

CONNECTION

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station

Lamb Center Needs Help to Meet Needs

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From left, Lamb Center Finance and Human Resources Director Pamela Carey and Operations Administrative Assistant Barb DeLisa dishing up Rita's Italian Ice.



Throwing Shade for Healthier Streams

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Who Won Cappies?

PAGE 7

Master Naturalists Team Up

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ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 8 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

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JUNE 22-28, 2023

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ROUNDUPS

Police Investigating Fairfax City Man's Murder

City of Fairfax police are investigating the murder of City resident Luis Barahona Reyes. Officers responded June 10, at 9:21 a.m., to 9715 Fairfax Blvd. for a report of a dead body. The victim was identified as Barahona Reyes, 50, and police have classified his death as a homicide. The Criminal Investigations Division asks anyone with information or video evidence pertaining to this crime to contact Det. Joe Pittman at 703-385-7907 or joe.pittman@fairfaxva.gov.

Fairfax, Woodson Receive Cappies Awards

Congratulations to Woodson and Fairfax high schools for the Cappies awards they received at the June 12 gala at The Kennedy Center. Woodson's Charlotte Willmore won the award for Featured Actor in a Female Role in a Play for "One Man, Two Guvnors," and castmate Silas Blocker won the award for Fea-

tured Actor in a Male Role in a Play. Fairfax's Victoria Collins-Jost, Sydney Grossbard, Caroline Vigna, Kaylee Williams received the Marketing and Publicity award.

Rock the Block Is This Friday

Fairfax City's next Rock the Block outdoor-music event is this Friday, June 23, from 6:30-9:30 p.m., at Old Town Square at 10415 North St. Performing will be Part Time Cowboys, and the free event includes food, beer and other beverages for sale.

Fairfax City's Hometown Celebration

Featuring music, games, food vendors and family-fun galore, Fairfax City will hold its annual "Hometown Celebration" this Sunday, June 25. The event begins at 5 p.m. at Veterans Amphitheater outside City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St., followed by a 7 p.m. concert by the award-winning City of Fairfax Band.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FREE INDEPENDENCE DAY LYFT RIDES

Preparing to combat that time of year when, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, over a third

(39%, 2021) of U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers,* a local non-profit organization announced that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout

the Washington-metropolitan area during the Independence Day holiday.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11

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Lamb Center Really Needs Help from the Community

Lamb Center fetes building's 7th anniversary amid rising demand.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

On the Wednesday before Memorial Day, every table at The Lamb Center was filled with men and women relishing their lunch. And because it was a special occasion, they were treated to Italian ice for dessert.

"We're celebrating the seventh anniversary of this building," Pastoral Director Dave Larrabee told the guests. "It seemed like a long journey that would never happen, but we moved into it on Memorial Day weekend."

Serving poor people and people experiencing homelessness, The Lamb Center in Fairfax City is a daytime, drop-in shelter offering hot meals, showers, clothing, Bible study, recovery and employment counseling, and many other services. The guests come from all walks of life. Some have mental illness, some are veterans and others have simply fallen on hard times.

During the celebration, Executive Director Tara Ruskowski marveled at how far the center has come since 2016. "We didn't have a workforce-development program then, a clothes closet, or the case-management program we have today," she said. "And we didn't have all of you, and we're blessed – we appreciate you being here. You give us a reason to get up in the morning."

"I remember coming here, watching the old building being demolished, seeing the new one being built – and the excitement we had," added Larrabee. "This was a \$4.5 million project, and we moved in mortgage-free. We needed the last half-million dollars, and a man gave us what we needed. Even a girl named Amanda brought us four quarters from her lemonade stand, so it was a community effort."

He then pointed out a long, wooden table with a cross atop it and noted that both were handmade and brought here from the old building the center had rented. "This is God's place, and this was built for you," he said. "You're all welcome here and are all part of the family."

Yet because the number of guests is growing every day, TLC staff is scrambling to serve them all. After the celebration, Ruskowski said they're in serious need of more volunteers, donations and supplies to meet all the demands for their services.

The two-story building is nearly 10,000 square feet. "When we moved in, we had so much space, we marveled at it and wondered how we'd fill it, since it was three times the size of our previous location," said Ruskowski. "We could never then have imagined the growth in people and programs we'd have, such as a dental office and our Jobs Program."

Through that program, some Lamb Center guests work part time for Fairfax City's Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments, receiving income for doing jobs such as picking up litter and removing invasive species from the City's parks, as well as planting trees. Seeing its success, Fairfax

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Celebrating the building's seventh anniversary are (from left) Workforce Development Manager Evan Reyle, Tara Ruskowski, Barb DeLisa, Dave Larrabee, Operations Supervisor David Morgan and Deb Haynes.

County now hires the center's guests for similar work.

Ruskowski also praised Case Management Director Deb Haynes for creating an "exemplary, case-management program with a team of six, highly qualified people who are really top notch."

"We've always fed and nourished our guests, both with food and spiritually, but they also need additional supports," explained Haynes. "So we first help them obtain photo IDs and let them use our building's mailing address so they can apply for benefits, employment and housing."

"We're so grateful to have this programming because we've seen a real surge in the number of guests – including first-time homeless and the elderly," said Ruskowski. "When we opened, we'd see 50-70 people a day in summer and 90-100 a day in winter. Pre-pandemic, these numbers were consistent; but post-pandemic, there's been an increase."

"In May 2019, we were averaging 96 guests/day," said Haynes. "This May, we averaged 112 guests/day – which is a 12-percent increase."

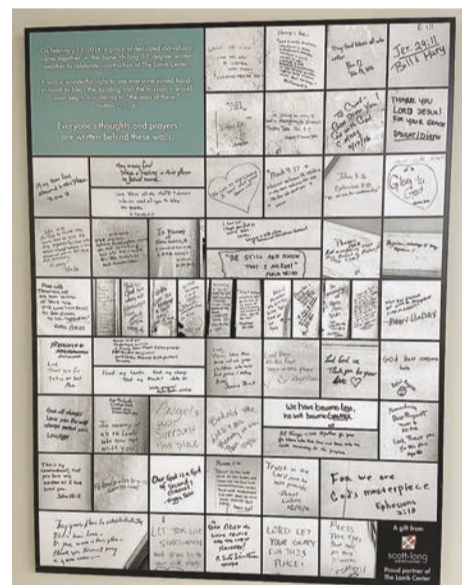
And, said Ruskowski, "It starts with 100 people coming in the door for breakfast, which is unusual for May. Typically, after the [local churches'] winter hypothermia program ends, people scatter, and our numbers typically decline. But this year, they started rising in April." Indeed, Haynes said TLC averaged 107 guests per day, this April.

Among the factors responsible for this rise, said Ruskowski, is the general, economic situation. "During the pandemic, the [federal] CARES Act poured a tremendous amount of money into emergency homeless services, and it was used for hotel rooms and rental assistance," she said. "But all that money came to an end last fall when that program expired."

