

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MAY 16, 2024

## Chamber Receives Report On General Assembly Activities

### Roll for a casino in Fairfax County?

BY HOLLY DOUGHERTY

“It was a session with a lot of changes,” said State Senator Scott Surovell speaking to the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce at the annual General Assembly Report business breakfast.

Surovell explained that the number of state senators and delegates who retired was unusually high. As a result, there were a lot of new people serving their first term in the General Assembly. He said that 25 percent of the General Assembly is now from a minority background.

“Going in as the Senate majority leader was a new experience for me,” Surovell said. “All those changes in both chambers was a very different vibe in Richmond.” He also mentioned that the number of vetoes by the Governor was unprecedented and did not lead to good will between the General Assembly and the Governor.

Surovell talked about some of the major legislation that came through both chambers saying, “The newspapers say all we talked about in Richmond was casinos and arenas. These issues dominated the news but were only a small part of what we did.”

Surovell talked about the benefit of having a casino in Fairfax County saying, “A casino coupled with a conference center in Tysons would be ideal.” He said such a



Sen. Dave Marsden (left) and Del Paul Krizek (right) are greeted by Chamber vice chair Roberta Tinch (center), Inova Mount Vernon Hospital.

development would generate tax and other revenues for Fairfax County equal to what is needed for education.

Delegate Paul Krizek talked about all the new things in this session including new districts and a new General Assembly Building that was “purpose” built and not just a re-used office building as they had used in the past.

Krizek outlined his committee responsibilities and said, “I worked harder this session than all the eight sessions before.” Krizek talked about his work on gaming issues including limiting the use of skill games in small convenience stores.

“The horse racing industry in Virginia has really exploded in the last ten years,” said Krizek. He is working to help that industry and bring economic benefits to the sur-



Sen. Scott Surovell

rounding areas. Krizek also mentioned state grants for local nonprofits including the Gum Springs Museum and Historical Society that he was able to get through the budget and his work with tribal nations in Virginia.

Senator Dave Marsden’s new district includes much of Central Springfield and West Springfield. Marsden currently chairs the agriculture committee which, he says, deals mostly with environmental issues.

“I didn’t plan on starting WWIII over proposing a casino bill,” said Marsden, who advocated for bringing a casino to Fairfax County. “Northern Virginia’s economy has been built on commercial real estate but covid has altered the basis of the economy.” He said that the commercial space in Tysons is currently 17 percent unleased and 50 percent unoccupied. County revenue from commercial property taxes has dropped significantly and will continue to drop over the next few years as leases are renewed.

Marsden continued explaining some of the changes such as a decline in Metro ridership. Metro was originally planned to operate with 60% of revenue from ridership and 40% from government subsidies. Currently it’s 15% ridership and 85% subsidies, which is not sustainable, he said.

“A casino is about the future of the community,” said Marsden.

## Are Longtime Businesses Leaving Hollin Hall Shopping Center?

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

Hollin Hall in Mount Vernon is a little shopping center off Fort Hunt Road that not only serves the immediate needs in the way of food, hardware and sundries, but it also acts as a gathering place for residents of this community. Change is coming to the Hollin Hall Shopping Center though and some of the store owners are leaving in search of a more affordable space.

“This is our last week,” said Susie Moss, who has worked at Hair Visions since 2008.

The rent may be one reason

they are closing, but the owner made the decision and set her sites for retirement in Florida. “The rest of the hair stylists and manicurists are going to different places,” Moss said.

The “Top it Off,” clothing store is another long-term resident that recently relocated to a spot on nearby Belle View Boulevard. The reason they moved was not available.

In Guidant’s “Small Business Trends” report, price increases are listed as the second top concern for small business owners. Consumers are not the only ones struggling with inflation. Guidant said that rising inflation can be challeng-

SEE HOLLIN HALL, PAGE 5



The Village Hardware changed hands a few years ago and continues to thrive and serve the community.

PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

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# HISTORY

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



The Woodlawn mansion today



The Alexandria Friends Quaker Meeting at Woodlawn today

## Woodlawn's Diverse History

### Beyond the Gentry.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

“Hanson’s mode of making chicken broth, the best in the world,” wrote Nelly Lewis in her housekeeping book at Woodlawn between 1828 and 1830. “If you wish it very nourishing – break the bones with a rolling pin before you put it into the pot.”

Hanson was Nelly and Lawrence Lewis’s cook, a man Nelly inherited in 1802. This chicken broth recipe is just one revealing gem in Woodlawn’s new exhibit that unravels several centuries of history and unveils the diverse people who lived and toiled there over the years, stories previously untold or obscured. Guides at historic homes and southern plantations have traditionally focused on the white, wealthy owners. Think George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Woodlawn’s curators are now telling the complex, intertwined stories of the many people associated with this land and buildings over time.

#### The Doegs

The exhibit starts with “Offerings for Tauxenent: Acknowledging Indigenous Place,” highlighting the Doeg people and their displacement. Tauxenent was a village of the Doeg or Dogue people near the mouth of the Occoquan River that English Captain John Smith encountered in 1608. The Doeg people lived in what is now Northern Virginia as far back as the 14th century. Some Doeg descendants today are members of the Rappahannock and Piscataway tribes.

For this exhibit, George Mason University history students, led by Dr. Gabrielle Tayac, a member of the Piscataway Tribe, connected with contemporary local Indigenous eastern hemisphere communities, whose objects on display are offerings honoring the Doeg people. For example, there’s a colorful woven bag by Diego Velasco Perez, a Maya Ixil, and a woven alpaca hat by Ozcollo Espinoza, a member of the Andean community in Northern Virginia.

