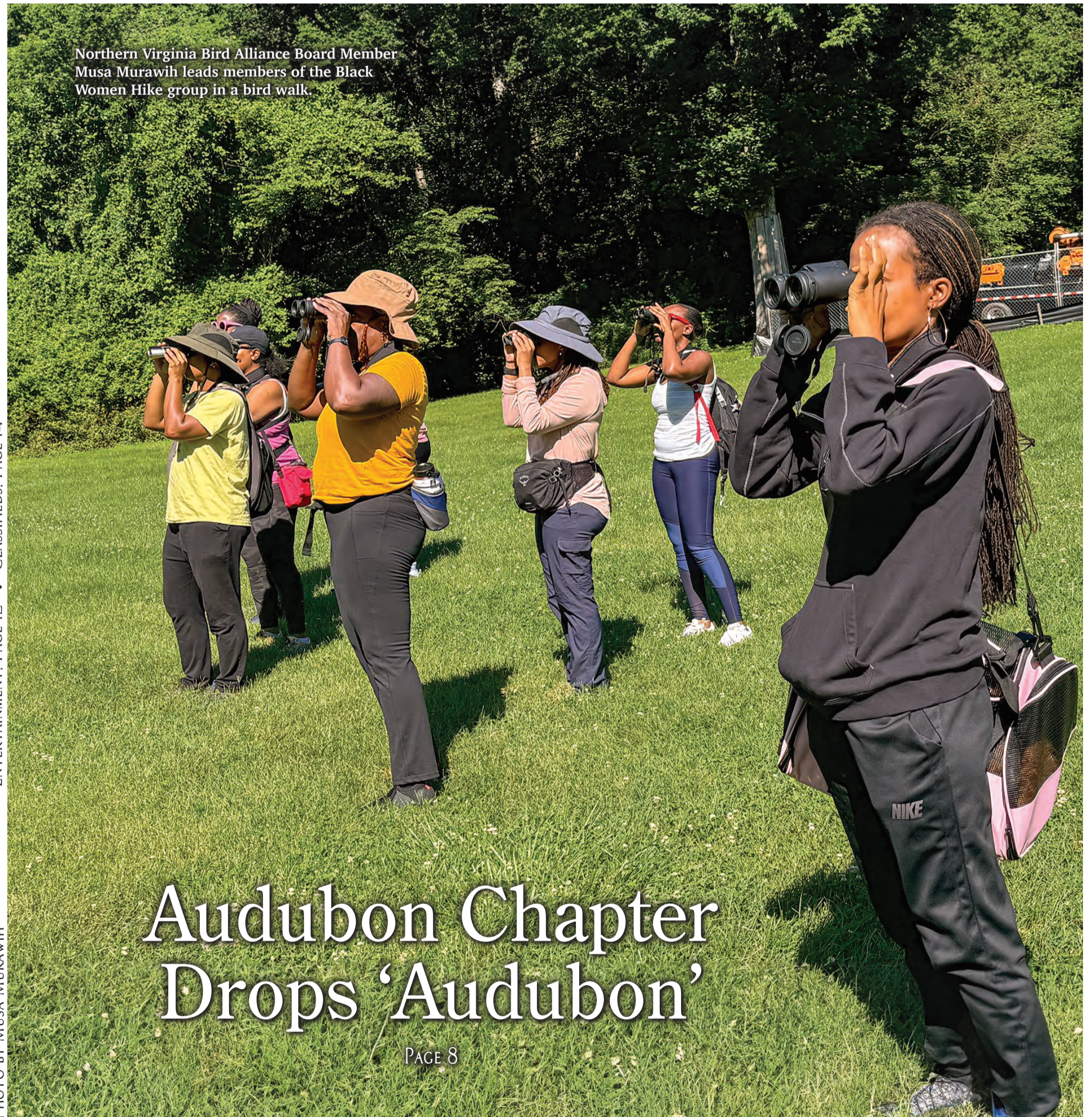


THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ♦ Chantilly ♦ Great Falls ♦ Herndon ♦ McLean ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Oakton
Reston ♦ Vienna ♦ Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station ♦ Lorton ♦ Clifton

Northern Virginia Bird Alliance Board Member
Musa Murawih leads members of the Black
Women Hike group in a bird walk.



Audubon Chapter Drops 'Audubon'

PAGE 8

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 14

PHOTO BY MUSA MURAWIH



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Cast of rollicking, romantic musical, 'Anything Goes,' at Chantilly High school. Top rated schools are one reason Chantilly ranked third.

Chantilly Ranked 3rd, Best Places for Families

The Chantilly area in Fairfax County ranked third in the nation by Fortune on its list of the 50 Best Places to Live for Families.

"A suburb of Washington, D.C., Chantilly is a serene escape just 24 miles west of the city and just seven miles from Dulles International Airport — convenient for family vacations. The community is largely residential, with just over

25,000 people, but there's plenty to do. Along Route 50 you'll find a number of eateries and bistros, and where it intersects with Route 28, there's a ton of places to shop," according to Fortune.

Some of the amenities in Chantilly mentioned by Fortune included the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, Eleanor C. Lawrence Park, and Pleasant Valley Golf Club. Great schools are part of the mix.

FILE PHOTO

Office Building Razed for Affordable Housing



From left, Senthil Sankaran, Amazon HEB; Jeff McKay (D), chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence); Steve Wilson, President, SCG Development; Lenore Stanton, Chair, FCRHA; Supervisor Jimmy Bierman (D-Dranesville); and Tom Fleetwood, Fairfax County Housing Director; participate in the ceremonial groundbreaking of Somas at McLean Metro on July 17. Construction equipment can be seen in the background.

PHOTOS: JEFFREY C. MCKAY ON INSTAGRAM



PHOTO COURTESY OF SCG DEVELOPMENT

Rendering of Somas at McLean Metro, phase one development.

Groundbreaking for Somas at McLean Metro.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors chairman Jeff McKay (D), Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence), Supervisor Jimmy Bierman (D-Dranesville), and others ceremonially broke ground on July

17 for the Somas at McLean, an affordable housing development backed by Amazon for people earning 30–60 percent of the area median income.

Located at 1750 Old Meadow Road, phase one costs \$108 million and will offer 231 apartments, while phase two costs \$107 million and has 225 apartments. Tysons-based



Chairman McKay, former Dranesville District Supervisor John Foust, Lenore Stanton, and Tom Fleetwood.

SCG Development is developing the project. "Investing in affordable housing is investing in our economic development and competitiveness," McKay said.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the \$33.3 million property acquisition.

The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority will own the land and lease it to affiliates of SCG Development. "Innovative partnership has enabled us to leverage private equity to convert an unused office building site," Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence) said in a statement.

Fairfax County Awarded \$50.5 Million for New Low-Emission Buses

The Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) received a \$50,591,220 grant from the Federal Transit Administration to buy low-emission diesel-electric hybrid buses. The grant assists Fairfax County in replacing older buses as part of its ongoing fleet replacement plan, which is progressing toward a more environmentally friendly public transportation system and improved service.

"Adding these low emission, diesel-electric hybrid buses to our fleet supports our commitment to our riders and to reducing our carbon footprint," Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay said.

Fairfax County's project is significant because it was the only one selected within the Commonwealth of Virginia, highlighting the competitiveness of this funding round. The Board of Supervisors authorized the Fairfax County Department of Transportation to apply for this funding on May 7, 2024.

— MERCIA HOBSON

Four more low-emission diesel-electric hybrid buses will run in Fairfax County in 2024 thanks to a federal grant.



SCREENSHOT

Sediment Study Underway at Lake Accotink

Sediments determine future management strategies for Lake Accotink that could go several ways.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

In the last few years, Lake Accotink has attracted much attention with locals and scientists who are looking for solutions for the future of this community attraction that has fallen victim to sediments and budget restraints. Now the United States Geological Survey is looking at the lake and measuring the rate of sediments piling up to forecast the next phase for Lake Accotink.

Once they get the sediment numbers upstream and downstream from the lake, the county can come up with a plan “that will inform future management strategies for Lake Accotink,” the county said.

In 2023, Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services staff recommended that Lake Accotink not be dredged due to significant community and environmental impacts and excessive cost. Following this recommendation, a task force was established to ensure that all possible options have been considered to preserve Lake Accotink in the most sustainable, equitable, and cost-effective manner possible, the county said. After receiving the task force’s findings last winter, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors directed DPWES to conduct a sedimentation rate study along with a feasibility study for preserving a smaller lake in the 20 to 40 acres range. The Lake is about 55 acres.

On July 16, the Board of Supervisors provided authorization for Fairfax County to enter into the Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS to study the lake so they can come up with some management strategies for Lake Accotink. The sediment monitoring study will focus on two elements: a lake sed-



PHOTOS BY FCPA

Lake Accotink is a recreational asset in Springfield.

imentation study and a stream study.