"Then came the hypothermia program, and evictions were still delayed," she continued. "But then those safety nets came down and evictions began." So that meant even more people became homeless.



From left, Finance and Human Resources Director Pamela Carey and Operations Administrative Assistant Barb DeLisa dishing up Rita's Italian Ice.



Some of the prayers and messages from the building's February 2016 beam signing were framed and hang in the new building.

In FY 2019, said Haynes, "We served 1,532 individual guests – not counting how many times they returned. This fiscal year, to date, we've already served 1,713 – for an 11-percent increase over our pre-pandemic total. And of special concern is the rise in the number of 65-year-olds – so far, it's an 8-percent increase over 2019."

She contacted other similar, homeless-service providers to see if they were experiencing the same thing, and they were. "The domestic-violence shelters and family shelters have also seen a rise," said Haynes. "And FACETS is seeing the same thing, too – so we're all very concerned."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) classifies people age 55 as senior citizens, said Haynes, because "Homelessness shortens people's life spans dramatically."

And, said Ruskowski, "We've had some heartbreaking cases here involving the elderly."

For example, said Haynes, "Two unshel-

tered 76-year-olds are here today. The man is a Vietnam veteran, and the woman came here looking for a sleeping bag. They're on the waiting list for Fairfax County shelters, but the list is long, and they might have to wait 90 days. And it's brutal having to tell a 76-year-old woman to make sure she camps in a place that's safe and well-lit."

Another elderly woman has a walker and is supposed to use an oxygen tank for her health issues. But she can't currently, because she's unable to drag it around and use her walker, too. "All the major metropolitan areas are experiencing an increase in elderly homeless people and aren't equipped for it," said Haynes. "Luckily, our building is ADA-accessible."

As a result, said Ruskowski, "Our volunteers and staff are stretched thin. We have about 100 volunteers/week, working at the front desk and in our kitchen, laundry and clothing closet. Overall, we have a dedicated army of 500 volunteers total who really give us their all, and we're so blessed to have them."

"But with the increase in guests, we're now asking the people who donate breakfast – a mix of private individuals and service groups – to bring more," said Haynes. "We're so busy and the needs are so great."

"They were bringing food for 80-90 people, and now we're asking them to bring it for 125 – and that's a hard ask," said Ruskowski. "For lunch, different partnering churches each provide it once a month."

Ruskowski said they're grateful their building has the space to offer so many important services to their guests and "a community that cares so much about them. We have such a good team here, and we all pull together. Seeing the care my colleagues take with everyone, and their heart for people, it's a wonderful place to be. It's a privilege and a rewarding and humbling experience."

"We really need help from the community, due to this increased demand. We're looking for more volunteers, supplies and donations." To learn how to help and what's needed, go to www.thelambcenter.org.

Early Voting

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Democratic candidate for Springfield Supervisor, Albert Vega, shares campaign information with early voter. Also running for the seat, John Nowadly.



Voters at West Springfield Government Center were often greeted by one or more candidates or their representatives during early voting hours for the Democratic Primary. Shown: representative for Dave Marsden (incumbent) for Senate, District 35; Heidi Drauschak candidate for Senate District 35; (fifth from left) Jennifer Carroll Foy, candidate for Senate District 33; (right) representatives of Ed Nuttall for Commonwealth Attorney. Also running for Senate District 33, Hala Ayla; also running for Commonwealth Attorney, incumbent Steve Descano.

Landfill Fire Adds to Smokey Skies in Southern Fairfax

Fire put out after nearly two days burning.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Late Monday night, June 5, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue units responded to a landfill in the 9900 blk of Richmond Hwy in the Lorton area for reports of an outside fire. Crews worked to get the large volume fire under control and remained on scene for an extended period of time, FCFRD said. Smoke was visible from Route 1 and I-95.

Firefighters remained on the scene the next morning and by daylight, the fire was contained with no reported injuries. The landfill is primarily composed of logs and brush. Due to the large amount of smoke being generated, HazMat units conducted atmospheric monitoring and all readings were within normal levels. Crews remained on scene throughout the day to assist with “extinguishment efforts.”

The FCFRD worked along with Ft. Belvoir Fire and Emergency Services, Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue, Fairfax County Police, and the property owner throughout the day to extinguish the bulk of the fire. Units remained on scene throughout Tuesday



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE DEPT.

From the air, smoke can be seen rising above the landfill.

night, June 6 to hit hot spots, FCFRD said.

By Wednesday morning, the landfill was back to normal operations, the landfill staff said.

The landfill site is being looked at for a future indoor ski facility called “Fairfax Peak,” by county officials, who are working with an organization called Alpine-X on the project. It will feature a 450,000-square-foot indoor fa-

cility with its longest slope at 1,700 feet. Fairfax Peak won approval from the Fairfax County Supervisors in November 2020 allowing the project to move ahead. The developer is currently in the public engagement and environmental impact study stage and is aiming to break ground after that. It is expected to take about two years to build out the first phase of the project, Alpine-X reported.

Police: Driver Going Over 100 mph Prior to Fatal Crash

The driver of the 2016 Honda Accord involved in a two-vehicle fatal crash on April 21 has turned himself in and is now facing a charge of involuntary manslaughter. A 26-year-old man of Alexandria turned himself in at the Adult Detention Center and is being held on no bond.

Detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit determined the driver of a 2016 Honda Accord was traveling eastbound on Arlington Boulevard just east of Patrick Henry Drive in the far-left lane in the Seven Corners area at approximately 1:10 a.m. April 21. The driver of a 2018 Honda Civic was also traveling eastbound on Arlington Boulevard in the far-right lane. The driver of the Civic attempted to make an abrupt U-turn and was struck by the driver of the Accord. Detectives determined the driver of the Accord was traveling over 100 mph prior to the crash.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

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'Their Pizza Is Delicious'

Customers enjoying
Marco's Pizza in
Fairfax City.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Following the success of their first Marco's Pizza in Fairfax Station, husband and wife duo Niten and Sonia Sabharwal have opened a second one in Fairfax City. And it's quickly become a popular addition to the City's restaurant scene.

"We welcome Niten and Sonia and Marco's Pizza to Fairfax," said Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read during its recent ribbon cutting. "This is the kind of business we want here in the City."

Noting how much his grandson loves Marco's Pizza, City Councilmember Tom Ross said, "I've been here a number of times, and it's a great new business for the community. The pizza is delicious, the customer service is excellent, and you can either call or order online. We're happy to have you here."

Agreeing, Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce Chairman Doug Church said, "We're thrilled to have you as a member of our community. And you'll find that the City is not only welcoming, but a partner."

Thanking the Chamber and the City officials, Niten Sabharwal told them that, when he and his wife first visited Fairfax, it looked like a great place to open their newest Marco's.