Also exhibited is a grindstone and stone



Bricks made by enslaved people for Woodlawn’s front portico columns

#### The Exhibits at Woodlawn

##### OFFERINGS FOR TAUXENENT:

- ❖ Acknowledging Indigenous Place, until Aug. 30, 2024
  - ❖ Woodlawn: People and Perspectives, until Dec. 31, 2024
- <http://www.woodlawnpopeleighey.org/>

scraper from the Gray family, descendants of the Doegs. Schirra Gray loaned a pine needle turtle basket.

#### African-Americans and Quakers

A second exhibit, “Woodlawn: People and Perspectives,” explores others who shaped Woodlawn over time, including the around 100 people of African descent that the Lewises enslaved. Visitors can study four triangular bricks with one rounded edge made by enslaved people for the original columns on the front portico. “The stories of the enslaved people who built Woodlawn brick by brick are inseparable from the story of this home,” notes the display.

In 1846, a group of Quakers bought Woodlawn and lived and worshipped in the mansion until they built farmhouses and a meeting house. They created a “free labor colony” to demonstrate that farming could be successful without slavery, an alternative to Virginia’s plantation culture.

In the two decades before the Civil War, free Black families such as the Hollands pur-



Woodlawn’s second floor bedroom as in the Lewis family era, typical of the traditional focus of interpretation at historic sites.



Mayan bag made, by Diego Velasco Perez

chased land and built communities alongside Quaker families like the Troths. Visitors learn that William Holland, freed in 1799, bought land in 1851 when the Quakers divided the land into family farms and sold it to free blacks like him. Some of the enslaved Parkers were sold by Alexandria’s Franklin and Armfield who had a slave pen at 1315 Duke Street and shipped slaves to Louisiana plantations.

#### Belvoir’s Takeover

Another rarely-told story is that of Fort Belvoir, formerly Camp Humphreys, which in World War I began to take over Woodlawn’s farmland. Renamed Fort Belvoir, to expand the installation, the federal government in the 1940s condemned some of Woodlawn’s land and demolished farms, homes, a church, school and lodges of Woodlawn’s Black community. Many Black people living



Andean woven alpaca hat, made by Ozcollo Espinoza

there relocated to Gum Springs, founded in 1833, and today Gum Springs is the oldest surviving Black community in Fairfax County. The federal government left the Quaker Meeting House intact. It is still in use today.

Woodlawn’s exhibits trace other owners of the property too, up to 1957 when the National Trust for Historic Preservation bought it and it became the first historic Trust site open to the public.

# 'Addictive Cell Phone Usage'

Fairfax County School Board spurred to action on student cell phone use.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE GAZETTE

**D**riven by research from the U.S. Surgeon General, the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, doctors across the country, and others that demonstrated “cell phones are destructive in multiple respects,” Mateo Dunne, the Mount Vernon District Representative on the Fairfax County School Board, urged his 11 fellow school board members on Thursday, May 9, to take action. There is a “fierce urgency” about countering student use of cell phones in Fairfax County Public Schools.

The school board representatives encountered a torrent of internal discussions regarding the amendments, follow-on motions, and amendments to follow-on motions related to developing a pilot

program for the secure storage of cell phones in classrooms and implementation of a strategic communications plan to raise awareness of the policies governing cell phone usage across high schools. As voting ensued, the board approved five follow-on motions to the Student Rights and Responsibilities, detailed in the agenda item on BoardDocs.

It began with Amendment #1, proposed by Dr. Ricardy J. Anderson (Mason District) and seconded by Kyle McDaniel (Member-at-Large), and ended with approved Amended Follow-on motion #2, a resolution directing “the Superintendent to develop alternatives to existing FCPS practices governing student cell phone usage in public schools.”

During the discussion, McDaniel noted that there had been a lot of conversation 48 hours before the meeting, and the board



Fairfax County School Board in session, May 9, 2024

had worked together to develop proposals. He thanked Dunne for working on the matter. McDaniel reported that multi-billion-dollar companies like Google, Facebook, and Meta devote “significant resources to studying the neurological effects of particular aspects of their apps, of cell phone usage, to make it addictive at a time [when] children are very vulnerable to addiction.”

Anderson added, “We have a problem, and we need to find some resolutions.”

Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Brad-dock District) clarified that data from the pilot and stakeholders’ input would support the development of additional options for the board when it considers Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Approved Amended Follow-on motion #2 says that for elementary, middle, and high schools, there would be “a prohibition on student cell phone usage during the school day, with appropriate exceptions for instructional activities and ... for students with IEPs, 504s, or medical conditions.” Additionally, the options developed would incorporate stakeholder input, best practices, and lessons learned from other school divisions, with the superintendent presenting the options to the board by March 1, 2025. However, by majority vote, the school board must approve options that the superintendent would implement.

“Cell phone usage in schools is rapidly becoming a critical issue,” McDaniel said. “We need to know what our options are, what we’re dealing with, what works, and what doesn’t.” McDaniel asserted that consistent enforcement of the existing rules is necessary. In his Follow-on Motion #2, McDaniel urged that the superintendent work directly with principals and school-based staff to reinforce the school board’s

expectation of always adhering to the cell phone policy.

Vice Chair Melanie Meren (Hunter Mill Representative) questioned the semantics of the related amendments the board was considering. She said the board would be directing the superintendent to create “policies,” yet “policies” are under the board’s purview. “I’m very sensitive about using policies ... We ask the superintendent to help us create it.”

Meren said she preferred the word practices in this case to policies and asked Division Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid if she was comfortable with the language.

“It is true I work on regulations,” Reid said. “But I also support policy work. So I will do as the board wishes.”

The approved Amendment to Follow-on motion #2 changed the term policies to practices.

Lastly, the board approved Amended Follow-on motion #2 by Dunne and seconded by Anderson, with 11 representatives voting yes and Seema Dixon, Sully District Representative, abstaining.