As noted at the Board’s Jan. 23 meeting, “We do not know with certainty how much sediment is entering Lake Accotink, how much sediment is settling in Lake Accotink, and how much sediment is flowing downstream from Lake Accotink. That information is necessary to inform future dredging and maintenance dredging intervals, our understanding of the Lake’s evolution over time, and sediment impacts on downstream areas,” the county said.

According to the county, these two studies are designed in tandem to specifically

reduce this uncertainty and to better characterize sediment transport dynamics in the upper Accotink Creek watershed — with specific emphasis on the Lake — providing sound scientific basis for informing future implementation scenarios.

On the Fairfax County Park Authority website, there is a section under “Lake Accotink” called “Options to Consider Other Than Full Traditional Dredging.” A final Report, dated Nov. 25, 2023 lists two lake size scenarios and has the cost of dredging the 22-acre lake at \$23,781,626 while the 41-acre scenario is \$33,875,689.

FLAP Gets Grant from Starbucks Foundation

The Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP) was selected to receive a \$1,000 grant as part of The Starbucks Foundation’s Neighborhood Grants program. This grant award is the result of a Starbucks partner (employee) nomination. This is the third Neighborhood Grant awarded to FLAP over the last four years.

The Friends of Lake Accotink Park is an all-volunteer community-based organization with the mission to protect, restore and preserve the natural, historical and cultural resources of the park, promote educational and recreational opportunities and promote community use and stewardship of the park. All FLAP funds go directly to supporting projects, initiatives and programs to benefit the park.

“Whether it’s organizing and conducting cleanups, maintaining the 11 dog waste stations throughout the park, tending the pollinator garden or helping plan large community events and activities, this is absolutely a labor of love for our volunteers,” said FLAP President Mary Keeser. “From the woods to the waterfront, it’s a privilege to work in partnership with the Park Authority in bringing the community together to enjoy the wonderful experiences and opportunities available at Lake Accotink Park.”

12.5 Percent Fare Hike Hits Fairfax Connector Riders July 29

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Monday, July 29, fare increases for riding the Fairfax Connector began. Riders will pay 12.5 percent more. Children 12 and under will continue to ride free with a paying adult. The last increase occurred on June 25, 2017, with a 12.5 percent adjustment.

The regular base fare for Fairfax Connector trips will rise from \$2 to \$2.25, whether by cash or SmarTrip card. The base fare for seniors and those with disabilities will rise from \$1 to \$1.10.

The 2024 increase is happening because, on July 16, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously vot-

ed to increase Fairfax Connector fares by 12.5 percent. The supervisors copied the same percent fare increase that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) implemented for Metro Rail and Metrobus on weekdays. WMATA’s increase took effect on June 30, 2024.

The increase is not a small change, especially for Fairfax Connector riders who are already struggling with increased consumer costs and a dollar whose purchasing power has decreased by 22 percent since 2017.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) Summary, released on July 11, 2024, reports all items increased by 3 percent, with shelter +5.25% and energy services +4.3% according to Percent Changes in CPI for

All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): U.S. city average, unadjusted 12-months ended June 2024.

Fairfax County describes the 12.5 percent fare increase as “slight” in its July 16 released statement, “Fairfax Connector Fare Change Effective July 29, 2024.” Calling the fare increase “slight” would presumptively appear to be relative to what one has available in one’s pocket.

The Consumer Price Inflation Calculator cites an erosion of a dollar’s buying power in 2024 compared to 2017. In 2024, a dollar will buy 78 percent of what it did in 2017. In other words, the buying power of a 2024 dollar is 22 percent less than it was in 2017.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON | THE CONNECTION
Fairfax Connector fares increase.



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COMMUNITY NEWS AT A GLANCE

Retired Centreville Teacher Publishes Young Adult Novel

Looks forward to receiving reviews from former students and staff members.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
<2B> THE CONNECTION

Retired Fairfax County Public School teacher Susan Coryell revised her anti-bullying young adult novel “Eaglebait” to include cyberbullying. She taught for 11 years at Centreville High School.

In her June 12, 2024, published book “Eaglebait,” Coryell stresses the need to reach out for assistance against bullying as one cannot fight it alone. She advocates increasing self-esteem and empathy against cyberbullying. She achieves this in the book through diverse perspectives and relatable characters, such as Wardy Spinks, a high school freshman who becomes the target of malicious bullying.

Through her relatable characters, Coryell suggests that if someone needs help with bullying, they can receive assistance from a mentor or an adult in whom they can confide. She encourages students to find an interest they love and “are good at.”

“You can draw other like-minded kids into your circle and make more friends, and friends don’t have as many bullies,” Coryell said. She said “EAGLEBAIT” had “lots of twists and turns, character, and plot” that would attract readers. “There is a message in it, and I think that even with the older teens, [the book] does resonate with them.”

Coryell invites readers to send her a review. EAGLEBAIT, published by The Wild Rose Press, is available from all online bookstores in ebook and paperback format. Coryell looks forward to hearing from her Centreville connections — former high school students and staff who read EAGLEBAIT — and hopes they will provide a review on Amazon or Goodreads. To learn more about Coryell, visit her author website, www.susancoryellauthor.com.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Retired Fairfax County Public School teacher Susan Coryell holds a copy of her newly released book, “EAGLEBAIT,” with a little help from her kitty, Walter. He showed up one day on her back porch and chose to live with her.

National eCYBERMISSION Competition Winners Hail from Fairfax County

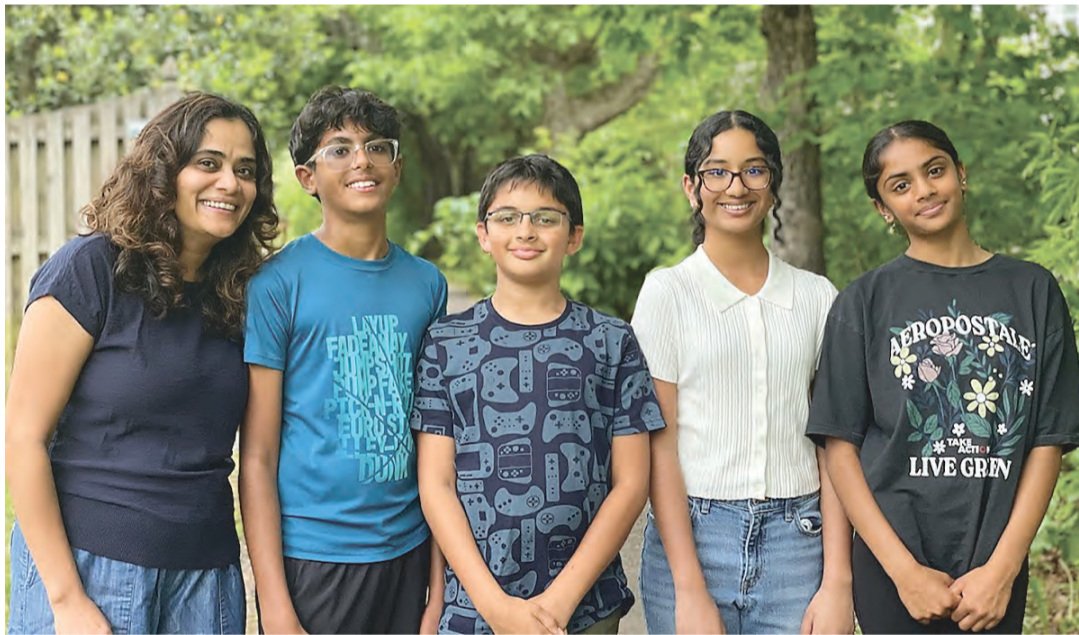
BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Team Aquafour is a group of four students from Fairfax County Public elementary schools in Herndon and Fairfax that placed among the top 20 teams in the national finals of the 2023-2024 eCYBERMISSION competition held in Chantilly from June 24 to 28. Team Aquafour’s members are Mahika Mamidi, Aditya Risbud, and Rishav Thakkar, students from Floris ES; Tanmaya Muthuswamy from Navy E.S., and team advisor Kavitha Thiyaghu. Teams presented their projects at the event.

Initially, over 2,000 teams from locations across the United States and Department of Defense Education Activity schools worldwide participated in the 22nd annual National Judging and Educational Event. The competition inspired and motivated the students, presenting them with performance-based challenges that required developing a product or object that effectively addressed a given problem.

Team Aquafour developed the Shower-Siren, a device that measures and notifies users of their water consumption during a shower, promoting a more responsible approach to water usage. “We all have older siblings who spend a long time in the shower. That’s wasting water. Showering takes up 17 percent of indoor water usage,” Rishav said.

