum. 3-5 p.m. at Heritage Fellowship Church, 2501 Fox Mill Road, Reston. Join the Fairfax NAACP for an engaging, moderated panel discussion with candidates for Fairfax County Board of Supervisor's Chair. Candidates are Alicia Plerhoples, Tim Chapman, Ryan McElveen and Jeff McKay. Free. RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/o/naacp-fairfax-county-12397167937.

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As Luck Has Had It



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Aside from the fatigue I experienced a few columns ago, this immunotherapy infusion is, and has been, quite manageable.

My biggest take away so far is that I've had no real quality of life issues, as had been the case with my previous chemotherapy/alimta infusions. With that drug, I had post-infusion eating challenges and for nearly a week after the fact, felt less than mediocre.

Moreover, I wouldn't say I felt like I had cancer, but I certainly was reminded of it — if that makes any sense.

And even though I do have some minor side effects from my current immunotherapy infusion, I am reminded nevertheless, that I have cancer. Not because of how I feel, as was the case previously, but because of how I look — and because of what I feel.

I am referring to my "Adam's apple" tumor. Not only can/do I 'look' it all the time but quite often, depending on how I move my head: forward/downward, I can feel it too.

I have to tell you, feeling it as I do, and looking at it as often as I do: every day, is unsettling.

My whole approach to this living-with-cancer life has been to compartmentalize it a la Jerry Seinfeld and "the vault." Out of sight has helped keep some things out of mind. And when things are out of mind, it's much easier to make believe.

And making believe has been one of my methods of "operandi" since Feb. 20, 2009. That's the date (you bet I remember) when my internal medicine doctor called me at work with the results of my previous week's biopsy: "malignant," he said.

Up until that call, the previous six weeks' diagnostic pursuit had been interesting in a curious kind of way wondering what all the goings on were about and when all these inconveniences would end. And not for a minute during this entire process did I ever think I'd be diagnosed with a "terminal" disease: non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV. I figured, to the extent I figured at all, that the process would result in much having been done about nothing.

Boy was I wrong!

I still remember — and laugh when I recall the phone conversation I had with my thoracic surgeon after he had received the results of my PET scan: "You lit that thing up like a Christmas tree," he said.

Presuming that wasn't good news, I replied: "I hear there are false positives all the time which is why these scans aren't used a lot." (A perfect example of a little knowledge in the wrong mouth.)

I can't recall if the doctor snickered before he said the following: "Well, then your scan was a world record false positive." I don't know if I grasped the obvious at that point but soon a surgical biopsy was ordered and the rest is Kenny-with-cancer history, a history with which many of you regular readers are all too familiar.

And that's a familiarity which I hope has not bred contempt. Because even though it's my life — and I'm stuck with it (as the old saying says), it need not be yours. I can well imagine and appreciate how living with and/or seeking out negativity is not likely to improve any one's lot in life. (I try to avoid it every day.)

To that end, I have always tried to tread lightly and write with a soft touch since I've been cancer-centric beginning June 10, 2009, when I published my first column on the subject: "Dying To Tell You, Sort Of." And in so doing, I've tried to see the light amid the darkness and be thankful for any in between.

I can't say it's been fun, but it's funny how things have turned out: alive and reasonably well, 10-plus years later.

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

OPINION

Black or Blue: Lessons Learned from How Virginia Democrats Handled the Ralph Northam Debacle

Let's get something straight, this is not a blackface controversy, this is a KKK controversy.

BY KOFI ANNAN
PRESIDENT, FAIRFAX COUNTY NAACP

During a 1960 speech to a mixed audience in New York City, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "There is a pressing need for a liberalism in the North which is truly liberal." While Virginia is a southern state, it gets bluer with each election, therefore we should take heed to MLK's words, which essentially challenges liberals to fight the gravitational pull to the right on issues of civil rights and equity. It is difficult to see both the election of Ralph Northam, his subsequent actions, and the actions of the party to protect him as anything but the party signaling to the center-right that they have their back and are willing to sacrifice a few black voters if need be.

Liberals have long sought to convince African Americans that they alone can shield us from conservative's intent on rolling back the hands of time. And African Americans normally respond to that message, having never wavered in our loyalty for the last half century. Every election cycle we make or break elections in favor of the Democratic Party, even though for the most part we get marginal improvement in our quality of life overall, and in many measurable ways we actually regress. Our average collective net worth remains a fraction of whites, our employment rate remains half that of whites, our neighborhoods are still gentrified in the name of progress, predominantly black public schools are still underfunded, we still make up 40 percent of the nation's incarcerated, and school administrators still consistently dole out harsher punishments to our kids compared to their white counterparts, even in districts dominated by Democratic Party leadership. A report from the Institute for Policy Studies, released to coincide with what would have been MLK's 90th birthday, demonstrated that over the past few decades, black wealth actually fell by 50%.