"We loved the City; it seemed like a good, diverse community with lots of businesses," he explained. "And we work closely with schools and nonprofits, so Fairfax seemed like a good fit for us. Thanks for making us feel like part of the community."

Based in Toledo, Ohio, Marco's Pizza has more than 1,100 locations in 34 states, plus Puerto Rico and the Bahamas. There are 30 in Virginia, alone. The pizzas boast a proprietary, three-cheese blend that's fresh and never frozen, as well as the secret, original pizza-sauce recipe of its Italian-born founder, Pasquale Giammarco.

The Marco's in Fairfax is at 10160 Fairfax Blvd., next to Patient First and across from Fire Station 33, and it brought 18 new jobs to the City. Hours are Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; and Friday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-midnight. To place delivery or carryout orders, download the Marco's Pizza mobile app, visit www.marcos.com or call the store at 571-544-7300.

"We make our dough fresh in the store every day, and use fresh veggies," said Niten Sabharwal. "Nothing is frozen, so that makes



Cutting the ribbon on Marco's Pizza are (from left) Doug Church, Tom Scibilia, Sonia Sabharwal, Catherine Read, Tom Ross and City Revenue Commissioner Page Johnson.

us different from other pizza places. And our sauce recipe hasn't changed since Marco's first opened in 1978. We offer both thick and thin crusts and can make a little less-doughy crust, if desired, plus a gluten-free cauliflower crust."

Pizzas come in four sizes – 10, 12, 14 and 16 inches – with a variety of toppings ranging from meats to vegetables to cheeses. They include a barbecued-chicken pizza, plus a white-cheese pie with bacon, onions, sliced Roma tomatoes and white sauce. Niten said the most popular pizzas are the Pepperoni Magnifico and the Deluxe, which features pepperoni, Italian sausage, mushrooms, green peppers, onions, sauce and cheese.

"People also love our salads – especially the Italian Chef and Greek," added Sonia Sabharwal. "And our Steak & Cheese Subs are popular, too. People keep coming back for it every week because of the quality of the meat."

Another big hit with the customers, she said, are the pizza bowls. In fact, Marco's was the first national, pizza-delivery brand to offer them. There are all-meat, deluxe and Philly cheesesteak options, as well as a build-your-own with sauce, cheese and a choice of four toppings. "Our pizza bowls

have no crust, but taste like a pizza," said Sonia. "So they're healthier and have less calories."

Marco's sub offerings also include meatball, ham-and-cheese and veggie. Served, as well, are chicken wings and dippers, a meatball bake, and cheese bread with garlic sauce. For dessert, there are double-chocolate brownies and Cinnasquares – buttery pastry topped with cinnamon and sugar, with vanilla icing on the side.

After the ribbon cutting, Sonia said how happy she was with the turnout. "I really appreciate everyone taking their time off and coming here," she said. "And hopefully, Marco's will continue to grow by word of mouth."

City Treasurer Tom Scibilia is already a big fan. "Their pizza is delicious," he said. "You just order, and they'll even bring it out to you, curbside."

Niten worked in finance for more than 20 years before being laid off at the start of the pandemic in 2020.

But instead of viewing it as a setback, he saw it as an opportunity to become an entrepreneur and start his own business. Sonia was an office manager; but she, too, shared her husband's dream.

They bought the Fairfax Station



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Niten and Sonia Sabharwal proudly display their cheese and sausage pizzas at Marco's.

Marco's in 2019 and the Fairfax site in 2021. "From the first time we tried Marco's Pizza, we knew the quality and authentic taste

were unlike anything else," said Niten. "And we're confident that everyone will also enjoy what we have to offer."

Summer Brings Happy Adventures

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT

As I sit at my desk on this beautiful summer afternoon, I am reminded of long, hot summer days, breezy evenings under the stars and kids splashing in pools – ah, the lazy days of summer! I hope as you begin your summer adventures, you consider the many natural, historic, cultural and entertainment sites in the Mount Vernon District.

This is a great time to visit a new park, kayak on the river, hike a forest trail or attend an outdoor concert. We have a plethora of parks in our area, ranging from parks that feature playgrounds and pools at MLK Jr. Park to waterfront and hiking parks like Mason Neck State Park. Check out our parks page to learn how to visit. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/mount-vernon-district-parks-trails>

The County's FREE Mount Vernon Nights Concert Series features local entertainers and a wide array of musical styles at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays at Grist Mill Park and Saturdays at the Workhouse Arts Center. The National Park Service also offers free concerts at Fort Hunt Park on Sundays throughout the summer. The Workhouse continues its Saturday Community Markets and our Farmers



FireWorks 2023, 6-10 p.m., Workhouse Quad. For tickets see <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/fireworks>

Markets are open at the Sherwood Regional Library and Lorton VRE on Wednesdays and Sundays, respectively.

A visit to our many historic, cultural and arts sites is a wonderful way to spend a summer day or week – think staycation Mount Vernon. Everyone knows you can visit George and Martha, but what about hidden forts, sustainable farming at Arcadia, the Gum Springs Museum and Historical Society, a Frank Lloyd Wright House, the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, a local brewery and so much more.

My efforts to connect our many visitor experience sites has led to the creation of Potomac Banks – Explore Fairfax South and an

accompanying Savings Pass. Visit our Potomac Banks website to learn more about the many locations and how you can save by visiting. <https://www.fxva.com/southcounty/>

Looking for something more adventurous? Check out the multitude of mountain biking trails in Lorton, the Cross County Trail and the Mount Vernon Trail, to name a few. Golf, frisbee golf, miniature golf, boating, camping, hiking, playgrounds and the Pirates Cove Waterpark can all be found at Pohick Bay Park.

The Workhouse Arts Center features one of the best Fireworks displays in the area on July 1. Visit the new National Museum of the U.S. Army to experience the life-size,

engaging, hi-tech and interactive narrative of the history of our U.S. Army.

Amid the excitement of your busy summer, I hope you will take time to vote in the Democratic primary election. Early voting is open at the Mount Vernon Governmental Center and the Lorton Community Center until Saturday, June 17 and the primary is on Tuesday, June 20 at your local voting precinct. All registered voters are encouraged to vote in this important election for the Fairfax County Board Chair, Mount Vernon District Supervisor, state representatives and Commonwealth's Attorney. This election is only a primary for Democratic Party candidates because the Fairfax County Republican Party committee chose to select its candidates by other means.

In Virginia, political parties decide how they nominate their candidates, including using caucuses, mass meetings, primary elections and other methods. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/upcoming>

I encourage you to take time this summer to visit the many area attractions we have right here in our neighborhoods, to bask in the wind and the sun, feel the peace and tranquility of a day on the water, listening to music, exploring history or the comradery of enjoying a great meal at a local restaurant. I know I will be and hope to see you there!