The competition also offered engaging



SCREENSHOT THE ECOBERMISSION BLOG

The Aquafour team student members, Mahika Mamidi, Tanmaya Muthuswamy, Aditya Risbud, and Rishav Thakkar, led by adult advisor Kavitha Thiyaghu. The team engineered a device they call the ShowerSiren, which measures and alerts users of the water used during a shower to encourage more responsible water use.

experiences and real-world connections for the students. Aditya said she loved the workshops because they exposed the team to different branches of the Army and “how they use STEM to help the country.”

Checking in with this year’s STEM-In-Action Grant recipient team, now rising Chantilly High School students.

A STEM-In-Action Grant-winning team from Herndon, the STEMper Tantrums, consisting of three rising Chantilly High School

students who attended Rachel Carson Middle School in 2023-2024, Ashrita Ashrita Moola, Anika Manda, and Symphony (no last name), has been hard at work the past year advancing their eCYBERMISSION project in their community. Two members, Anika and Ashrita, presented the project to participants at the 2024 national event.

The students showcased their winning regional work, highlighting the environmental and financial threats of disposable diapers. This led them to take action toward

making a biodegradable, affordable diaper. Team STEMper Tantrums shared grant application details and discussed how they used the funds in their communities. Since receiving the grant, the team has proactively sought advice and feedback. They spoke with professors at NC State and George Mason University, tested the properties of five commercial diaper brands, entered the project into their school’s science fair, purchased materials for their diaper, made a plan for creating the diaper, and used feedback to conduct additional research.

According to the team, their goals include connecting with nonwoven companies to order nonwoven material, completing the diaper’s construction, and comparing their diapers to other brands. The Army Educational Outreach Program (AEOP) provides STEM-In-Action Grants to eCYBERMISSION teams who want to enhance and execute their community projects. These grants can be up to \$5,000 in value.

The eCYBERMISSION competition is a STEM competition for grades 6–9 students. There are no entry fees and a chance to win state, regional, and national awards of varying U.S. Series E.E. Savings Bonds. Each team needs 2-4 students, an adult advisor, and a community problem to explore or solve.

Visit the eCYBERMISSION website at <https://www.usaeop.com/program/ecybermission/>

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Fairfax County Expands Eligibility for Homeownership Program

On Tuesday, July 16, the Board of Supervisors approved an amendment to the county's Comprehensive Plan aimed at expanding affordable home ownership opportunities. The move comes after a series of recommendations from the Workforce Dwelling Unit (WDU) For-Sale Policy Task Force, which addressed affordability challenges and aimed to enhance the WDU program. Key changes include:

- ❖ Adjusting the affordability level of the WDU program to serve households earning up to 70% to 100% of the 2024 Area Median Income (AMI). The adjustment makes affordable homeownership accessible to individuals earning up to \$108,000 for an individual, and \$155,000 for a family of four. Previously, the program AMI range was up to 80% to 120% AMI.

- ❖ The amendment also expands guidelines for proportionality of bedroom counts, allowing flexibility for family-sized units.

- ❖ It also extends the policy's geographic applicability to properties outside designated development centers.

"The updates to the WDU homeownership program reflect a thoughtful re-evaluation of the program's scope and impact, making the dream of homeownership accessible for a broader segment of the Fairfax County community," said Tom Fleetwood, Director, Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development.

The county's Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) and WDU programs, which facilitate home purchases and rental opportunities at below-market prices for eligible low- to moderate-income households, are a cornerstone of Fairfax's strategy to provide affordable housing. These programs incentivize developers to include affordable units in exchange for the potential to build more market-rate units.

The amendment supports One Fairfax, the county's equity policy goal of creating a full spectrum of housing opportunities, according to the county statement. It also aims to make affordable homeownership more accessible by lowering the income threshold and addressing the need for larger family-sized units.



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Man Arrested for Stabbing Death of Wife

A man is in custody after fatally stabbing his wife in their Fair Oaks home, according to police.

Yesterday at 6:18 p.m., officers responded to a stabbing in the 3900 block of Highland Oaks Drive in Fair Oaks. Officers located Karen Dorbayan, 77, of Fair Oaks suffering from trauma to the upper body. She was taken to the hospital in life threatening condition and was pronounced deceased.

Detectives determined that Behruze Dorbayan,



Behruze Dorbayan

77, of Fair Oaks stabbed his wife. He was transported to the Adult Detention Center and charged with Second-Degree Murder. He was held on no bond. Detectives continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the stabbing.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is encouraged to call our Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone -1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

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BIRD ALLIANCE



PHOTO BY MUSA MURAWIH.

Northern Virginia Bird Alliance Board Member Musa Murawih led members of the Black Women Hike group in a bird walk at the Carderock Recreation Area, Potomac, MD.



PHOTO BY LIBBY LYONS

Members of NoVa Bird Alliance worked with local residents to improve the habitat at Monticello Park in Alexandria as part of the organization's Stretch Our Parks initiative. The group spread wood chips to reduce erosion on the trails and planted trees in the park. The park is a hot spot for migratory birds, and particularly warblers, in the spring.



PHOTO BY JERRY TOUVAL

NoVa Bird Alliance held a work day at the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge to remove invasive species, and in particular Mile-a-Minute. Invasive plant species can out-compete native species and destroy local ecosystems



PHOTO BY JERRY TOUVAL

NVBA's Vice President Jerry Touvall teamed up with the US Fish and Wildlife staff from the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge to do a presentation for the combined 3rd and 5th grade classes at Rockledge Elementary School in Woodbridge. Students learned about birds they can see at the Refuge and in their own backyards and neighborhoods.

Local Audubon Chapter Drops 'Audubon' from Name

Now the Northern Virginia Bird Alliance, still a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, a 5,000-member chapter of the National Audubon Society, voted overwhelmingly to change the chapter's name to the Northern Virginia Bird Alliance (NoVa Bird Alliance), effective Aug. 1. The group's new motto is "Conserving and Enjoying Nature."



PHOTO BY JUDY GALLAGHER

Green Herons are small herons that are found at the edges of ponds, lakes and wetlands throughout northern Virginia. They wait patiently for a fish to swim near, then capture it with their dagger-like bill.

and Spotsylvania Counties; and the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas and Manassas Park.

MANY BIRDS IN DECLINE

Elizabeth Lyons, president of the organization, explained, "We are excited about our new name for two primary reasons. First, 'Bird Alliance' better describes what we do. Second, protecting nature is so urgent that we need everyone's help yet we found that John James Audubon's history was keeping people, especially those in younger and more diverse groups, from joining our cause. Our new, more welcoming name will enable us to conserve nature for the benefit of birds, other wildlife and people because it will help us engage and serve all of Northern Virginia's communities."

For over 40 years, the group has surveyed birds, butterflies, dragonflies and bloom dates of plants in southeastern Fairfax County and Prince William County. The bloom dates project is one of the longest-duration such surveys in the country.

One study of North American birds showed that three billion birds – 25 percent of the total bird population – have been lost in the last 50 years, because of spreading agriculture and urbanization, and the pollution and loss of habitat that comes with that.

Nearly 500 species of birds spend part or all of the year in Virginia.

"Bird population trends in Virginia are consistent with the rest of North America," noted Blackburn. "Preliminary data from the state's Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas indicate that many bird species are in steep decline in Virginia."



PHOTO BY RANDY STREUFERT

The Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge near Lorton was the first refuge in the United States established to protect nesting Bald Eagles. Bald Eagles were nearly eliminated from the lower 48 states in the 1960s, but populations have rebounded strongly thanks to protection under the Endangered Species Act, banning the chemical DDT, and protection of their habitats.

"Our new, more welcoming name will enable us to conserve nature for the benefit of birds, other wildlife and people because it will help us engage and serve all of Northern Virginia's communities."
— Elizabeth Lyons, president, NoVa Bird Alliance

"Some birds, such as gadwalls and blue-winged teals, no longer breed in Virginia. Climate change has resulted in southern birds, such as Mississippi kites and anhingas, starting to breed in Virginia. Many bird species are nesting two to five weeks earlier than they were 35 years ago, when the first

Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas was compiled," he said.

Greg Butcher observed, "Northern Virginia remains one of the most rapidly developing regions in the world. A major downside to this development is that we are losing natural areas that support birds and wildlife. In



PHOTO BY RANDY STREUFERT

Wood Ducks are the most spectacular duck in Northern Virginia. They nest high in trees in wooded swamps. The ducklings jump out of the nest just a day after hatching then join their parents on a trek to the nearest water.



PHOTO CREDIT TONI GENBERG

NVBA's Wildlife Sanctuary program offers trained naturalists who provide advice on habitat improvements to homeowners, churches, HOAs and small businesses. Those who take the Healthy Yard Pledge and succeed in attracting key species to their property receive certification as a Wildlife Sanctuary.

the last few decades, we have lost the bobwhite quail as a breeding bird in northern Virginia and we no longer hear its namesake whistle in our neighborhoods.