On the other hand, Republicans haven't presented a particularly appealing message to African Americans voters at any point during this time period either, and even less so during the Trump Administration, which uses racism and xenophobia to collect votes as effectively as any administration in recent history. However, what's more intriguing is the possibility that Democrats like Northam view Trump's success as a reason to shift focus on securing the white middle-class vote even if that means sacrificing some of the African American vote, or at least taking the black vote for granted. After all, the politics of "fear the racist Republican" is a lot easier to sell today than it was just a few years ago. This might explain why presidential favorite Pete Buttigieg felt comfortable proposing that he would undo decades of work to expand voting rights to those convicted of crimes, who are disproportionately represented

by minorities.

This certainly appears to be the case in Virginia. Most of us are familiar with the controversy surrounding Governor Northam and his possible Ku Klux Klan (KKK) affiliation by now, right? Perhaps I shouldn't assume. Maybe you were one of those that ignored the Klan member in the photograph, and instead saw this incident as a [less harmful] 'blackface' controversy that could be explained by innocent cultural insensitivity. But let's get something straight, this is not a blackface controversy, this is a KKK controversy. A lot of people - including the governor - would rather focus on the person in blackface because it's a slightly more tolerant form of white supremacy, and conveniently ignore the terrorist next to the individual in blackface. But the governor should not be let off the hook that easily. The KKK is America's original domestic terrorist group (despite what the laws say), having killed well over 4,000 Americans that we know of, and our governor either is or was associated with them. Let that sink in, particularly as we still mourn the loss of another group of innocent lives at the hands of other terrorist groups in New Zealand a few weeks ago, Pittsburgh, Charlottesville, and most recently Sri Lanka. The leader of the Democratic Party in Virginia has yet to offer a sensible explanation for why a terrorist was in his yearbook, and the Democratic Party is okay enough with this that they're now openly not only defending him but trotting him out at political fundraisers.

To most the case against Northam seemed open and shut, and his resignation seemed inevitable. One would imagine that an elected official who represents the party which prides itself on its diversity, that routinely secures over 90% of the African American vote, and counts on that constituency to win key battleground territories in a purple state that was red just a few elections ago, would certainly recognize that defending the governor is not a hill worth dying on and step aside as quickly and as gracefully as possible.

Well we're now approaching May and not only has Northam refused to step aside, but even more unfortunate the Democratic Party has begun to rally around him in a show of solidarity. First came the slow drip of messages of appreciation from members of the General Assembly for one bill after the other on social media. Then the ridiculous Michael Jackson impersonation story that once seemed straight out of a bad SNL skit became the official party line. As for the "Coonman" nickname in his VMI yearbook that never received a formal explanation from the governor? Well one explanation floated to me by a Democratic member of in the Virginia House of Delegates - who happened to be African American - was an even greater insult to our intelligence, and full of even more racist stereotypes. According to the delegate the governor's nickname stemmed

from the fact that he had a lot of black friends due to his love of basketball.

As if insulting our intelligence wasn't bad enough, many within the Democratic Party felt it necessary to go after those amplifying the call for the governor's resignation. Following a protest led the Fairfax County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at a Democratic fundraiser where the governor was scheduled to attend, Democratic Party loyalists and leaders alike attacked the NAACP for doing the very thing the organization was founded for - standing up against racism. Its members were described as "troublemakers" and "bullies"; and the nation's oldest and most successful civil rights organization is described as a "fringe element" by one party leader.

One of the talking points coming from Virginia's Democrats is that "the governor isn't going anywhere, so we might as well work with him." This intentionally alleviates the burden of responsibility from the rest of the party leadership, because it makes them seem powerless, when in reality they really don't want to challenge him anyway. As the reaction to the protests demonstrated, real challenges to the governor will not be looked upon favorably by the Democratic Party. If they'll publicly assassinate the NAACP, one could only imagine what private pressure is being placed on African American legislators who dare break ranks. This likely explains the deafening silence and acquiescence from most black elected officials on this issue.

Not enough black leaders (elected and community leaders alike) stand with the black community on principle when it matters most; and if they can't stand on principle when it comes to the KKK, when will they? If they can't break ranks with the party now, when will they? Black leaders stood next to Hillary Clinton when she called our youth "super predators", and they stood next to Bill when he doubled down on Reagan's mass incarceration policies. We're often told that the solution is electing more African American to office; but if this is the best they can do when faced with a such a clear-cut choice in a time of crisis, then their true value to the African American community is questionable.

If these officials don't have what it takes to tackle overt headline-grabbing racism within their own ranks, how can they be trusted to tackle systemic racism that doesn't make headlines. The numbers highlighting African American wealth decline speak for themselves. They can't.

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