During an earlier discussion, Dixon said she wanted to wait and see details of the pilot study and if they solve the enforcement issues. Seema added that the sitting principals of FCPS told her that taking cell phones away “is not a great idea.”

“Especially high school students, that just strikes this off for me.”

Following the meeting, McDaniel said in a release, “We need to know what our options are, what we’re dealing with, what works, and what doesn’t. This pilot program will answer these questions and give us invaluable data to inform future rules around cell phone usage in our schools.” He added, “We need to do a better job communicating the existing rules. That’s exactly what this motion does.”

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# Are Longtime Businesses Leaving Hollin Hall Shopping Center?

FROM PAGE 1

ing for many small businesses, so cutting expenses can be the most effective way to help offset those challenges, which might mean finding a space or shopping center with lower rent.

Long time Hollin Hall shoppers aren't happy. "It's a community mainstay," said Ann Metcalf, a nearby resident who has lived there for eight years. She gets her hair done at Hair Visions in the center, so she'll have to find a hairdresser she likes.

"We should be supporting long time businesses in our community," Metcalf added.

Other places in the center the customers are concerned about include the Via Veneto restaurant and River Bend Bistro. "A loss of local eateries," is another concern for Metcalf. But any plans for restaurants to change locations would have to be categorized as rumors.

In April 2021, there was another concern at this shopping center when longtime hardware

store owner Larry Gray retired and sold the business. The new owner vowed to keep things the same.

The shopping center is managed by Woodlawn Properties and they were reluctant to answer any questions about businesses leaving, and requested an inquiry be directed to the higher ups, who have yet to respond.

### In the Beginning

Hollin Hall got its start in the 1940s and 1950s and the elementary school opened in 1949. The center was built by John McPherson Sr. in three phases. One of the original stores was the Fort Hunt Drugstore which had a lunch counter in the back. The current Variety Store opened in 1958. Hoda Kotb of NBC's Today Show worked at the Scoops ice cream store in the shopping center at one time.

The motto over at the shopping center is "Where Everybody Knows Your Name," a borrowed saying from the old sitcom "Cheers."



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Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
SCOTT	23591	600	FAIRVIEW ROAD	NORTH FORK OF CLINCH RIVER	4/30/2024
TAZEWELL	18530	601	FREESTONE VALLEY ROAD	LITTLE TUMBLING CREEK	4/30/2024
PATRICK	13252	610	HELMS ROAD/RTE 610	BRANCH DAN RIVER	4/23/2024
FLOYD	7631	785	BURKS FORK ROAD/RTE 785	BURKS FORK	4/18/2024
FRANKLIN	7936	731	DUGWELL ROAD/RTE 731	BUCK RUN	4/11/2024

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit [vdot.virginia.gov](http://vdot.virginia.gov) and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact [haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov).

*The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.*

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Donna Stauffer recorded their observations.



Jerry Nissley and Donna Stauffer stuffed some of the box openings with a cloth plug to keep house sparrows out. They will remove the plugs when bluebirds are ready to lay eggs again.



PHOTOS BY LARRY MEADE



PHOTOS BY LARRY MEADE



PHOTOS BY LARRY MEADE

# Local Volunteers Boost Bluebirds, Monitor Nestboxes

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

A little one-ounce blue, orange and white bird is a good news environmental story, for a change. Amid what seems like never-ending doom-and-gloom reports about climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation and species declines and extinctions, the eastern bluebird is a comeback story and some

Northern Virginians are helping tell the story.

In the early 20th century, eastern bluebird populations fell in North America, but since 1966, they have been rising, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Experts credit human-installed nest boxes as a major factor in the birds' rebound.

Eastern bluebirds are cavity nesters. Females typically build nests in natural cavities like old

woodpecker tree holes. Pairs raise two to three broods in the spring and early summer.

### Local Volunteers

Since 1982, volunteers have maintained and monitored around 25 bluebird boxes at Huntley Meadows Park. The park's most recent nestbox data show that in 2022 the bluebirds there laid 42 eggs and the success rate was 79 percent, meaning 79 percent of the

young birds born fledged, grew up to leave the nest. This year, ten volunteers check the boxes weekly.

"The bluebirds are not having a problem around here. It's certainly working well at Huntley Meadows," said Brooks Long, the park's Natural Resources Assistant.

### AHS's New Bluebird Trail

The American Horticultural Society (AHS) this year created its first bluebird trail at its Mount

Vernon headquarters with eight boxes. Nestbox volunteers were encouraged when on April 9 in one nest box they found five bluebird

eggs and the next week, three eggs and two young. On May 3, Donna Stauffer and Jerry Nissley with the Fairfax County Master Naturalists, in doing their weekly check, found one side of that box unscrewed and open and nothing inside. "It looks like a human predator," said SEE LOCAL VOLUNTEERS, PAGE 7



PHOTO BY RACHEL ROLL

Five bluebird eggs observed in a nest at AHS on April 5.



PHOTO BY DONNA STAUFFER

Three eggs and two bluebird chicks in a nest at AHS seen on April 26.



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Jerry Nissley securing the disturbed bluebird nestbox at AHS.

# The Backward Budget Moves Forward

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

**B**reaking news from Richmond – the biennial state budget has been passed and signed into law. We reconvened for a single-day special session on Monday to vote on a compromise budget agreed to by the Governor and General Assembly leaders. As you may remember, this budget is essentially the same one that the Governor blocked and called “backward” during his press tour in April. In reality, this budget provides record investment in the Commonwealth’s education and health care systems, helping all working families to keep Virginia moving forward.

With this budget deal, our Democratic leaders successfully averted a potential government shutdown. They rejected regressive taxes that would have impacted working families while preserving all critical spending allocated in the conference budget for programs important to our constituents.