Rockets Red Glare, Bombs Bursting in Air

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Get ready for Independence Day celebrations.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Every year, it usually starts in the daylight hours on July 4, or the weekend before. A few firecrackers here and there, a lone bottle rocket soars through the air before exploding. As the sun sets, more pops, and rockets soaring in the neighborhoods to the oooh's and aaah's from the folks on the ground. It goes on all night too.

Wait a minute, these are illegal in Fairfax County without a permit, right?

According to the county, "consumer fireworks legally permitted for sale and use in Fairfax County are known as permissible fireworks." But that's where they draw the line, and they list illegal fireworks as well. "Aerial shells, firecrackers, cherry bombs, roman candles, and skyrockets are just a few examples," the county said.

In 2022, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department responded to over 40 fireworks-related incidents in Fairfax County. The total property and content loss with these incidents was \$72,536, said Ashley Hildebrandt, Director of Public Information at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

Since even the possession of unapproved fireworks is prohibited in Fairfax County,



At the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, they are having a pre-July 4th show this year, Saturday, July 1. See the calendar on page 8 for other local fireworks, including Mount Vernon, Vienna, Great Falls, Reston and more.

such fireworks will be confiscated and the person possessing them can be charged with a Class 1 misdemeanor. This carries a maximum penalty of a \$2,500 fine and/or one year in jail, the county website read.

There is an extensive 19-page list of what is allowed too, and these permits are only valid from June 1 to July 15 of each year. The fireworks listed in this document are classified as "permissible fireworks" for purposes of applying and enforcing the Statewide Fire Prevention Code. starting with the Allen Party Assortment to item GG0359 called the WOO WOO! There are many colorful names on the list including the "Dancing Butterfly," the "Radioactive Meltdown," and the "Frisky Starburst." One can just picture sparks flying every which way and the sulfur smell that hangs around the backyard on a hot July 4 night. With colorful names like these, what could they hurt?

According to Hildebrandt, there have been a number of injuries in the past few years. In 2018 there were three serious inju-

ries, 2019 there were four and three again in 2020 with a total property damage of nearly \$700,000.

Explosions Wanted?

Alas though, just putting a cone on the ground, lighting it and watching the shower of sparks may not be enough for some, so it's time for a road trip down I-95 to a place called "South of the Border." This stop is right inside of the South Carolina border and is famous for fireworks that are illegal in other states. It started as a beer stand in 1949 and now has a motel, gas stations and shelves and shelves of firecrackers, bottle rockets, M-80s and smoke bombs just to name a few. Isn't this stuff dangerous? South Carolina and a few other states allow them anyways.

Keystone Fireworks is located in Pennsylvania, close to the Maryland border and they sell mortar kits, firecrackers, missiles, rockets and Roman candles. "Fireworks are a great American tradition," Keystone states.

"They can provide hours of family entertainment but must be handled by adults with safety in mind. For the safety of both the audience and those lighting the fireworks, we recommend that you observe the following safety measures during your fireworks display," and then have an extensive 22 item list of precautions, including "following the local and state laws."

Keystone's version of the mellower "moon rocket" is called the "Big Daddy," with stuff like the Star Blast, the Whistling Buster and Premium Artillery Shells. Phantom Fireworks has a commercial on an area television channel despite that most of their fireworks are illegal in this area.

According to Hildebrandt, at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, "Going to another state to purchase fireworks is not legal."

The police leave it to the fire experts though. Possessing illegal fireworks is a fire department issue, said Fairfax County Police officer Katie Watts. "We'll usually get noise complaints," she said.

CAPPIES

And the Winner Is ...

23rd gala for Cappies of the National Capital Area.

The Cappies of the National Capital Area held its twenty-third Gala recognizing excellence in High School theatre. The sold-out event was held in the Concert Hall of the Kennedy Center. Hundreds of student nominees were celebrated. Eleven schools who were nominated for best play and musical performed at the event. Community digni-

taries and Cappies alums presented awards to the finalists in forty-two technical and performance categories.

Cappies is a unique collaborative program for journalism and theatre students. Trained student critics review Cappies designated high school shows throughout the year. The best written reviews are published in the local press. At the end of the season, the



PHOTO BY DAVID MASSARIK

The Winning Play was **Dracula** by Lake Braddock Secondary School and

student critics vote for who of their peers should be recognized for awards. The Cappies critics are ambassadors for high school



PHOTO BY MY PHOTOGRAPH

The winning Musical was **Bright Star** by South Lakes High School.

theatre and spread the word about the value and fun of participating in theatre.

Here are this year's Cappies award winners.

Category	Winner	Show Name	School Name
Andy Mays Rising Critic	Ellen Lawton		Herndon High School
Maryland Theatre Guide Returning Critic	McKenzie Phelan		Quince Orchard High School
Bill Strauss Graduating Critic	Hannah Frieden		Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Marketing and Publicity	Victoria Collins-Jost, Sydney Grossbard, Caroline Vigna, Kaylee Williams	Sister Act	Fairfax High School
Special Effects and or Technology	Soeun Lee	Dracula	Lake Braddock Secondary School
Hair and Makeup	Emily Brennan	Dracula	Lake Braddock Secondary School
Sound	Dillon Prestidge, Emma Springer, Megan Wright	Claudio Quest	McLean High School
Props	Eva Greek, Jaden Harris, & Crew	She Kills Monsters: Young Adventurers Edition	Mount Vernon High School
Lighting	Charles Bucher, Ella Clarke, Cullan Kelley	Pippin	Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Costumes	Michelle Dorman, Claire Gibbons, and the Bishop Ireton Costume Team	The Music Man	Bishop Ireton High School
Sets	The Bright Star Set Team	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Orchestra	The Bright Star Orchestra & Featured Musicians	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Choreography	Anna Leo & August Rivers	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Creativity	Emmett Justice, Abdullah Muhammad, Autumn Whetstone, Music Composers	Animal Farm	Duke Ellington School of the Arts
Stage Management	Olivia Baumgartner, Tomas Bocock, Sebastian Harman, & Elicora Janow	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Stage Crew	Tomas Bocock, Grayson Quigley, and the Bright Star Run Crew and Ensemble	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Ensemble in a Play	The Transylvanians	Dracula	Lake Braddock Secondary School
Ensemble in a Musical	Farm Animals	Animal Farm	Duke Ellington School of the Arts
Featured Actor in a Female Role in a Play	Charlotte Willmore	One Man, Two Guvnors	W.T. Woodson High School
Featured Actor in a Male Role in a Play	Silas Blocker	One Man, Two Guvnors	W.T. Woodson High School
Featured Actor in a Female Role in a Musical	Alexa Norris	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Featured Role in a Male Role in a Musical	Brandon Miller	Once on This Island	Clarksburg High School
Dancer in a Female Role	Angie Sukhee	Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical	Wakefield High School
Dancer in a Male Role	August Rivers	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Vocalist in a Female Role	Elina Viana	The Music Man	Bishop Ireton High School
Vocalist in a Male Role	Seger Ott-Rudolph	My Favorite Year	Albert Einstein High School
Comic Actor in a Female Role in a Play	Joana Lima Alves Montenegro	The Man Who Came to Dinner	Langley High School
Comic Actor in a Male Role in a Play	Jonah Uffelman	Much Ado About Nothing	James Madison High School
Comic Actor in a Female Role in a Musical	Khailah Schroeter	Mean Girls High School Version	Osborn Park High School
Comic Actor in a Male Role in a Musical	Idil Erdoğan	Claudio Quest	McLean High School
Supporting Actor in a Female Role in a Play	Amelia Campbell-Reidhead	Dracula	Lake Braddock Secondary School
Supporting Actor in a Male Role in a Play	Audrey Evans	Peter and the Starcatcher	Woodbridge Senior High School
Supporting Actor in a Female Role in a Musical	Maren Lewis	Anastasia: The Musical	Quince Orchard High School
Supporting Actor in a Male Role in a Musical	Hayden Polsky	Anastasia: The Musical	Quince Orchard High School
Lead Actor in a Female Role in a Play	Sarah Hilton	The Man Who Came to Dinner	Langley High School
Lead Actor in a Male Role in a Play	Jack Wolff	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time	Chantilly High School
Lead Actor in a Female Role in a Musical	Abigail Jamison	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Lead Actor in a Male Role in a Musical	Henry Carter	Bright Star	South Lakes High School
Song	Platypus Heart	Claudio Quest	McLean High School
Critic Team			Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
Play	Dracula		Lake Braddock Secondary School
Musical	Bright Star		South Lakes High School