"Similarly, the wood thrush used to provide a familiar and lovely song that is increasingly rare to hear anywhere near Washington, D.C., where it is the official bird." Butcher is



PHOTO BY RANDY STREUFERT

The Prothonotary Warbler nests in swampy woodlands, including in nearby Huntley Meadows Park. Its numbers are declining due to the loss of forested wetlands in the United States and in the mangroves of its wintering grounds in Central and South America.

the retired Migratory Species Coordinator for U.S. Forest Service International Programs and former Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society.

He continued, "Our parks provide our best chance to maintain healthy bird populations. We need to add more parks, increase their sizes and promote their natural values.

"Both grassland birds and forest-interior birds require large patches of habitat to survive and breed. These large habitat patches are the first to disappear during urbanization. Species like bobwhite quail and wood thrush are at risk when these large habitat patches disappear."

WHY CARE ABOUT BIRDS?

"Many studies have shown that exposure to nature contributes to human health and happiness," Butcher said. "Birds are especially important because they provide both visual and aural beauty.

"In addition, birds are easy-to-measure indicators of the health of the environment. Birds need many of the same natural elements that humans need, so when bird populations decline, it's a warning that human wellbeing is also at risk."

CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

With a 44-year history, the organization, newly renamed Northern Virginia Bird Alliance, offers educational programs on birds, conservation and natural history and leads walks. Their Stretch Our Parks initiative



PHOTO BY TOMICAH TILLEMANN

These young birders, from left, Nero Disparte, Lincoln Tillemann and Ryan Weber, at Huntley Meadows Park are participating in a Birdathon, NVBA's annual fundraising campaign. Teams compete to see how many bird species they can find in one day in northern Virginia and how much money they can raise for the organization. This year's winning team found 124 species in one day.



PHOTO BY TANIA ROMERO GONZALEZ

NVBA volunteers prepare to tackle invasive plants at the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Left to right: Judy Gallagher, NVBA Board; Isaiah, OBNWR staff member; Jerry Touvall, Vice President, NVBA; Gail Youngken, OBNWR Visitor Services Specialist; Libby Lyons, President, NVBA; Andreas Seiter, NVBA Board.

works with people to expand the ecological impacts of parks beyond their borders and into surrounding neighborhoods. The Wildlife Sanctuary Program offers trained ambassadors to help property owners restore natural habitat, including free on-site visits.

The Advocacy Committee works with

elects and other officials and "sister" organizations on local, state and federal policies to preserve and restore wildlife, habitats and ecosystems.

For more information and to join, visit www.nvbirdalliance.org or email president@nvba.org. Annual dues are \$20.

Second-Degree Murder Yields 28 Years in Prison

Robertson is sentenced for violent killing of Fairfax man.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Although Aaron Robertson was sentenced last week to 28 years in prison for the brutal killing of Fairfax City's Luis Barahona Reyes, the victim's family and the prosecutor were hoping for more. Indeed, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Kaitlin Morgan argued in Fairfax County Circuit Court that Robertson deserved the longest sentence possible – 40 years – for his offense.

Stressing the “long and extensive nature of the attack,” she said Robertson “killed a complete stranger and was indifferent to his suffering. And his actions forever changed the lives of those who loved him. Mr. Robertson delivered the maximum amount of pain to this victim and his family, so he deserves the maximum sentence for his crime.”

The tragedy occurred June 9-10, 2023, behind a building under construction at 9715 Fairfax Blvd. in Fairfax City. Following an investigation, Fairfax City police arrested Robertson on July 6, 2023. He later gave police an unsolicited confession – which jurors watched during his May 6-8 trial in Circuit Court. On May 9, they found him guilty of second-degree murder.

During Robertson's trial, City Police Det. Joe Pittman testified that, after seeing footage from surveillance cameras at both the WAWA and 7-Eleven near the crime scene, police identified Robertson, 30, as the suspect.

Pittman also obtained a video showing both men riding on a City CUE bus, June 9, just after 11 p.m., before both exited at Draper Drive, some 350 yards from where Barahona Reyes's body was found, the next morning. At the time, Robertson was 6-foot-4 and 230 pounds – much taller and heavier than his 49-year-old victim.

Robertson had no fixed address; but on June 11, police searched his room at a Fair Oaks hotel where he often stayed with his girlfriend. There, they seized the victim's shoes. “The top and side of the right shoe was covered with blood,” said Pittman. “And a DNA examination identified it as belonging to Barahona Reyes.”

Police also spoke with people in the vicinity of the crime scene and eventually built a timeline of both men's whereabouts on June 9-10 before arresting and charging Robertson with murder.

Then, on Sept. 12 – with permission from his attorney, Mike Sprano – Robertson asked Pittman to come speak with him in jail. The next day, after being advised of his Miranda rights, Robertson was videotaped while telling both Pittman and Det. John Farrell how he'd killed Barahona Reyes.

Robertson said and his fiancé had argued on June 9, and she pepper-sprayed him, so he packed his things and left. “And from that morning, I was drinking that whole day, two to four beers at a time,” he said. “That night, I was drinking near Wawa [directly across the street from the murder scene] and didn't know where I'd go stay that night.”

When he got off the bus, said Robertson, a man [Barahona Reyes] was walking behind him and whistling. “He said, ‘Hey,’ and was speaking in Spanish,” said Robertson. “Then he [allegedly] said, ‘Me and you go back there’ and he pointed behind a building and [reportedly] said, ‘Sex; I give you money.’”

“So I got upset,” said Robertson. “We walked across the street, behind the building, and I put my bags down. I knocked him out and he hit his head hard. I took his beer and poured it over him and walked away. But I thought I should check on this dude.”

Robertson said he returned, asked Barahona Reyes if he was all right and told him he wasn't gay. “He said something in Spanish, stood up near the wall, went in his pocket and got a small knife and lunged toward me,” said Robertson. “I told him to back up, but he lunged again.”

And although Robertson said he was “scared and nervous” when he saw the pocketknife, he also described it as the kind a “grandfather” would carry. He then said he easily disarmed Barahona Reyes and attacked him again.

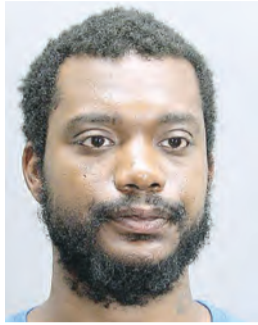
“I hit him, knocked him down, took the knife out of his hand and started choking him,” said Robertson. “I hit his head on the ground and kicked his head with my right foot. He stands up, but I kicked his butt and he fell over.”

Next, Robertson told how he picked up a nearby brick – which the prosecutor said was actually a rock – and hit Barahona Reyes with it. And when it broke, he got another one and continued battering the man. Realizing the victim was still breathing, Robertson said he then stabbed him with his own knife, aiming for his heart – and the medical examiner testified in court that Robertson succeeded in striking it.

“I was just focused on hurting this dude,” said Robertson. He also explained how he tried to cover up the crime by getting rid of the victim's belongings, throwing away his own blood-spattered shirt and tossing the knife in a sewer near his grandmother's house in Maryland.

After killing Barahona Reyes, said Robertson, “I left my bags there, walked into the 7-Eleven and washed the blood off my hands. I walked back over there and didn't know what to do. I never did nothing like that in my life; that wasn't my intention. I got his arms and pulled him to the dumpster and covered him with cargo boxes and trash bags.”

Following his May conviction, Robertson returned to court last Friday, July 26, for



Robertson



Victim Luis Barahona Reyes

sentencing. First, though, Judge Michael Devine heard testimony from three members of the victim's family.

Taking the stand first was Barbara Barahona Reyes, whose older brother Luis helped raise her after her mother died in childbirth. And years later, when she became a single mother, he helped her again with money and guidance. Yet while devastated by his death, she said she forgives Robertson.

However, her daughter Neyda Barahona said she'll never do that. “I think of my uncle and how he died,” she said. “Seeing the photos of how he was found – and the violence of it all – was traumatic. My uncle did not deserve to be murdered for who he is.”

“And he was still more of a man than [Robertson] was,” she continued. “Robertson lived off the women in his life; my uncle helped all the women in his. I will never forgive him. I love and miss my uncle, and I'm still angry.” She then read part of a poem that said, “God, please let the deer on the highway get some kind of heaven...If I am killed for simply living, let death be kinder than man.”

Testifying next was her cousin, Rosibel Barahona, describing her Uncle Luis as loving, caring, kind and hardworking. “I grew up with him since age 5; he took care of me,” she said. And as an adult, Rosibel said they talked daily about family things and plans to travel together.