This budget will invest \$2 bil-

lion in our K-12 schools and boost opportunities at colleges and universities by over \$700 million. Additional funding will be provided to the At-Risk Add-On, which supports economically disadvantaged students, and support for English language learners will increase by \$70 million. Teachers and other school staff will receive a 3% salary increase each year, for a total of a 6% increase. \$175 million will be provided to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to support the creation and preservation of affordable housing in the Commonwealth.

As highlighted in my recent column on mental health, this budget prioritizes mental healthcare. The budget allocates \$58 million to expand and modernize Virginia’s comprehensive crisis service systems. \$10 million will be provided to the Virginia Mental Health Access Program, which addresses shortages of pediatric mental health specialists. \$12 million is



Krizek

allocated for child psychiatry and children’s crisis response services, and \$5 million for school-based mental health integration grants. Additionally, this budget fully funds insurance forecasts for low-income Virginians and children, adds

3,440 Medicaid developmental disability (DD) waiver slots, and provides millions in funding for community health workers in local health departments.

I am especially pleased to report that all of my efforts included in the General Assembly’s conference budget were fully funded! These initiatives include \$144.7 million to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), \$5 million for a pilot program to assist residents of a manufacturing home park and nonprofits in purchasing at-risk parks, \$860,000 for a Northern Virginia firefighter cancer screening program, and \$500,000 over the biennium to support an African American

Research Fellowship at Mount Vernon requested by the community-based charity, Black Women United for Action.

This budget does not include any of the tax cuts directed at wealthy individuals or corporations that the Governor originally called for in his December 2023 proposed budget. Additionally, this budget does not include any tax increases. Explained to the General Assembly and the general public during the Appropriations budget briefing, changes and modernizations to Virginia’s tax policy, including going forward with the Governor’s digital tax proposal, were found unnecessary for the time being because the Commonwealth’s economy is so robust. Since December, the Commonwealth’s revenue collections have been far stronger than anticipated – approximately \$1.12 billion over projections – and all components of the original Conference Report spending package through fiscal year 2026 can be fully funded without any tax policy adjustments. Furthermore, analysis of the six-year financial

plan indicates that these funding levels could be sustained through 2030 without modernizing the tax system. Nevertheless, tax code modernization will likely be addressed in next year’s session.

However, I am disappointed that Virginia’s participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) was left out of the budget agreement. Virginia’s participation in RGGI was unlawfully repealed by the Governor last year as the Clean Energy and Community Flood Preparedness Act, which passed in 2020 and is still enacted law, requires Virginia to participate in RGGI. Despite this, numerous wins for the environment remain in the budget like funding to study tree loss and expansions to tree canopies, investments to the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, water waste treatment plant upgrades, and oyster restoration.

I agree with the Governor when he mentioned earlier this week that this budget must be a good compromise if everyone is a little unhappy with the outcome.



Non-native house sparrows are tough competitors for bluebird nest boxes, like these at AHS on May 3.



Nissley and Stauffer found a house sparrow nest in a bluebird box at AHS on May 3.



Within minutes of plugging the box’s entrance, this house sparrow arrived with nesting material.



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

## Local Volunteers Boost Bluebirds, Monitor Nestboxes

FROM PAGE 6

a dejected Nissley.

No one is certain what happened or when. On May 11, volunteers found four bluebird eggs in one box and are hopeful the bluebird will lay a fifth in this nest.

AHS and volunteers are trying to prevent non-native house sparrows and European starlings from using the boxes so before nest-building begins again, they are stuffing a cloth plug in the boxes’ openings. The house sparrow was introduced to New York, in 1850, according to the Sibley Guide to Birds. People brought the European starling in 1890. Both have spread all over North America, sometimes displacing native cavity nesting birds like bluebirds.

Raccoons, snakes and opossums are also

threats if they can get into or reach inside the boxes. Metal stovepipe and skirt baffles can block access by many animal predators. A wire mesh device around the box entrance called a “noel guard” also stops some predators from reaching inside.

“We are trying to restore native plants and wildlife, to help key species lost from our area recover,” said Stauffer. “This helps the whole ecosystem.” For her, helping bluebirds is an extension of Care for Creation, a program of Good Shepherd Catholic Church.

### Regrouping

Since this is AHS’s first year managing bluebird boxes, some trial and error is inevitable, says Nissley. Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) experts have helped volunteers repo-

sition some of the boxes. Cornell University’s NestWatch website says that boxes should face east toward open habitat, be four to six feet high and 300 feet apart. Virginia Bluebird Society donated the boxes to AHS and staff installed them over the winter.

“Environmental stewardship stands as one of the American Horticultural Society’s four pillars” explained Katie Tukey, AHS Director of Development and Engagement. “The thriving wildlife at River Farm serves as a testament to our commitment to responsible care for the land.”

### Bluebird Facts

Eastern bluebirds like open fields with scattered trees and sparse ground cover, like pastures, agricultural fields, suburban parks

and golf courses. They often perch on wires and fence posts.

Female bluebirds build the nests and lay two to seven blue eggs. The incubation period is 11 to 19 days and the young usually fledge within 21 days.

Bluebirds eat insects and in fall and in winter eat fruit, including the berries of mistletoe, black cherry, dogwoods, pokeweed, juniper and other plants.

North America also has two other species of bluebird, a western and a mountain bluebird.

### More Information

Bluebird Conservation, <https://www.nab-bluebirdsociety.org/>

Bluebird nestbox basics, <https://nestwatch.org/> and <https://www.audubon.org/news/how-build-bluebird-nest-box>

# ENTERTAINMENT



The Mount Vernon Wine Festival takes place May 17-19, 2024 at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate.



A Sunset Concert with Soulfire takes place on Thursday, May 30, 2024 at River Farm in Alexandria.

## WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

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

## APRIL 9 - MAY 19

**There and Back Exhibit of Photographic Art by Maureen Minehan.** At Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N Union Street, Studio 312, in Alexandria. There and Back reflects Maureen's ceaseless desire to explore the beauty inherent in solitude. Through her artistic vision, she portrays isolated landscapes not as desolate or forsaken, but as sanctuaries where quietude reigns supreme, and narratives yet untold await discovery. Maureen will be at the gallery on Sunday, April 21st from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

## MAY 3 TO JUNE 2

**"The Art of Tea" exhibit at Del Ray Artisans gallery features art that explores themes and stories woven around this aromatic beverage.** From tea cups and tea pots to the Mad Hatter or Boston Tea Party, this exhibit intrigues and delights. Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Reception: Friday, May 3, 7-9pm. Open Thursdays 12-6pm, Fridays 12-9pm, Saturdays & Sundays 12-6pm (June 2, 12-4pm). [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

## MAY 17-19

**Mount Vernon Wine Festival.** At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Secure tickets early for the popular Mount Vernon Wine Festival on May 17th, 18th, and 19th. Bring a blanket to relax on the east lawn overlooking the Potomac River while sampling



The Thirteen: Beautiful as the Sky will be performed on Friday, May 17, 2024 at Washington Street UMC in Alexandria.

wines from Virginia wineries and enjoying the live music of Bruce Ewan and the Solid Senders.

## FRIDAY/MAY 17

**The Thirteen: Beautiful as the Sky.** 7:30 p.m. At Washington Street UMC, 109 South Washington Street, Alexandria. In this program, The Thirteen explores moral beauty in three guises: the second World War, the American Civil War, and the women's rights movement in America. Poulenc secretly composed his Figure Humaine in Vichy France, with the intention that it should be performed in Paris upon liberation from Nazi rule. Last performed by The Thirteen in 2018, this twelve-part tour de force is a

testament to the resilience of the human spirit and to the practice of remembrance. Leonard Bernstein Award-winning composer Hilary Purrington writes a new work for The Thirteen that traces the progress and intimate stories of the American women's rights movement. Jeffrey Van's A Procession Winding Around Me sets Civil War poems by Walt Whitman for choir and solo classical guitar with music as evocative and transcendent as the poetry.

## MAY 17, 19

**Mount Vernon Wine Festival.** At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Bring a blanket to relax on the east lawn overlooking

extravaganza, attendees can gain valuable insights and tips from knowledgeable Master Gardeners.

## SATURDAY/MAY 18

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

## SUNDAY/MAY 19

**U.S. Navy Band Chamber Recital.** 2 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Join them for a special performance by the U.S. Navy Band chamber ensembles. The recital will feature a diverse array of traditional and contemporary music.

## SUNDAY/MAY 19

**Old Town Festival of Speed & Style.** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Across lower King Street in Old Town Alexandria. Sponsored by Burke & Herbert Bank. The event is a high-sensory spectacle for participants, spectators and car enthusiasts, allowing them to experience the "Speed & Style" variety of exotic supercars and vintage motorcycles rarely seen sitting still for up-close viewing. Center-stage at noon, a unique Fashion Demonstration will be hosted by Maria Elizabeth of Alexandria-based Salon DeZEN. Maria will discuss the elegance and importance of natural fashion and its profound impact when paired with beautiful automobiles. An award presentation highlighting cars judged to be the finest in 11 categories, will immediately follow the Fashion Demonstration. In addition to the Festival itself, the pre-Festival High-Octane Ball will take place the night before, on Saturday, May 18th from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria. For more information about the festival and to purchase tickets to the High-Octane Ball, visit [www.festivalofspeedandstyle.com](http://www.festivalofspeedandstyle.com).

# ENTERTAINMENT

## SATURDAY/MAY 20

**Civil War Books, Relics & Memorabilia Show.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Arlington-Fairfax Elks Lodge, Rt. 50, Fairfax. Admission, \$5 Per Person. Vendors Welcome. Call 703-389-1505 / 703-785-5294.

## TUESDAY/MAY 21

**Is He Dead?** Benefit Performance. 8 p.m. Benefit performance at the Little Theatre of Alexandria, Mark Twain's droll comedy *Is He Dead?* Penniless artist fakes his death to increase the value of his work, but doesn't anticipate the consequences. The evening's proceeds benefit the Board of Lady Managers of Inova Alexandria Hospital in their support of technological advances in the hospital's state-of-the-art medical treatment. Tickets \$45, \$65, \$125. Call 703-548-9485 or go to [www.boardofladymanagers.org/donations/](http://www.boardofladymanagers.org/donations/).

## TUESDAY/MAY 21

**Garden Sounds: Cicadian Serenade.** 5:45 to 8 p.m. A fundraising concert benefiting the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. In the Garden of the Redmon Residence. The program will feature Dvorak's Wind Serenade and Mozart's Adagio from Gran Partita, conducted by Maestro Jim Ross. Guests will enjoy catered appetizer and wine in a beautiful backyard setting. Individual tickets are \$125 each.

## THURSDAY/MAY 23

**Book Talk.** At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, Mount Vernon. Hear from historian

Talmage Boston on his new book, *How the Best Did It: Leadership Lessons from our Top Presidents*, on May 23rd. This book offers an insightful explanation of how the most important leadership traits from America's eight greatest presidents can be implemented by today's leaders.

## SATURDAY/MAY 25

**Singer Kate Campbell.** 7:30 p.m. At St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 8531 Riverside Road, Alexandria. Kate Campbell is a southern singer-songwriter who writes and sings memorable folk songs infused with undercurrents of delta blues, folk, pop, and country that originate from a musical landscape spanning the less-traveled back roads from Nashville to Muscle Shoals to Memphis. Over the course of 20+ years since her acclaimed debut album *Songs from the Levee*, she has resisted the temptation to follow musical trends but instead chooses to set the pace for her unique musical journey. Advance tickets \$25 at [www.focusmusic.org](http://www.focusmusic.org), day-of \$30 (member / congregation as applicable \$25 at the door) | webcast \$15 | Info: at [rob@focusmusic.org](mailto:rob@focusmusic.org) or [www.focusmusic.org](http://www.focusmusic.org).