Throwing Shade in Virginia

Va. Forestry urges gardeners to give native trees a try.

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

“**T**hrow some shade” and what do you get? Cleaner air and water, and inviting shade, says Virginia’s Department of Forestry urban and community partnership coordinator, Molly O’Liddy. The Department of Forestry now has a pilot program to help interested plant nurseries promote planting native trees to their customers, to bring more of those important benefits to the Commonwealth. The pilot program, new this year and open only until the end of June, is called, Throwing Shade VA.

The program incentivizes nursery customers to purchase native species of trees and shrubs for their myriad of benefits, and provides a tool to measure the state’s progress toward Virginia’s water and Chesapeake Bay watershed improvement goals. Native plants offer more ecosystem benefits, provide food and habitat for wildlife, especially essential pollinators, and discourage the establishment of invasive plants. Native species also provide benefits for gardeners. Native species adapt to their natural environment and are more likely to thrive than non-native, ornamental, or exotic species. Fertilizing isn’t required and watering needs decline once the trees are established. When native trees mature, they provide shade and reduce temperatures in planted areas.

Beyond the benefits to wildlife and gardeners, successful trees hold soil and filter stormwater runoff. O’Liddy adds that, “Waterways and rivers that flow into the Chesapeake Bay, and through our cities and towns, can be cleaned by establishment trees.” The federal Environmental Protection Agency set pollution limits for nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment in the Bay.

Virginia, five other bay states, and the District of Columbia developed plans to adhere

How the Program Works

- ❖ Select a native tree or shrub with a “Throwing Shade VA” tag
- ❖ Scan the QR code on the tag and record where the tree will be planted
- ❖ Show cashier that the information on the QR code was collected and receive a \$25 discount on your purchase.

Benefits of Native Trees/Shrubs/Plants

- ❖ create food/habitat for wildlife, especially essential pollinators
- ❖ improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, store greenhouse gases
- ❖ save time/money - hardy & require little care once established
- ❖ likely to thrive due to environmental adaptation
- ❖ meet any landscaping needs
- ❖ advantageous to the ecosystem
- ❖ maintain their space & foster biodiversity in our communities and forests



Burke Nursery & Garden Center is one of three nurseries state-wide offering the Throwing Shade VA pilot program.

to those limits. Virginia’s Water Implementation Plan, also called the Clean Water Blueprint, requires an increase of tree canopy coverage for the health of the Chesapeake

Bay. The Blueprint is a detailed practical plan for meeting Virginia’s goals for reducing pollution by 2025. If fully implemented, it is expected to vastly improve the health

of rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay. Community planting of native trees is a part of that plan. Described as the single most important roadmap for restoring the Commonwealth’s waters, the Blueprint also is a guiding document for the Department of Forestry in setting tree planting goals.

As part of the Throwing Shade program, the Department of Forestry includes a tool to map trees planted through the discount program. By scanning the tree tag QR at the time of purchase, customers enter some basic information, confidentially, and that helps track the Commonwealth’s progress toward tree planting and water quality improvement goals.

Burke Nursery & Garden Center, in Burke, was one of the three private nurseries that responded to DOF’s request to participate. Under the pilot program, customers can receive a discount of \$25 on eligible native trees for retail sales valued at \$50 or more. The Department of Forestry will evaluate the potential for a state-wide program based on the three nursery pilot experience.

Burke Nursery horticulturalist Misty Kuceris said “There’s a sense of satisfaction knowing that we’re doing our part to maintain and even improve our ecosystems. This [program] gives all of us the opportunity to discuss native plants, the beauty they bring to the landscape, and the benefits they provide. We totally believe in the ecosystem and using native plants, and see this program as part of educating the public.” Kuceris expects people who have been thinking about using natives to be motivated by the program’s incentives to give them a try.

For more information about plants native to our region, see <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/nativeplants>

Burke Nursery & Garden Center, 9401 Burke Road, Burke

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Nursery horticulturalist Misty Kuceris shows the Throwing Shade VA tag that identifies a Redbud tree as a native species.

Nursery employees like Cole Hunter assist customers in identifying native plants that qualify for program discounts.

ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY/JULY 1

Fireworks. 6-10 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Fireworks will illuminate the surrounding landscape in an expertly choreographed display of dazzling pyrotechnic light and thunder. Launched from the historic, 55-acre campus, the region's largest pre-Independence Day Fireworks show celebrates the history of this amazing nation and honors the courage and sacrifice that have made America a beacon of hope and freedom around the world. Admission: \$40.

SUNDAY/JULY 2

Independence Day Fireworks. At Yeonas Park, Town of Vienna. Festivities including live music, children's entertainment, games and other family fun begin at 4 p.m., and a 20-minute fireworks display will begin at 9:30 p.m. Those who plan to attend the celebration are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or picnic blankets. The Vienna Little League concession stand will be open offering food and beverages for sale, or residents may bring their own snacks. No alcohol, glass containers, sparklers/fireworks or dogs are permitted. Lawn chairs are not permitted on the baseball fields but may be used anywhere else in the park. Visit www.viennava.gov/fireworks.