“He was the best uncle, and I have so many great memories of him,” she said. “His death was hurtful, and I'm angry and want justice for him. I don't understand why he was taken from us like he was. [Robertson] took a pillar from our family, and it's unacceptable.”

Following his murder, Rosibel said she didn't sleep well for months. “I still have nightmares that someone's going to come out of nowhere and get me,” she said. “And I still dream of my uncle; I don't have him to talk to anymore. He was there for my son, as well. There's so much to miss about him. We can't laugh anymore or talk about family gossip. It's just so sad how cruel this person was to my uncle. It's impacted all of us in my family because we're not going to get my uncle back.”

Then it was prosecutor Morgan's turn. She said Robertson had prior convictions for assault and robbery, with a criminal record spanning 13 years, since he was 17. “And after being released from incarceration for an attempted robbery, he committed another one,” she said. “He's shown the court that

SEE ROBERTSON SENTENCING, PAGE 11

Barahona Reyes's Family Responds to Sentence

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

After the man convicted of killing their loved one was sentenced last week in Fairfax County Circuit Court, relatives of Luis Barahona Reyes spoke to The Connection about how they felt. The perpetrator, Aaron Robertson received 28 years in prison.

“I hope he really thinks deeply about what he's done,” said the victim's niece, Rosibel Barahona. “I don't think he realizes how much he hurt us and the pain he caused us. I'd hoped he'd be given at least 30 years. But I do have peace – because this process is finished – that my uncle is finally resting in peace, now that he's gotten some sort of justice.”

Her son Joel, 26, prefers to recall the happier times with Luis. “I always remember the times when my uncle took me to my elementary-school bus stop in the mornings, and the conversations we'd have,” he said. “It makes me depressed and angry thinking about his death. I wanted [Robertson] to be sentenced to 40 years. But at least they caught him and found out he was responsible – not everyone gets that.”

Rosibel's cousin, Neyda Barahona, said she'd have preferred Robertson to have received life in prison – but that punishment wasn't on the table for a charge of second-degree murder. “But if not, the consolation prize would have been 40 years,” she said. “I can't bring myself to be content with the sentence. ... I'm a jumble of emotions – anger, disappointment and sadness,” said Neyda.

She also doesn't believe Robertson is really sorry for taking her uncle's life. “In court today, he only talked about himself – not about what our family is feeling,” she said. “It wasn't a real apology. He didn't apologize for the pain he caused to Luis or to us.”

Ultimately, said Neyda, “I feel like justice for my uncle wasn't done. They should have thrown the book at Robertson. That man had nobody like my uncle to love or care for him, and that's probably why he became what he became.”

However, both Neyda and her mother, Barbara Barahona Reyes, praised the work of the Fairfax City police and the prosecutors. Barbara said she's grateful to Detectives Joe Pittman and John Farrell for their support and for all the work they did on this case. And Neyda thanked Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys Andrew Bolton and Kaitlin Morgan – who prosecuted Robertson in General District Court and Circuit Court, respectively – for “fighting the fight that my uncle couldn't.”

Robertson Sentencing

FROM PAGE 10

probation isn't enough to deter him. He escalated from robbery and assault to this brutal and heinous murder.

"He's demonstrated he's not able to follow the rules, and his violent history has led him here today. The aggravating factors in this crime include his astonishing level of brutality and the fact that he used multiple weapons. And we got a glimpse of the victim's agony from the coroner's medical records."

After leading Barahona Reyes across the street, said Morgan, "Robertson hit him so hard that, after two hours, he was still where Robertson left him. He then jerked the victim up by the arm - and Barahona Reyes was injured so badly that, as he stood up, he left a bloody handprint on the wall."

Then, said Morgan, "Robertson kicks him in the head and back, knocks him to the ground. He hits him with a brick or rock and hits him with another one after the first one breaks. Then Robertson flips him over and stabs him five times in the neck and upper chest before he's satisfied that Luis is dead."

"At any time, he could have walked away - and he did - but then he came back and continued beating him. And when the defendant was done, he left Luis among the trash because that's what the victim was to him."

Although Robertson could have received as much as 40 years in prison, the state sentencing guidelines recommended 15-25 years, so defense attorney Sprano sought a sentence at or below that amount. He also revealed his client's mental illness. "It doesn't negate what happened," said Sprano. "But he grew up in a violent environment of fighting and drive-by shootings. At age 8, he was assaulted by a 14-year-old, and he saw his mother beaten by his stepfather."

At age 15, Robertson had schizophrenia symptoms, said Sprano, with psychotic episodes at 16. At 17, he was convicted of attempted robbery and spent nine months in detention. Shortly afterward, he was convicted of the same crime and sentenced to two years in prison. While there, at age 18, he committed aggravated assault against

another inmate and was given three more years to serve. He was released at 22 and has been homeless ever since.

"He rarely felt safe and still heard voices inside him," said Sprano. "And all these things created the mental state he was in that night. It doesn't excuse what he did, but he told the police, 'That man shouldn't have died; that was wrong.'"

Robertson then stood and apologized to Barahona Reyes's family. "I didn't assault him because he was a homosexual," he said. "I did it because he offered me money for sex. He didn't deserve to die for that. I'd been trying to move forward with my life, get a job and do the best I could. I'm sorry for what I did."

But Judge Devine had the last word. "The level of violence was extreme and extraordinary," he told Robertson. "And the impact on the family was substantial and life changing - they will never get over it. I believe you didn't set out to do harm that night. But I don't think you've done everything you could have to live a good life. You've had a serious mental illness for decades and did nothing about it."

"Saying what you did was senseless and needless is an understatement," continued Devine. "But given your violent history, this was almost inevitable, in some fashion. Barbara Barahona Reyes said she forgives you, which is stunning. Yet it's only through forgiveness that they'll ever find peace. But I don't blame anyone for not ever being able to forgive you."

"I can't fix the hole you placed in this family's hearts. I hope they remember [Luis] for what he was, and not how he died at your hands. I've been asked to serve justice for you and for them, so I'm sentencing you to 40 years in prison, suspending all but 12, and leaving you 28 years to serve. Upon your release, you'll be placed on 10 years' active supervised probation, with the condition that you obtain mental-health evaluation and treatment. I believe that's a fair sentence."

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ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU AUG. 4

LuminoCity Festival. At Westfield Montgomery Mall, 7101 Democracy Blvd., Bethesda. The festival will run daily, Monday to Thursday, from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. and Friday to Sunday from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. Admission tickets are available for purchase online at luminocityfestival.com or onsite. Ticket pricing ranges from \$16 to \$20 per person. Admissions for children 3 and under are free.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ **Dino Safari and Ice Age Adventure:** Two exhibition areas where visitors will explore 70+ life-sized animated dinosaurs and immersive ice age animals lighting sculptures
- ❖ **Interactive Recreation Zone:** Attractions such as a Dino Bounce Castle, Dino Speedway, T-Rex Thrill, Jungle Explorer Playground, Dino Carousel and Oviraptor Ride
- ❖ **Educational Experiences:** Participate in a Safari Dig and Dino Fossil Hunt to uncover hidden gems and excavate fossils from the prehistoric era
- ❖ **Lumi Giftshop:** Shop for dino-themed toys, gifts, and Lumi souvenirs
- ❖ **Food & Relaxation Zone:** Food trucks and restroom facilities, are convenient and easy to grab a bite and unwind after the prehistoric adventure

THRU AUG. 4, MINHWA

Workhouse Minhwa Exhibition. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Immerse yourself in the beauty of Minhwa, an exploration of the essence of Korea's beauty, vibrant colors, flora and fauna, and timeless narratives. The exhibit is located in the McGuire Woods Gallery, W-16 2nd Floor. <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/blowing-the-winds>

NOW THRU AUG. 11

WMAI Inaugural Exhibition. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Serving Together, Creating Together is an Inaugural Exhibition of art by participants in the Workhouse Military in The Arts Initiative (WMAI). Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/serving-together>

FCPA'S SUMMER

ENTERTAINMENT SERIES

Fairfax County Park Authority's Summer Entertainment Series presents more than 190 exciting performances at 17 locations all summer long. Choose from an array of free, live performances featuring classical to bluegrass music and everything in between. Enjoy performances from outstanding local and national touring groups including:

(Aug. 16) The United States Air Force Strings – Mason District Park Amphitheater: Join the official string ensemble of the U.S. Air Force for an evening of music ranging from classical symphonic selections to classic rock, bluegrass and patriotic compositions.

(Aug. 18) Cheryl Wheeler with Kenny White – Mason District Amphitheater: Sing along to folk music with famed singer-songwriter Cheryl Wheeler and pianist and singer Kenny White.