## THURSDAY/MAY 30

**Sunset Concert with Soulfire.** 6-8 p.m. At River Farm, 7931 E. Boulevard Dr., Alexandria. Get ready for a soulful evening to remember as the captivating band Soulfire takes the stage at River Farm, headquarters of the American Horticultural

Society (AHS). This outdoor family-friendly concert promises an unforgettable evening of music, nature, and stunning views overlooking the Potomac River. The event is free. Donations are appreciated. Parking fee is \$20. For more information and to purchase parking in advance, visit [www.ahsgardening.org/sunsetconcert](http://www.ahsgardening.org/sunsetconcert). For more information, call (703) 768-5700 ext. 114 or visit [www.ahsgardening.org](http://www.ahsgardening.org).

## SATURDAY/JUNE 1

**Dans Un Bois Solitaire.** Songs by Mozart, Schubert, Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel. 6:30 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Join 28 Chairs concerts at the Athenaeum for a vocal recital of beloved and lesser-known art songs, performed by acclaimed French mezzo-soprano Anna Reinhold and accompanied by twice-Grammy-nominated keyboard artist Jory Vinikour on piano. One-hour program followed by a French wine, cheese and chocolate celebration with the artists.

## SATURDAY/JUNE 1

**Used Book Sale:** 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit [https://www.fair-](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional)

[faxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional](http://faxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional).

## THURSDAY/JUNE 6

**Celebrating 50 years of Guest House.** 7-10 p.m. At ALX Community Atrium Rooftop, 277 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Mocktails, music and memories. Join them as they celebrate 50 years of achievements helping 5,000 women reclaim their lives. This year's gala promises to be an evening filled with laughter, joy, and heartwarming moments as we come together to support the incredible work of Friends of Guest House. With live music, delicious hors d'oeuvres, and captivating company, it's an event you won't want to miss!

## SATURDAY/JUNE 8

**Old Town Alexandria Arts & Crafts Fair.** 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. At Waterfront Park, 1 Prince Street, Alexandria. Volunteer Alexandria is thrilled to present the Old Town Arts & Crafts Fair on June 8, 2024, at Waterfront Park located at 1 Prince Street on the Potomac River. The fair is free to attend and features local and regional artisans who showcase their pieces across various mediums including pottery, stationary, fabrics, paintings, jewelry, photography and more. Featuring more than 80-plus vendors including food and drink to purchase.

## SATURDAY/JUNE 15

**Columbia Pike Blues Festival.** 1-8 p.m. At the intersection of

South Walter Reed Drive and Columbia Pike in Arlington. This year the Festival celebrates women in blues with a lineup of all-women-fronted bands offering a full array of blues, R&B, and funk performers of national and regional note that includes: headliner Bette Smith, Eden Brent, Mama Moon & the Rump Shakers; The Stacy Brooks Band and the Honeylarks.

## THE BIRCHMERE

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

## MAY

Wed. 15: David Sanborn \$49.50  
Fri. 17: BoDeans \$35.00  
Sat. 18: Harmony Sweepstakes A Capella Festival Mid-Atlantic Regionals \$35.00  
Sun. 19: The Sun Ra Arkestra - 100th Birthday Celebration of Maestro Marshall Allen \$39.50  
Mon. 20: Leonid & Friends \$65.00 SOLD OUT!  
Tue. 21: Lucero w/ William Matheny \$39.50  
Thu. 23: Ruth Moody (of The Wailin' Jennys) \$35.00  
Fri. 24: Chante' Moore \$79.50 SOLD OUT!  
Sat. 25: Walter Beasley \$49.50  
Sun. 26: Maggie Rose: No One Gets Out Alive Tour w/ Fancy Hagood \$29.50  
Fri. 31: The Manhattans featuring Gerald Alston \$65.00

## FCPS Students Awarded National Merit Scholarships

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation awarded 27 Fairfax County Public students \$2,500 scholarships in the 69th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. The Fairfax County Public School winners are among 770 high school seniors who received corporate-sponsored National Merit Scholarships. Over 1.3 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered the 2024 National Merit

Scholarship Program by taking the 2022 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants according to a release by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. "Each scholarship winner was evaluated on his or her academic record, including difficulty level of subjects studied and grades earned; scores from two standardized tests; contributions and leadership in school and com-

munity activities; a personal essay; and a recommendation from a high school official," stated FCPS.

The winning students with their probable career fields in parentheses, are: Chantilly HS: Leona Eunbi Kim (law), Siddhi Surawkar (medicine), and Jason Yoo (investment banking); Fairfax HS: Maya Kamat (medicine); Madison HS: Shivashish Das (medicine); McLean HS: Maya Pashai (veterinary medicine) and Clara Marks (mechanical engineering); Oak-

ton HS: Aditi Bhattacharjya (law) and Nicole Deng (astrophysics); Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology: Cameron Ake (computer programming), Jacob Bowen-Glazeroff (law), Lakshmi Sritan Motati (computer science), Paul Hwang (aerospace engineering), Cierra Min (biomedical engineering), Benjamin Daniil Cohen (neurosurgery), Dylan Cheng (software engineering), Pranav Elavarthi (computer science), and Mihir Kulshreshtha

(finance); Emi Zhang (computer science), Ayaan Siddiqui (software engineering), Aiden Cheong (mechanical engineering - robotics), Tristan Devictor (politics), Ronit Kapur (astrophysics), Grace Oh (medicine), Alexander O'Quinn (biomedical engineering), and Sebastian Emin Toro (computer engineering; and West Potomac HS: Lucy Marshall (law).