GREAT FALLS 4TH OF JULY

At Village Centre, Great Falls. Celebrate Great Falls Foundation and get ready for the cuteness of the Little Patriots Parade on the 4th of July! This has been a local Great Falls tradition since 1955, and it kicks off the morning festivities in the Village Centre. Dress your little ones (babies through kindergartners, plus siblings) in patriotic attire and walk or pull them in a decorated "ride" around the Village Centre Green. Awards include Young George Washington, Miss Betsy Ross, Little Liberty, Best Decorated Wagon, Best Curly Hair, and Most Entertaining. Register for free on-site at 8:30 a.m., and the parade begins promptly at 9 am. Sponsored by the Women's Club of Great Falls.

JUNE 30 AND JULY 1

Independence Day Fireworks. At George Washington's Mount Vernon. Enjoy an evening of family fun and Independence Day fireworks along with patriotic music to celebrate the nation's founding. Guests also can attend a special wreath-laying at Washington's Tomb, watch colonial ice cream-making demonstrations, and enjoy 18th-century dancing. The Mansion will be lit in red, white, and blue during this event scheduled for June 30 and July 1.

JULY 1

Independence Day at Lake Fairfax Park. At 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. Ticketed entry to Lake Fairfax Park begins at noon, and the park will close to new arrivals at approximately 8:45 p.m. Parking fees are \$15 per vehicle in advance or \$20 per vehicle at the gate. Bicyclists and pedestrians are free. Lake Fairfax is a destination location providing 476 acres of parkland. You'll find a wide range of family friendly activities. Visitors can enjoy the Water Mine Family Swimmin' Hole water park, skate park,



Independence Day Fireworks will begin on June 30 and July 1 around the region.

pump track, several hiking and biking trails, and athletic fields. All picnic areas will be offered on a first-come-first serve basis. Food trucks will open for business from noon until 9 p.m. Live music will begin at 4 p.m., featuring Ted Garber, Frying Pan Farm Bluegrass Jam and Sonic Boom. Cap off an eventful holiday with a patriotic fireworks display beginning at approximately 9:15 p.m.

NOW THRU JUNE 25

Falls Church Arts All Member Show L-Z. At the Falls Church Arts gallery, 700-B West Broad St. (Route 7), Falls Church. Eighty-eight artists with last names from L-Z will be featured in the second part of the All Member Show at the Falls Church Arts Gallery. An opening reception will be held from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday, May 27. The reception is open to the public. The show features the work of emerging and established member artists from Falls Church Arts and encompasses an extensive range of media from the more traditional watercolor, acrylic, mixed media, pastel, fused glass, oil, photography, and sculpture to a wide variety of mixed media and printing techniques. Visit the website www.fallschurcharts.org.

RESTON COMMUNITY CENTER 2023 SUMMER

ENTERTAINMENT LINEUP Saturdays, June 17 – August 5 10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

At Reston Town Square Park, Reston Bring the kids for magic, comedy, puppets, music and lots of laughs. Shows include Rocknoceros, Lohr Family Antics, The Uncle Devin Show and Turley the Magician. See the full schedule here: Family Fun Entertainment Series. Family Fun Entertainment is presented by RCC and Reston Town Center Association in cooperation with MSE Productions, Inc. Reston Town Center garages offer free parking on Saturdays. Sunday Art in the Park with the



Pride Night Out will be held on Friday, June 23, 2023 at Springfield Town Center.

Shenandoah Conservatory Sundays, June 11 – August 27 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Reston Town Square Park Wind down your weekend with classical, jazz and cabaret-style music provided by faculty and students from Shenandoah University's acclaimed music conservatory. This series will run through August 27. Visit Sunday Art in the Park for the complete schedule. Reston Town Center garage parking is free on Sundays. Sunday Art in the Park is presented by RCC and Reston Town Center Association in cooperation with Shenandoah University.

NOW THRU JULY 2 (EXTENDED)

"The Last Match." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road Tysons. Played out under the bright lights of the U.S. Open Semifinals, The Last Match pits rising Russian star, Sergei Sergeyev against American great, Tim Porter in an epic showdown that follows two tennis titans through pivotal moments in their lives both on-and-off the court. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at

8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$50 general admission, \$47 seniors (65+), \$15 students, educators, and military. The first 20 tickets sold for every performance will cost only \$20. Thursday evening tickets are \$35. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or 703-854-1856.

JULY 15 & AUGUST 19

Summer Concert Series: Genres. 7-9 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, The Plaza, McLean. Join the Summer Concert Series featuring performance artists Keeton on July 15 for a Pop throwback and Delta Spur with Country & Classic Rock on August 19. Enjoy takeout and cocktails from our restaurants while dancing and singing along to your favorite tunes!

FREE SUMMER CONCERTS AT MCLEAN CENTRAL PARK

The Alden in McLean presents its annual Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park at McLean Central Park. This free outdoor concert series runs now through Sunday, July

30. Performances start at 3 p.m., and the June concerts are designed to be family friendly. McLean Central Park is located at 1468 Dolley Madison Blvd.

Schedule
Sunday, June 25, 3 p.m. – Gay Men's Chorus of Washington: Potomac Fever
Sunday, July 2, 3 p.m. – Capital Blend
Sunday, July 9, 3 p.m. – Czarna Wolgastar: Intergalactic Balkan Surf Jazz Trio
Sunday, July 16, 3 p.m. – Six Pack Rodeo
Sunday, July 23, 3 p.m. – Justin Trawick
Sunday, July 30, 3 p.m. – Philip Bowen
For more information, call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711 or visit The Alden website: aldentheatre.org.

LAKE ANNE'S PLAZA CONCERT SERIES

Lake Anne Live! brings Thursday evening concerts to the plaza from now through July 27. The free concerts will feature music and dance from local musicians and dance instructors. The plaza is located at 1609 Washington Plaza North. All concerts are free.

Schedule:
June 22, (6-9 p.m.): Swing Instruction and Dance with Gottaswing; pet adoptions by Lucky Dog Animal Rescue
June 29 (7-9 p.m.): Bruce Corsino concert
July 6 (6-9 p.m.): Bachata Instruction and Dance with David Norton
July 13 (7-9 p.m.): To be announced on Lake Anne Plaza's social media pages
July 20 (7-9 p.m.): Concert with the Reston Community Orchestra
July 27 (6-9 p.m.): Salsa and Bachata Instruction and Dance with David Norton

FREE CONCERT SERIES AT BURKE LAKE PARK

Every Wednesday night from June 28th through August 23rd at 7p.m., Supervisor Pat Herrity (Springfield District) along with the Fairfax County Park Authority will be hosting the fifth annual Free Concerts in the Park series at Burke Lake Park. The series has expanded to nine shows with pop, rock and R&B music. Peterson's Ice Cream, 2 Silos beer and food trucks will be on site at all concerts. Attendees are encouraged to bring blankets and/or a lawn chair.