(Aug. 23) Deanna Bogart – Grist Mill Park: Hear Deanna Bogart's dazzling keyboards, soulful saxo-



Magician Wes Iseli will perform on Saturday, Aug. 3 at 11 a.m. at Mary Riley Styles Library in Falls Church.

phone, smoky vocals and cut-above songwriting.

(Aug. 24) Bruce in the USA – Arrowbrook Centre Park: Jam on to your favorite tunes by Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band.

(Aug. 31) Cloud Cult – Arrowbrook Centre Park: End your summer on a high note with Cloud Cult, a band known for their unique alternative-orchestral-folk-rock sound and hailed as one of the "Top 10 Green Bands" by Rolling Stone. Performances are held outdoors and may be canceled in the event of inclement weather. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) before leaving home for inclement weather updates.

FREE CONCERTS AT

BURKE LAKE PARK

Mark your calendars for 7 p.m. every Wednesday night through Aug. 21st at Burke Lake Park for an incredible line-up of bands, food trucks, 2 Silos beer, and Peterson's Ice Cream. The atmosphere is informal, so bring a picnic blanket, lawn chairs, and relax with friends and family.

July 31 - The English Channel
Food trucks: DC Slides & Babu-Ji

August 7 - The Road Ducks
Food trucks: Babu-Ji & Empanadas de Mendoza

August 14 - SoHo Down
Food truck: Roaming Coyote

August 21 - Riptide
Food truck: Roaming Coyote

KIDZ KORNER EVENTS IN

FAIRFAX CITY

FUNDAY MONDAY: Mondays, 10:30 – 11:15 am at Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. For more information: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

Aug. 12 – Music Together Sing and Groove

Aug. 19 – Drew Blue Shoes Magic!

Aug. 26 – Storytime with Fairfax

Library: "Ice Cream" theme

KIDZ KORNER: Saturdays, 10:30 –

11:15 am at Old Town Square,

10415 North Street, Fairfax.
<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

Aug. 3 – My Gym "Olympics" Theme
Aug. 10 – Superhero Training with "The Hulk"

Aug. 17 – Children's Music with Marsha (of Marsha and the Positrons)

JULY 12 TO AUG. 2

LEGO DREAMZzz Playground. At Springfield Town Center, Springfield. LEGO DREAMZzz activities include:

Search MINIWORLD for the dream clouds to crack Mr. Oz's secret code
Dream up your own animal/vehicle mash-up and test it out on giant ramps

Meet & Greet Izzie & Z-Blob
Play Dream Team Bingo and collect your dream team and then take on the timed challenge to create a Memory Protector
Experience the LEGO DREAMZzz 4D movie

JULY 27 TO OCT. 20

Annual Clay International. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. View 48 unique ceramic works that incorporate contemporary spirit and technical skill in the material. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/clay-international-2024>

WEDNESDAY/JULY 31

Community Forum. 7-8:30 p.m. Virtual. The Fairfax Area Commission on Aging (COA) and the Fairfax Area Disability Services Board (FA-DSB) are seeking community input to identify systemic gaps in service and/or barriers Fairfax County residents with disabilities face. Register to attend and receive an email with access instructions. Space is limited. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/disabilities/fairfax-area-disability-services-board/community-forums>

AUG. 1-4

4-H Fair and Carnival. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2709 West Ox Road in Herndon. Check out livestock displays and 4-H exhibits, treat



Korean Fan Painting will be presented on Saturday, Aug. 3, 2024 at Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

yourself to classic fair food, enjoy live entertainment, tractor demos, carnival rides and get up close and personal with adorable farm animals. For a special Friday night out, visit the Big Truck Night on Aug. 2.

Carnival Hours

Thursday, Aug. 1 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 to 8 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 2 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. Big Truck Night from 5 to 7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 3, the Carnival is from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 4 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Do you want the best deals on tickets for carnival rides? Purchase Unlimited Ride Wristbands for Thursday and Friday only. If purchased in advance online, wristbands are \$20 per person. Onsite wristbands are available for purchase at \$25 per person between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. You can purchase regular ride tickets on site after 3 p.m. Wristbands are for one day only.

FRIDAY/AUG. 2

Totally Trucks. 8:30 a.m. – noon.

At RA's Central Services Facility, Reston. Bring the kids/grandkids and check out all the big trucks that Reston Association uses to make Reston beautiful. In addition, there may be a fire truck on display if they are available. Children will receive a "Totally Trucks" construction helmet.

SATURDAY/AUG. 3

Magic Magician and Illusionist Wes Iseli. 11 a.m. At Mary Riley Styles Library, 120 N. Virginia Ave., Falls Church. Master magician and illusionist Wes Iseli will be performing his spectacular Magic Show at the Mary Riley Styles Library. Known for his fast-paced performances filled with surprises, Wes Iseli's shows are a must-see event for families and magic enthusiasts alike.

BACK TO SCHOOL BOOK SALE At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 Saint Germain Dr., Centreville.

Friday, Aug. 2, 1-5 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 3, 10-5 p.m.
Sunday, Aug. 4, 1-4 p.m.
Bag sale on Sunday. Fill a grocery bag with books for just \$10.
Sponsored by Friends of the Centreville Regional Library.

SATURDAY/AUG. 3

Korean Fan Painting. 10-11:30 a.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Learn Korean watercolor painting techniques as you fill in beautiful, traditional Korean Minhwa designs on a fan that will get you through these hot days in style! Cost: \$43, with an additional \$12 to be paid to the teacher directly. Website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/korean-fan-painting>

SATURDAY/AUG. 3

Summer Open House. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. Featuring free self-guided tours of both Woodlawn and Frank Lloyd Wright's Pope-Leighey House, bring your family and friends to learn more about this unique local historic site and enjoy 127 acres of outdoor space.

FAMILY FILMS AT

SULLY HISTORIC SITE

Fairfax County Park Authority introduces another season of Starlight Cinema. Come enjoy this outdoor movie series with feature films for the entire family as well as pre-movie entertainment. Pack your picnics, blankets and chairs, and head out to enjoy movies under the stars — for free — all month long this August.

The Starlight Cinema gates open at 6 p.m. Opening children's enter-

www.connectionnewspapers.com

ENTERTAINMENT



The United States Air Force Strings will perform on Aug. 16, 2024 at Mason District Park Amphitheater.



A Women's Equality Celebration takes place on Saturday, Aug. 24, at Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

tainment begins at 7 p.m. with performances featuring music, magic, comedy and puppetry. The evening's feature film will begin at dark. Watch from your cars or on the lawn in front of the screen. This year, the Starlight Cinema Series will be held at Sully Historic Site at 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. This year's performances will include:

Aug. 3: The Uncle Devin Show and "Migration"

Aug. 10: The Great Zucchini and "Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie"

Aug. 17: Mr. Gabe and Friends and "Wish"

Aug. 24: Geoff Marsh and "Elemental"

Movies are held outdoors and are subject to cancellation in case of inclement weather. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) one hour before the start of pre-movie entertainment for rain cancellations. Learn more about the Starlight Cinema and other performances being held throughout the summer by visiting the Summer Entertainment Series website.

SATURDAY/AUG. 3
BBC Annual Community Health and Wellness Fair. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Bethlehem Baptist Church, 7836 Fordson Road, Alexandria. Free health screenings, i.e., blood pressure, Afib, HIV testing, etc. Information on wellness, health promotion and prevention, mental and physical health education, healthcare access resources and more.

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 7
Senior Movie Day. 10 a.m. At LOOK Cinemas at Reston Town Center, Reston. Featuring the movie "Kung Fu Panda 4." RA presents Senior Movie Day, a free movie on the fourth Wednesday of the month. For ages 55-plus. Sign-In and Register online through the www.RestonWebtrac.com account.

AUG. 9-10
"Legally Blonde." 7 p.m. At Meridian High School in Falls Church. The

Metropolitan School of the Arts (MSA) musical theatre department is thrilled to announce their upcoming production of the hit musical "Legally Blonde," taking place at Meridian High School in Falls Church, featuring a state-of-the-art 600-seat theater. Tickets cost \$10 for students and \$25 for adults. "Legally Blonde" follows the story of Elle Woods, a determined and underestimated sorority girl who defies expectations by enrolling at Harvard Law School to win back her ex-boyfriend. Through her journey, Elle discovers her own strength and intelligence, proving that she's much more than just a pretty face.

SATURDAY/AUG. 10
2024 Lake Anne Cardboard Boat Regatta. Make a splash at this year's race. Hosted by Lake Anne of Reston, a condominium unit owners association. Aug. 3 is the deadline to register your boat. Register or sponsor at www.reston-museum.org.

SUNDAY/AUG. 11
Second Sunday at Lake Anne Plaza in Reston. 3-6 p.m. Get ready for an unforgettable afternoon at Lake Anne Plaza's Second Sunday event. This vibrant afternoon will be a perfect blend of art, wellness, and culinary delights.