— MERCIA HOBON

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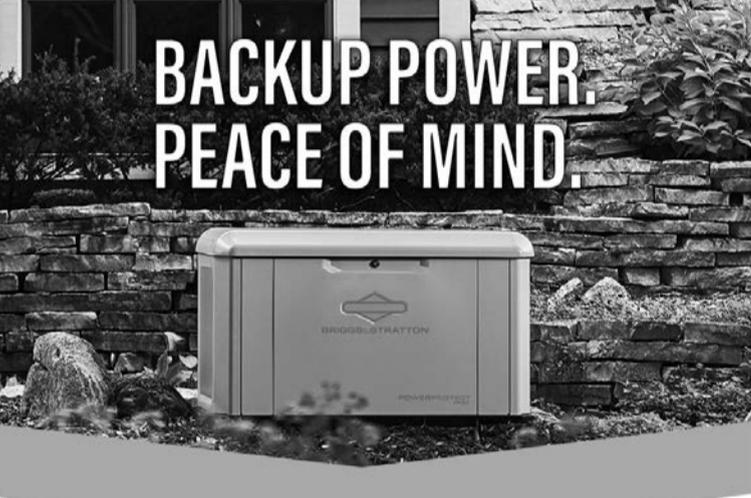


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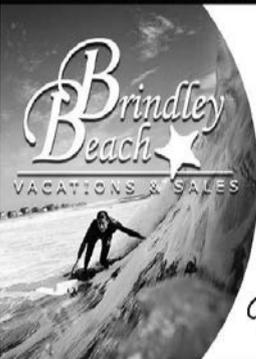
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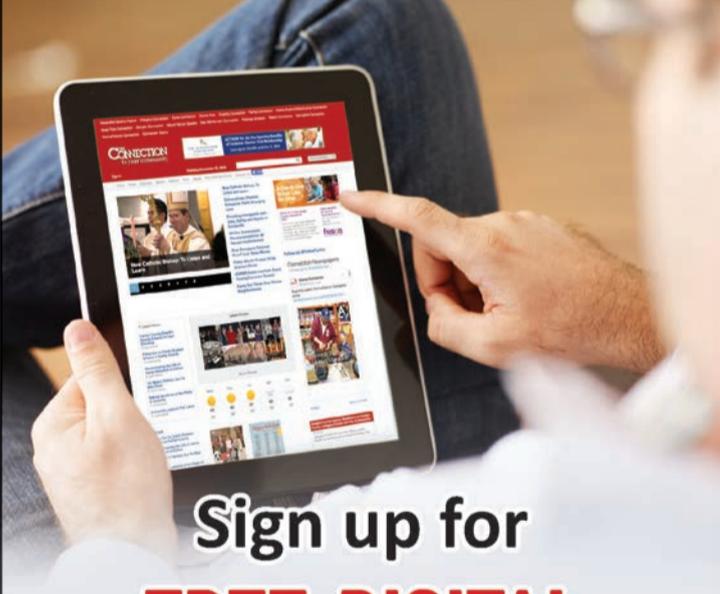
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A Connection Newspaper



# School Board Hearing on Budget Poorly Attended

## Why didn't more people testify?

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**D**r. Ricardy Anderson (Mason District representative) welcomed the six people who testified Tuesday evening, May 14, at the Fairfax County School Board Public Hearing on the budget. The time between the first speaker, Nancy Trainer, starting her testimony, and Arthur Purves, the sixth speaker, ending his testimony was approximately sixteen minutes.

Fairfax County Public Schools must depend mainly on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for revenue, and the Board of Supervisors held three days of public hearings last month. The only taxes the General Assembly allows localities that generate enough tax revenue to pay for local services are real estate and personal property taxes. Combined with changes in the operation of the school board's public hearings, there may have been other disincentives to people testifying.

Compared to a similar public budget hearing in 2019, the Fairfax County School Board FY25 Public Hearing on the Budget, held Tuesday evening, May 14, saw a significant decline in registered speakers. On May 14, 2019, the school board welcomed 24 registered speakers, each allotted three minutes. The meetings' camera footage captured the speakers' faces as they stood at a podium.

On May 14, 2024, the school board prepared to welcome ten registered speakers, each allotted two minutes, time cut by one-third. The recorded camera footage showed the speakers' backs as they faced school board members.

Fairfax County Public Schools projected that the Board of Supervisors-approved real estate taxes set at a 6 percent increase, according to the County Executive's FY25 Advertised Budget, would provide most of the division's revenue for its FY 2025 Proposed Budget that totaled \$3.8 billion, adopted Feb. 22. Supervisors reduced the tax rate to a 3 percent increase when it adopted the FY 2025 Budget at their meeting on May 7, resulting in the county transfer to FCPS being \$89 million less.

Only six of the ten registered speakers showed up and testified.

Nancy Trainer said she is disappointed that a school system that emphasizes the data-driven classroom for its educators is seemingly not engaging in rigorous data-driven analysis in developing its budget.

Trainer added, "FCPS has not proposed nor adopted significant changes to policies and/or regulations that aim to improve workforce satisfaction but has not employed efficiency analysis to determine whether those staffing standards are effective nor has FCPS engaged in a root cause analysis regarding low teacher retention."

Emily Vanderhoff, a first-grade teacher in



In 2024, Nancy Trainer testifies during the Fairfax County School Board Public Hearing on the FY 2025 Budget Hearing. In the video, viewers see only her back.



In 2019, David Broder testifies at the FCSB Budget Public Hearing. Viewers five years ago could see faces of people who testified.