Schedule
JUNE
28 Randy Thompson Band
JULY
5 The Nighthawks
12 SoHo Down
19 Speidel, Goodrich, Goggin & Lille
26 The Skip Castro Band
AUGUST
2 The English Channel
9 The Road Ducks
16 The Colin Thompson Band
23 Riptide

SATURDAY CONCERTS AT WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton 7:30 p.m.
JUNE
24 Christylez Bacon (Progressive Hip-Hop)
JULY
1 Workhouse Fireworks Festival (Ticketed event. For details visit www.workhousearts.org) Rain date is July 8th.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 11

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 9

- 8 The Radio Sparks (Modern Rock) This will be a ticketed event if the July 1st Fireworks Festival is postponed to July 8th.
 - 15 Project Loceca (World Music)
 - 22 Bachelor Boys Band (High Energy Cover Music)
 - 29 Bobby Blackhat Band (Traditional/Contemporary Blues)
- AUGUST
- 5 Workhouse Musical Event (Ticketed event. For details visit www.workhousearts.org)
 - 12 Quin Tango (Classical Argentinian Tango Music)
 - 19 Karl Stoll & The Danger Zone (Rock, Blues)
 - 26 The United States Army Field Band Six-String Soldiers (Country)

JUNE 19 TO AUG. 18

Summer Art Camps. Ages 8-18 years. At Great Falls Village Centre Art School, Great Falls. Looking for a summer art camp for your budding artist? The popular art summer camps include:

- NEW! Fun with Watercolor & Acrylic Paints
- Paper Maché Sculpture
- Classical Drawing
- Color Study
- Cartooning
- 35mm Photography for Middle and High School Students
- Animé Style Drawing
- Morning (9:30-12:30 p.m.) and afternoon (1:30-4:30 p.m.) camp sessions are available. Camps are taught by professional artists with teaching experience in the convenient Great Falls Village Centre art school. Visit <https://artsofgreatfalls.org/summer-camps-2023/>

FRIDAY/JUNE 23

Pride Night Out. 6-9 p.m. At Springfield Town Center, Center Grand Court near Starbucks, Springfield. Through a new partnership with Safe Space NOVA – an organization dedicated to providing a safe, accepting, and supportive environment to combat social stigmas, bullying, and other challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth, Springfield Town Center will be hosting Pride Night Out. This family-friendly pride celebration features entertainment for all ages

including music, a Pride Photobooth, community vendors, giveaways, and much more! Visit SpringfieldTownCenter.com/events.

JUNE 24-25

National Field Day. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Rd., Fairfax Station. Vienna Wireless Society will join thousands nationwide to show off their Amateur Radio and emergency-communications capabilities. The public is welcome to join the Field Day event and even get on the air under the guidance of a licensed Ham.

SATURDAY/JUNE 24

Pride Month Poetry Reading. 3-5 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Featuring Sunu Chandu, Malik Thompson, Kim Roberts, and Holly Mason Badra. Hosted by Fairfax Poet Laureate Danielle Badra. June is Pride Month, celebrated each year to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in New York City, which launched the queer liberation movement in the United States. Featuring some of the region's most prominent LGBTQ+ poets, this reading lifts up a variety of voices and experiences to honor the rich legacy and contributions of poets and poetry in the queer community.

SUNDAY/JUNE 25

Burke Historical Society. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Debbie Robison will speak on schools established or supported by the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to serve African American children in Fairfax County after the Civil War. Email: slawski_brian@yahoo.com.

JUNE 26-30

Vacation Bible School. 9-11:30 a.m. At Fellowship Baptist Church, 5936 Rolling Road, Springfield. Keepers of the Kingdom: Standing Strong in Today's Battle for Truth. Activities include a Bible lesson, missions, crafts, snacks and games for children age 3 (potty-trained) through grade 6. Visit the website: www.FellowshipBaptistVA.org

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 2

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2023 Independence Day SoberRide program will be in operation beginning at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 4th (Independence Day) and operate until 4:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 5th as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period.

During this 12-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app's 'Payment' tab (under the 'Add Lyft Pass' option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's 2023 Independence Day SoberRide promo code will be posted at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 4th on www.SoberRide.com.

TOWN COUNCIL SETS PUBLIC HEARINGS ON UPDATED ZONING CODE

At a special called meeting last week, the Vienna Town Council approved the next steps for the first major update on the Town zoning code in nearly 60 years. The Council voted to set two joint public hearings in front of the Town Council and the Planning Commission. The first public hearing will be held on Monday, July 10, 2023, at 8 p.m. and the second public hearing will be held on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. Both public hearings will take place at Vienna Town Hall,

127 Center Street S, Vienna, Va. 22180. The zoning code regulates how land can be used within the Town of Vienna. It stipulates permitted building heights, parking requirements, lighting standards and land uses for commercial, public, and residential property. Portions of the code regarding residential lot coverage and front porch setbacks were approved last year. The overall goal of the proposal is to revise the code to meet modern-day needs and lifestyles with a plan that is written in common language that is easily understandable to all audiences, all while maintaining the small-town feel that Vienna residents value.

The proposed plan is available for review on the Town website: www.viennava.gov/zoningdraft. In addition to the public hearings, residents and businesses may provide feedback on the proposed zoning code update via email to the Town Clerk, Melanie Clark, at mclark@viennava.gov or via phone call at 703-255-6304 through Wednesday, July 26, 2023.

QTC MEDICAL GROUP OPENS NEW FLAGSHIP CLINIC FACILITY IN FAIRFAX

QTC Medical Services, Inc., a Leidos company, opened their new flagship clinic facility in Fairfax on June 6. This cutting-edge facility will bring a range of health services to U.S. military veterans, separating and retiring service members, active duty and reserve service members and civilians in Northern Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area.

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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped to keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

Each local newspaper's mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before Federal PPP funding arrived, and both made our survival possible. We now await a decision for a grant from Rebuild Virginia in early February that we hope will help us in 2022 and beyond. But we need help to survive the first quarter, always a brutal time for cash flow in weekly newspapers. Thank you.

Please, help save these historical papers.

All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

The ongoing pandemic continues to crush many newspapers across the country, and our newspapers continue to be at risk. The Northern Virginia area's best read and most trusted source for community news includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Connection Newspapers in the metropolitan region.

The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyper local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning in 2020. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. In the fall of 2021 we saw the return of some advertising for events and Grand Openings, but now omicron clouds the horizon in so many ways. Revenue still remains short of expenses despite our greatly curtailed costs.

Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless residents have grown up with these papers covering significant moments in the lives of family and children, news, community events, school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cats. Internet news and large national newspapers cannot provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers and the Alexandria Gazette Packet provide. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of local community newspapers.