Event Highlights
Reston Art Gallery: Indulge your senses at the Chocolate & Wine Reception. Savor fine wines paired with delectable chocolates while enjoying the inspiring artwork.

OmBaked: Refresh yourself with their BOGO CBD Seltzer Specials. Experience the potentially calming benefits of alcohol-free, low-calorie CBD while sipping on these delicious, refreshing beverages.

Lake Anne Coffee House: Dive into a culinary adventure with Paella Night! Savor the rich flavors of this traditional Spanish dish and take advantage of the retail wine specials to find the perfect pairing.

Elden Street Tea Shop: Indulge in BOGO Mocktails & Retail Tea

Specials.
New Trail Cycling & Strength: Find your zen with Outdoor Yoga. Stretch, breathe, and relax in the beautiful outdoors, guided by expert instructors.

AUG. 12-16
Haunt Camp. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Join them for a week exploring all things related to producing an entertaining haunted house experience from a Performing Arts perspective! Cost is \$300. For rising 7th - 12th grade students. Younger may be admitted with permission of the instructors. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/haunt-camp>

SATURDAY/AUG. 17
Poetry Beneath the Stars. 7:30-8:30 p.m. At Turner Farm Park, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls. Head to Turner Farm Park for an evening of contemplating the cosmos through poetry. Led by Fairfax County Poet Laureate Danielle Badra, this workshop will feature examples of poems inspired by the stars to ignite your creativity on a unique celestial journey. Participants will start indoors and be provided with examples of star-gazing poetry and prompts to craft their own poems. But that's not all! Weather permitting, you can take your poetry outdoors or enjoy a special treat: telescope viewing at the Roll Top Observatory. Please note, this will be Danielle Badra's final Poetry In The Parks event as Fairfax County Poet Laureate. Space is limited to ensure an intimate and engaging experience for all attendees.

SATURDAY/AUG. 24
Women's Equality Celebration. 1-4 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Honor Women's Equality Day with an afternoon of festivities commemorating the efforts and achievements of the groundbreaking activists that fought long and

hard for women's enfranchisement. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/women-equality>

TUESDAY/AUG. 27
Red Cross Blood Drive. 1:30-6 p.m. At Christ the King Lutheran Church, 10550 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Christ the King is having a Red Cross blood drive. Donors will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card via email! Register today at www.redcrossblood.org. Questions? Contact Melody Starya Mobley at 571-276-7356.

FREE SUMMER CONCERTS AT NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation has announced its annual Summer Concert Series schedule at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Virginia. The series will feature military bands performing music from traditional patriotic tunes to contemporary works and pop hits. All shows begin at 7 p.m. Visit marineheritage.org/eventcalendar-368789.

Thursday, August 22: "The President's Own" United States Marine Band will present a varied repertoire ranging from traditional concert band selections to the patriotic marches that made it famous.

Thursday, Aug. 29: "The President's Own" United States Marine Band returns to close the Summer Concert Series for 2024.

FAIRFAX COUNTY FARMERS MARKETS 2024 SEASON
For 2024 Farmers Market season, dozens of local food producers have tons of fresh and healthy foods waiting for you at all 10 markets located throughout the county. Find locally grown produce, delicious baked goods and prepared foods at the farmers markets. Additionally, enjoy a variety of family-friendly activities from musical performances, games, and

don't forget to bring your food scraps to support our community composting efforts.

WEDNESDAYS
McCutcheon/Mount Vernon; Through Dec. 18, 8 a.m. - noon; Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria
Oakmont; Through Nov. 6, 8 a.m.-noon, Oakmont Recreation Center, 3200 Jermantown Road, Oakton
Wakefield; Through Oct. 30, 2-6 p.m., Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale

THURSDAYS
Annandale; Through Nov. 14, 8 a.m. - noon, Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale
Herndon; Through Nov. 7, 8 a.m. - noon, Old Town Herndon, 700 Block of Lynn St., Herndon (by the Red Caboose)

FRIDAYS
McLean; Through Nov. 15, 8 a.m.-noon, Lewinsville Park, 1659

Chain Bridge Road, McLean
Kingstowne; Through Oct. 25, 3-7 p.m., In the Giant parking lot, 5870 Kingstowne Towne Center, Alexandria

SATURDAYS
Burke; Through Dec. 21, 8 a.m.-noon, VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway, Burke

Reston; Through Dec. 7, 8 a.m.-noon, Lake Anne Village Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza, Reston

SUNDAYS
Lorton; Through Nov. 10, 8 a.m.-noon, VRE parking lot, 8990 Lorton Station Blvd., Lorton

Visit the Farmers Market website for complete information about this year's markets - including details on SNAP benefits for eligible households available at designated locations. Contact the Community Horticulture Office at 702-642-0128.

AUG. 10 TO OCT. 13
Life's a Stitch. 11 a.m. to 12 pm. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Life's a Stitch x4 looks at 4 very different ways that art quilts and fiber sculpture can use both humor and drama to express character and story. Website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/lifes-a-stitch>

SUNDAY, SEPT 15
Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel. 7 p.m. Music of Joy and Peace. At GMU's Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Dr., Fairfax. Visit <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 14
Adat Reyim Gala. 8-11 p.m. At Congregation Adat Reyim, 6500 Westbury Oaks Court, Springfield. Congregation Adat Reyim of Springfield celebrates four decades of its congregant-led choir with a medley of instrumental and popular music, including show tunes and folk-rock tunes. Cost: \$36-\$72. Visit the website: <https://www.adatreyim.org/event/adat-reyim-choirs-40th-anniversary-gala.html>

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Legals

ABC LICENSE

Silver Diner Fredericksburg LLC trading as Silver Diner, 2951 Plank Rd. Fredericksburg, VA 22401. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a mixed beverage restaurant license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Robert Giaimo, owner/ The Veritas Law Firm. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

Legals

ABC LICENSE

Ono Brewing Company trading as Ono Brewing Company, 4520 Daly Dr #102, Chantilly, Fairfax County, Virginia, 20151-3735. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Winery: 5000 or less license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Scott Hoffman, President, Ono Brewing Company. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

Employment

Apex Companies seeks Construction Project Manager in Rockville, MD to oversee construction activities to ensure compliance with the design documents. Position based at headquarters and may be assigned to unanticipated worksites throughout the U.S. as determined by management. Telecommuting permitted. Apply @ www.jobpostingtoday.com Ref# 67638

Legals

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESMENT AND DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE PROPOSED TRAVEL CAMP FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA

The U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir hereby gives Notice of the Availability (NOA) for the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the proposed construction of a travel camp expansion with 30 recreational vehicle (RV) camp sites with full utility hookups; a camping support facility with laundry, restrooms, showers, and associated vehicle circulation roads and walkways at Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, Virginia. The purpose of this project is to build and operate an approximately 20-acre travel camp expansion at Fort Belvoir to be managed by the Installation Management Command's Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Directorate. The Proposed Action would provide needed space for customers at Fort Belvoir in a highly desirable area along the Potomac River.

The Draft EA has been prepared in accordance with the regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), (Public Law 91-190, 42 USC 43214347 January 1, 1970), amendments, and the Army's Implementing Regulations (32 CFR Part 651, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions). The EA is available to view in printed form at the Lorton Branch, Kingstowne Branch, Richard Byrd, and Sherwood Regional Branch of the Fairfax County Public Library system, or to view/download electronically at https://home.army.mil/belvoir/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-public-works/environmental-division. Click the "Programs and Documents" tab, then "National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Program." Information about the EA and links to download the various documents are provided under the "Open for Public/Agency Review & Comment" heading.

Comments or questions on the Draft EA and Draft FONSI may be directed in writing to: Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, Building 1442, 9430 Jackson Loop, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060, or by email to: belvoir.travel.camp.nepa@usace.army.mil. Comments must be received no later than 30 days after publication of this NOA.

Legals

Employment

Asst Professor of Comp Sci - Prep/deliver lectures to undergrad students on comp sci topics, initiate/facilitate/moderate classroom discussions, administer/grade exams. Req'd PhD in Comp Sci + 1yr exp w/ knowledge of digital libraries, methodologies to build info systems/digital libraries & in HCI on the processes involved in info systems design. Resume by mail to University of Mary Washington, ATTN: Beth Williams, Office of Human Resources, 1301 College Ave, Fredericksburg, VA 22401.

Employment

Software Developer - Develop/create/modify comp apps & dev/design software solutions per user needs/use to optimize operational efficiency. Req'd Bachelor of Comp Sci or Software Engineering (or func equivalent) + 2yrs exp w/ knowledge/use of HTML5, CSS3, JavaScript, Rest API, Visual Studio & Angular JS. Resume to Brookfield Dental Associates, 7108 Brookfield Plaza, Springfield, VA 22150.