FCPS and member of Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, expressed disappointment in the decisions by the Board of Supervisors and state leaders. She said the state budget passed yesterday and was eager to see how the final amount may reduce some shortfall. Vanderhoff suggested that the board consider "differentiated increases" as staffing shortages are going to be felt differently across different positions. She suggested "taking into consideration the positions most hard hit by shortages for stronger increases to help with recruitment and retention." Vanderhoff also said to prioritize roles that directly impact students, those who transport students, serve their meals, and keep facilities safe and comfortable. She also suggested they find a way to raise the salaries of "the percentage of the lowest paid workers to begin to close the gap and provide a more equitable distribution."

Durann Thompson addressed teacher shortage by making salaries competitive with nearby jurisdictions. Thompson said she was frustrated and hurt when she heard about the 3 percent pay raise. She added that she believes teachers are underpaid because it is a "female-dominated profession, hence the inequity." She talked about teachers being champions of children and, like Rita Pearson, "This is how we do that by not just honoring teachers with words of appreciation, but by working together to fully fund schools. Be-

cause our students deserve better."

Mary Ottinot urged the school board to create an office to protect children from trafficking predators.

Speaking as vice president for public education, Vanessa Hall asked that more significant funding be directed to those who are most vulnerable and underserved, like Title One schools' lower-income students, English language learners, and students requiring special education services. "We have so many smart, capable high schoolers whose poor literacy skills may make college inaccessible. Please don't shut them out from a lifetime of opportunities."

Arthur Purves, president of the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance, said this year's three-cent increase in the real estate tax rate is a six-cent increase due to the 3 percent increase in residential assessments. He added, "In education, it is game over by third grade. Children who haven't mastered reading and arithmetic by third grade are socially promoted. They rarely catch up and are condemned to lifelong poverty. Instead of fixing the curriculum, standards are lowered. ... Freeze salaries until the curriculum is fixed."

If you wish to provide feedback to the Fairfax County School Board before their regular meeting on Thursday, May 23, during which the board is scheduled to vote on the FY 2023 Approved Budget, send comments to [communityparticipation@fcps.edu](mailto:communityparticipation@fcps.edu).

## Creature Comforts



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Off hand, I don't know/can't recall the names of the pharmaceutical companies who are advertising extremely regularly (I wish I was so regular) products for toe fungus and psoriasis. What I can recall is that there are numerous products on the market these days to offer sufferers relief never thought possible. The pitches are nearly identical in tone, if not in actual word and deed. If one is to believe what is said and shown on these television advertisements, these two chronic, previously-hard-to-get-rid-of conditions are likely a thing of the past. And the present is patches, pills, creams, et cetera, and presto, you're very nearly at the promised (although not literally) land. No more itching. No more scratching. No more hiding your toes and/or arms and legs as the scales of injustice persist. (My mother had psoriasis, and though it wasn't a pretty sight, she managed to live her life. Quite unintentionally my mother's life-long struggles to find some relief from her psoriasis were realized when she stopped smoking her four packs of Chesterfield King cigarettes per day. There was no other answer. Over the ensuing months of non-smoking "cold turkey," the scales gradually disappeared, and my mother lived psoriasis-free for the rest of her life. Nevertheless, I have distinct memories of the difficulties my mother had day-to-day dealing with her condition. Fortunately, she had no similar toe condition. As an aside, I can still hear my late father admonishing my brother and I if we ever referred to my mother as 'she.'

As for the toe issue, I never saw any toes that looked affected on the order of what my mother's arms and legs looked like when she had a psoriasis outbreak. And we usually belonged to pool clubs in the summer where toes would be on full display. I should have seen something. Maybe I've blocked the memory. Toes can become nasty, I imagine. And finding a product that allows you to reintroduce your toes to the public and make peace with your sandals is likewise a solution years in the making. I will admit to being feet-and -toe-centric growing up but it was not due to any toe issue. It was athlete's foot. (Although both feet were affected.) The topical applications didn't really work. What did work was the relief my father offered. Picture this: I'm lying on the couch at a 90-degree angle to where my father is sitting on the single chair against the wall with my feet on his lap. Then he would take his index, middle fingers, and slide those two fingers back and forth along the inside of any two toes showing the signs. I got to tell you; that was heaven on earth for me. The relief and pleasure I felt from his fatherly act stays with me to this day. My father was one in a million. As the card I got him for his 65th birthday said: "When you were born, they broke the mold." (Open the card.) "You should see what they did to the mold maker." Unfortunately, there wasn't anything he could do for my mother's psoriasis. But if there were, my father would have made the effort. In later years when my mother had irreparable hearing loss and tinnitus, my parents - at my father's insistence, took regular plane flights to New Jersey from Boston to visit a doctor there who offered my mother some potential relief. (There are even products/procedures nowadays that offer tinnitus suffers some hope. I'd like to think my mother would have benefited. Getting her some relief in arrears.)

As simple and apparently effective as these two advertising campaigns to defeat (pun intended) toe fungus and cream (another pun) psoriasis seem to be, I wish, in an odd way to be so affected so that I might benefit from the new solution. It reminds of the late coach of the early 70s Redskins and mid-60s Rams, George Allen, whose mantra-type refrain was "The future is now" supporting his preference for older players. If I was a psoriasis or toe fungus sufferer, I would also feel, that after years of discomfort and perhaps even some embarrassment from these two chronic, nuisance-type conditions, the future is not only now, but also available, and not a moment too soon. Living with chronic pain and/or discomfort from psoriasis, as was the case with my late mother, or toe fungus (which I certainly can relate to due to my athlete's feet), and finally learning of a product or two - or three that could solve lifelong problems, the future is indeed now, finally. However, the frequency of these two product-specific advertisements on television is starting to get to me a bit. As I say, I can appreciate the relief these product/solutions potentially offer, I just wish the message were out there already. As with the gambling sights that are non-stop-advertised, especially during football season - and the semi-related non-stop promotions for men's erectile dysfunction, to quote my late mother: "It's enough already."

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



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