Visit connectionnewspapers.com or <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-keep-your-newspaper-printing>
Connection Newspapers... Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette, Centre View, Potomac Almanac
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Back to Abnormal



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Life in the cancer lane: slow and steady, thank God! And after 14 years and nearly six months past a terminal "13 month to two years" prognosis given in late Feb. 2009, "I am pleased as punch," to quote the late Hubert H. Humphrey, our 38th Vice President, serving Lyndon B. Johnson from 1965 – 1969, to say I am still in the game, the game of life, that is. This is no board game, however. Although, it can get very boring.

A game for which there are rules and responsibilities, although few guarantees (other than death and taxes, of course). Let me amend that. There is one guarantee: after a cancer diagnosis, your life will never be the same. Every action and reaction will likely be affected by your diagnosis, treatment, tolerance to chemotherapy/cancer medicine and any number of cancer-related appointments, as well as a variety of side effects which are often the inevitable result of your treatment (which is likely keeping you alive), and by your support system. Any joie de vivre you can muster under these extremely difficult circumstances will be welcome indeed. Sustaining that joie, however, can be challenging. As my close friend and breast-cancer survivor Lynne had advised us years ago at the beginning of our cancer journey concerning what to expect: "This will be the toughest thing you've ever had to endure," she said. And needless to say, although I'll say it anyway, she was 100% correct: "Cancer is not for cissies." (You can thank Suzanne Somers for little ditty.) It says it, and it's simple. But receiving a cancer diagnosis is anything but simple. It's the proverbial boom being lowered atop your head. And when I first received it from my oncologist, I sat stunned at what I was hearing. I said to myself: "How is this possible? I have never smoked cigarettes in my life." (I have since found out that up to 25 percent of lung cancer patients are non-smokers.)

Moreover, navigating the slings and arrows of your outrageous misfortune can get overwhelming. In fact, the medical industry has created a profession specifically to assist the patient in managing their care (scheduling appointments, ordering drugs, following miscellaneous protocols and in short, trying to help the cancer patient in any way possible to simplify and organize the demands of their diagnosis); so you have a chance, an assist even, in living your most rewarding, least worrisome life – under the circumstances. Nurse navigator is their name and helping the patient is their game. Family and friends are a great and necessary support system. Without their encouragement, patience and understanding, a cancer patient would be hard-pressed to endure the ordeal – which cancer treatment most definitely is. But what goes on in the hospital or infusion center is likely beyond their expertise. Having an in-house resource could make all the difference in your life.

And it is not a tangled web they weave. Quite the opposite. The nurse navigator's task is to untangle and cut through any figurative web that is interfering in your life. My oncologist has regularly encouraged me to do things to try and enhance the quality of my life. Because cancer is hard. Keeping up to date and current with all the cancer responsibilities, especially when trying to integrate/schedule it around your non-cancer/pre-cancer life, is nearly impossible. It's difficult to plan a future – which is measured in weeks or quarters, for recurring lab tests, doctor's appointments, infusions, and diagnostic scans when your present is so chalk-full of commitments. Commitments/appointments which could change if any result causes a delay. The cascade effect of rescheduled appointments will play havoc with any future plans – for what was passing as your normal-type life, anyway. Because once the word cancer is uttered in your direction, your life as you have known it is over and normal has very definitely left the building.

But if you don't find a path forward and stagnant/struggle instead with your present while trying to arrange and in many instances rearrange your future, it will make "Jack" a very dull boy, and not one who's able to live a normal-type life at all. And if you don't find a way to get a few highs, the lows, as cancer can certainly cause them, will more often than not, grind you to a screeching halt. If you do find them, you may still succumb to your disease but at least you'll do so in your own way with some sort of control (most of which you lose once your cancer diagnosis is confirmed). After all, if you're going to die, you might as well set the terms.

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

Fairfax Master Naturalists Team Up for State Park

Mason Neck Park and pollinators benefit.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Usually working as leads for volunteer teams across Fairfax County, or working solo on project efforts, Fairfax chapter members of the Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN) are teaming up in June to take on a project together. The project, Help Our Partner, benefits the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, a sponsor of the state-wide naturalist organization. Specifically, Fairfax Master Naturalists are working to renew pollinator gardens at Mason Neck State Park in Lorton. Working in conjunction with the Friends of Mason Neck State Park volunteers, the joint effort extends care for the gardens beyond renewal into on-going maintenance care.

Begun on June 3rd, the park's gardens are being prepared for the summer season with multiple work sessions. Initial work includes aerating the soil, weeding, and spreading compost in four garden areas. Rain barrels used to collect water from the visitor center roof run-off are providing a way to conserve water for use in the garden beds; providing a free, natural resource. Added plantings of fifty native wildflowers, including new species, lengthens the bloom period in each bed. The gardens,

previously largely neglected, will receive monthly care from the volunteer naturalists and Friends over the summer months.

Fairfax chapter president, Sarah Mayhew, says she agreed to organize the chapter to assist after the call for volunteers by the state park staff came up short of the help needed. She notes those volunteering are able to learn to identify native plants and learn how to use rain barrels in their own gardens. Volunteers remarked on the added benefit of working in a beautiful setting, with eagles flying over the bay waters behind them and butterflies circling directly overhead.

The park's wildlife appears to easily accept the garden improvements. A large Eastern River Cooter Turtle (*Pseudemys concinna concinna*) was observed making a nest in the central garden soon after the first work session moved leaves, exposing more soil. A Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) flitted about the garden near its preferred host species shrub, Spicebush (*Linear benzoin*), freed from weeds. A Giant Mayfly (*Hexagenia limbata*), disturbed from the ground, allowed a short visit before spreading its wings for a brief flight back into the grasses. Park visitors can view these creatures and many more at the park located at 7301 High Point Rd, Lorton.

Applications for the Fall class of the Fairfax Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists opens online on July 23rd, at:

<https://app.betterimpact.com/Application?OrganizationGuid=a5643fc6-4efe-426b-97ef-f113d7531591&ApplicationFormNumber=1>



A Giant Mayfly sits with Sarah Mayhew and Julia Ghiselli for a short observation before flying into the grasses.



Fairfax Chapter President Sarah Mayhew is pleased to see the power of rain barrel pressure to feed a soaker hose in the restored Mason Neck State Park garden.



Elizabeth and Criss Lewis enjoy the blue sky and butterflies while weeding the Mason Neck State Park garden.



The mulching crew, Rob Warren, of Burke, Mike Smith, of Lorton, and Jerry Nissley, FMN director, renew the gardens' soil with a boost of compost donated by the Friends of Mason Neck State Park.



A female Eastern River Cooter turtle, like this one, soon found the renewed central garden of the park a good place to lay her eggs.

PHOTO BY
PAUL W. SATTLER

Spicebush Swallowtails, and many other species of butterflies, can be seen visiting their favorite host plants in the park.

PHOTO BY
JUDY GALLAGHER