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Questions?

E-mail sales@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9431



AUCTION Friday, Aug. 16, 12:30pm at Appomattox Inn & Suites, 447 Old Courthouse Rd, Appomattox, VA

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Drought Watch

Due to unusually dry conditions in Fairfax County and the surrounding region that are expected to persist, a drought watch is now in effect, issued by the Drought Coordination Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), in coordination with the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force, issued a drought warning advisory earlier this month for many areas of Virginia, including Fairfax County and the rest of Northern Virginia.

Residents and businesses are encouraged to take voluntary measures to conserve water and help reduce demand on the region's water supply systems.

Water saving tips:

- ❖ Monitor watering of lawns, plants and shrubs.
- ❖ Sweep sidewalks and driveways instead of using a hose.
- ❖ Avoid washing your car or use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- ❖ Repair plumbing leaks – especially toilets and faucets.
- ❖ Shorten shower length to under 5 minutes.
- ❖ Turn off the water while brushing your teeth.
- ❖ Wash full loads of dishes and clothes.

Learn more from the Council of Governments and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Officials emphasized that while there currently is an adequate supply of water in the Potomac River and back-up reservoirs, implementing voluntary water conservation practices across the region will help complement measures already in place and reduce water demand and environmental needs of the river. A drought watch is the level in the plan before drought warning, when additional water restrictions are requested and could become mandatory should conditions worsen.

"As officials continue to closely monitor drought conditions in the region, it is important for the public to use water wisely," said Clark Mercer, COG Executive Director, adding that "with a few simple measures, we can all aid in water conservation efforts and help ensure an adequate water supply for our region."

Three water supply reservoirs were constructed in the early 1980s to provide water during droughts. These reservoirs are full and, if needed, water can be released to supplement the flow in the river. "Fortunately, despite the current conditions, the region still has an adequate water supply to meet demands," said Fairfax Water General Manager Jamie Bain Hedges.

"Wise water use is a great habit to practice all year long to decrease water demand, protect our precious resources and help customers save on their water bills," said WSSC Water General Manager Kishia L. Powell.

Residents and businesses are being asked to use water wisely as part of their daily routines. Increasing conservation efforts now will help optimize use of water resources, especially if dry conditions persist into the fall and winter. A detailed list of tips for wise water use can be found at mwcog.org/wisewater.

While the region is currently at a low to moderate risk for wildfires, fire safety and protection is a concern due to dry conditions. Committee members encourage residents to use extra caution when smoking outside, using outdoor grills or engaging in other activities that involve flammable materials.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past two months, the region has experienced record-breaking high temperatures along with some periods of historically low streamflow and groundwater levels. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center has declared that 95 percent of the Potomac River Basin is experiencing abnormal to extreme drought and precipitation levels have dropped almost four inches below normal in the past 60 days.

Another Why Me ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... but not what you think. Once again, this 'why me' has nothing to do with cancer. It has to do with emails that I am receiving almost daily, including weekends. The email is addressed to me; 'Dear Kenneth' is how they begin. This recurring appearance in my inbox is being sent by alerts@neighborhoodalerts.com. What they are emailing to me are police-type reports, if not copies of the actual documents, of "non-violent crimes" in our community: thefts, car break-ins, robberies in homes, in addition to rather helpful advisories: flood watch, excessive heat warnings, properties for sale, permits applied for, and any buildings/new construction proposed. In summary, I am receiving unsolicited news of our community's goings on, the good, the bad, and the ugly, with apologies to Clint Eastwood and director Sergio Leone.

On the face of it, "Not horrible," which is exactly how are neighbor, Robert, described to us over the phone, the damage caused by a large tree that crashed into our house while we were away on vacation. But what bothers me most about this almost daily news feed, is the overwhelming percentage of these communiques have to do with crime. And from the consistency of the reporting of break-ins, car thefts, and all manner of relatively non-violent behaviors, I can't help feeling victimized even though I have not been, nor witnessed, or heard firsthand of any of these kinds of activities. Moreover, I just can't believe there's this much crime in my little corner of Montgomery County. And yet, every morning, or nearly so, I am the recipient of this drumbeat of low crimes and misdemeanors occurring practically under my nose. It's as if I'm part of an email group that includes the police commissioner, captain at of my nearby police station along with his chief of detectives, the desk Sergeant and so on who should receive and/or are on a need-to-know basis, whereas I'm neither part of the police and/or really don't need-to-know, this much. I've asked many of my neighbors if anybody else is receiving the daily updates that I am. No one is receiving these emails. Ergo, 'why me?'

This must be an error, right? I'm of two minds on the matter (I am married to a Gemini, after all); either there's this much crime occurring - for which I see or hear no evidence, and I'm lucky to even be hearing about it or, I'm unlucky to be hearing about it because what I wouldn't have known couldn't hurt me. But now, I know. Or do I?

It just seems that if crime was as rampant as this 'service' infers that it is, I would have heard about elsewhere, like from a person first, not a 'service.' But to quote the great Sergeant Schultz from "Hogan's Heroes:" "I see nothing." Perhaps, I'm playing the innocent here because I've never heard of nor requested (signed up) for this so-called service. Yet here I sit, computer in hand (on desk, actually) and there the email arrives - from alerts. More unpleasant activities that's fit to email.

What am I to make of this outreach? Why am I the one being informed? If this is a phishing expedition, where's the bait? I've not been asked for money, but maybe simply clicking on this email is somehow causing me problems even though I've never responded. I sure hope my curiosity isn't going to get the best of my bank account.

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

Driver Charged in Fatal Pedestrian Crash

Detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit have charged the driver from the June 24 fatal pedestrian crash in Centreville.

Detectives determined Climencia Melgar, 58, of Centreville, was driving a 2012 Jeep Grand Cherokee on eastbound Braddock Road. Melgar made a left onto Pickwick Road and failed to yield to a pedestrian as she was walking within the crosswalk.

Melgar was charged with Failure to Stop for Pedestrians. She was served a summons and released.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone - (703)246-4676

Detectives from our Crash Reconstruction Unit (CRU) are investigating a fatal pedestrian crash in Centreville.

On June 24, around 9:50 p.m., officers responded to the intersection of Braddock Road and Pickwick Road in Centreville for two pedestrians who were struck by a vehicle. The driver of the vehicle remained at the scene.

Preliminarily, crash reconstruction detectives determined Lubia Mirasol Vasquez Mateo, 46, of Clifton, was crossing Pickwick Road, not in the crosswalk, with another adult man. The driver of a 2012 Jeep Grand Cherokee was traveling east on Braddock Road and attempting to make a left turn on Pickwick Road and struck both pedestrians. Mateo was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries, while the other pedestrian sustained injuries considered non-life-threatening. Mateo was pronounced deceased at the hospital. Detectives do not believe speed or alcohol are factors in the crash and continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the crash.

Route 28 and Route 29 Interchange Ramps Nighttime Closures

July 31, Aug. 1, Aug. 4-8; detours in place during ramp paving.

Weather permitting, the Route 28 (Sully Road/Centreville Road) and Route 29 interchange ramps will have nighttime closures Wednesday night, July 31; Thursday night, Aug. 1 and Sunday night, Aug. 4 through Thursday night, Aug. 8 between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. each night for paving, according to the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Drivers are asked to follow posted detour signs. Ramp traffic will be detoured as follows:

❖ Northbound Route 28 Ramp to Northbound and Southbound Route 29 (to Fairfax and Gainesville): Northbound Route 28,

ramp to Braddock Road (Route 620)/Walney Road (Route 657), westbound Braddock Road, ramp to southbound Route 28 and southbound Route 28 back to the ramps to northbound and southbound Route 29

❖ Southbound Route 28 Ramp to Northbound Route 29 (to Fairfax): Southbound Route 28 and Machen Road (Route 5401) back to northbound Route 29

❖ Southbound Route 28 Ramp to Southbound Route 29 (to Gainesville): Southbound Route 28 and Machen Road back to southbound Route 29

❖ Northbound Route 29 Ramp to Northbound Route 28 (to Dulles Airport): Northbound Route 29 and Old Centreville Road (Route 898) back to northbound

Route 28

❖ Northbound Route 29 Ramp to Southbound Route 28 (to Manassas): Northbound Route 29 and Old Centreville Road back to southbound Route 28

❖ Southbound Route 29 Ramp to Northbound Route 28 (to Dulles Airport): Southbound Route 29 and Machen Road back to northbound Route 28

❖ Southbound Route 29 Ramp to Southbound Route 28 (to Manassas): Southbound Route 29 and Machen Road back to southbound Route 28

You can get traffic, work zone and incident information online at 511virginia.org, via the free mobile 511Virginia app, or by calling 511 in Virginia anywhere anytime.

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