

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

OCTOBER 31, 2024



Alexandria high school students Grace Barughese, Ava Saunders, and Zoe Flynn, members of their school's Young Democrats Club, sign up to knock on doors to speak to voters, with Penny Akahloun of West Springfield (left).



Tilly Blanding addresses activists, including fellow members of her AKA sorority and SEIU union and others, who gathered on her front lawn before working on getting out the vote

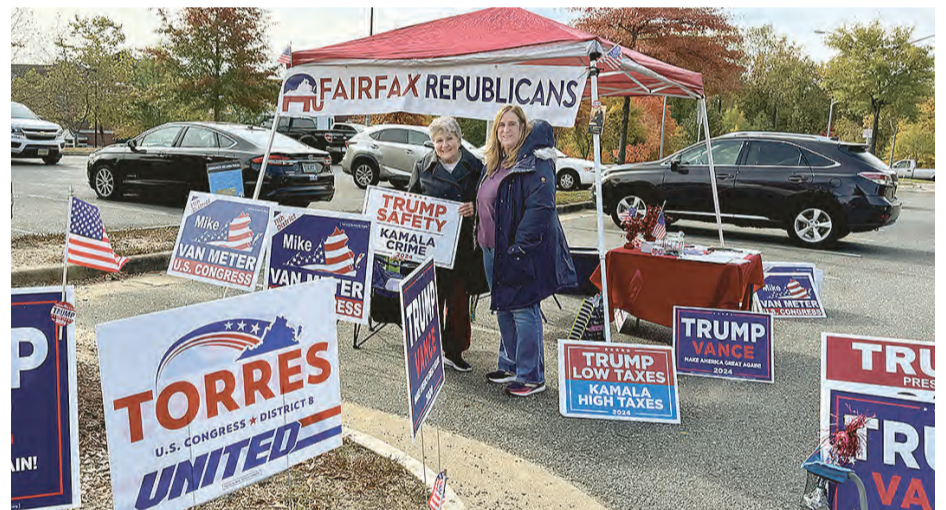
PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Tilly Blanding, a well known figure in Springfield politics prepares food to sustain her 'army' of political activists



Members of Fairfax's local SEIU joined the launch rally backing Harris/Walz



Fairfax Republicans staff tents at area Farmers' Markets, among other activities to reach voters, including this tent in Lorton

Democracy in Action Across the Area

Political activists make last push for candidates.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

As the frenzy of ads and political activities increases with Election Day now days away, area supporters of national and local candidates gathered for rallies and last efforts to see their favorites elected.

Fairfax Republicans held a car rally in Alexandria, and planned a pop-up roadside rally at Routes 50 and 29 for the Trump/Vance ticket; had a presence at area farmers' markets; held door knocking efforts in Alexandria and Fairfax City; and hosted a meet and greet with 11th District Congressional candidate Mike Van Meter.

Fairfax Democrats volunteered supporting the Harris speech on Tuesday at the National

Mall; marched in Leesburg's Halloween parade to "vote for your daughter;" held final postcard writing parties in Springfield; and gathered with several state elected officials in support of 11th District incumbent U.S. Rep. Gerry Connelly for their "Don't Boo - Vote Blue" rally at Accotink Park. NAACP pursued its efforts to curing ballot issues, monitoring canvassing and election boards, phoning potential voters in battleground states, defending voter challenges and purges; and holding a "Souls to the Polls" fish fry for those voting at Mount Vernon Government Center, an after-voting event. All over Fairfax County, voters cast their ballots at early voting sites.

Democracy also is happening in front yards across America this week, including Tilly Blanding's front yard. Long-time union advocate and political activist, Blanding held a canvas launch rally at her Springfield home for Harris/Walz/Kaine on Saturday. In October 2019, Blanding held a similar rally for then Presidential primary candidate Kamala Harris, who attended and spoke to supporters before their canvassing efforts

on her behalf. Over the years since, Blanding maintained contact with Harris, a fellow Howard University graduate and Alpha Kappa Alpha member.

Blanding praises Harris, saying, "Her excitement for public service and her commitment to ensuring that workers are respected, protected, and paid is palpable, and her record has proven her commitment to our Union and working families across the Commonwealth and our entire nation."

This October's Springfield rally drew, among others, members of the local chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), an organization for workers in healthcare, the public sector, and property services. The union has endorsed Harris and lauds her plan to add home healthcare coverage to Medicare eligibility. Also attending were many who were present for Harris' 2019 visit. New attendees included three Alexandria high school girls who participate in their school's Young Democrats Club. The only one of the three now eligible to vote, Grace Barughese, told the crowd, "You are



Howard University student La'Nia White sings the National Anthem a capella to start the canvas launch

voting for our future." Zoe Flynn, age 17, added, "Since we can't vote, please make sure you vote for us."

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SCREENSHOT FCPD YOUTUBE

Fairfax Police Chief Kevin Davis.

Police Fatally Shoot Woman During Welfare Check

Welfare check went deadly in three minutes. What happened?

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

For 459 days, the Fairfax County Police Department maintained a record free from incidents involving the shooting and killing of an individual by one of their officers. On Monday, Oct. 14, the department released the body-worn camera (BWC) video footage from a police wellness check in Reston conducted on mid-morning Sept. 16, which escalated into a fatal police shooting of a woman within three minutes. It occurred at a new upscale apartment complex in the 11800 block of Sunrise Valley Drive in Reston.

According to the department's General Order No. 509, effective June 17, 2024, officers must activate their BWC systems during their duties, provided that capturing video documentation complies with department policy and the Code of Virginia. In their release on Sept. 18, two days after the shooting, the department identified FCPD officer First Class (PFC) Peter Liu as the officer who discharged his firearm in the fatal shooting in Reston.

The timestamps in the upper right-hand corner of each body-worn camera footage frame chronicle the sequence of events. It be-

Who was Sydney Elizabeth Wilson?



PHOTO WALLACE FUNERAL
Sydney Elizabeth Wilson, obituary photo.

Young Women's Leadership Panel Speaker for All-City Leadership Secondary School in 2018.

In 2021, Wilson began her career at JLL Mid-Atlantic as a temp. She later secured a full-time position in the Tysons Corner office. In 2022, she received a promotion to Markets Operations Manager for JLL Mid-Atlantic in Washington, D.C. She managed 18-25 coordinators, with some in Norfolk and Richmond, and traveled between offices in Tysons Corner, VA, D.C., Bethesda, MD, and Baltimore, MD. Her obituary asks for memorial donations to the National Alliance on Mental Health in Sydney's honor.

Wilson's Facebook page states that she completed 8 hours of necessary training to become certified in adult mental health first aid on April 19, 2024. Wilson writes on her Facebook page, "As a people manager, mentor, friend, big cousin, daughter ... the list goes on, it's important to be able to help and identify challenges in myself and others. I think this is the greatest act of love."

gins with the arrival of Liu, who approaches and knocks on the door of 33-year-old Sydney Elizabeth Wilson's apartment at 10:14:00 a.m., continuing for three-and-a-half minutes. At 10:17:30, Liu has shot Wilson, who lies still in her white bathrobe and barefoot on

the hallway floor outside her third-floor apartment. Liu grabs his police radio to call for assistance. Knife wounds slash his face, blood dripping onto his hand holding his radio and onto the floor.

The beginning of the footage
SEE POLICE FATALLY, PAGE 4

The following images chronicle officer body cam video leading up to, during and after the knife attack on the officer and the shooting. In the top right-hand corner of each frame is the time stamp by year-month-date, followed by hour:minute:second, e.g. 2024-09-16 10:17:08.



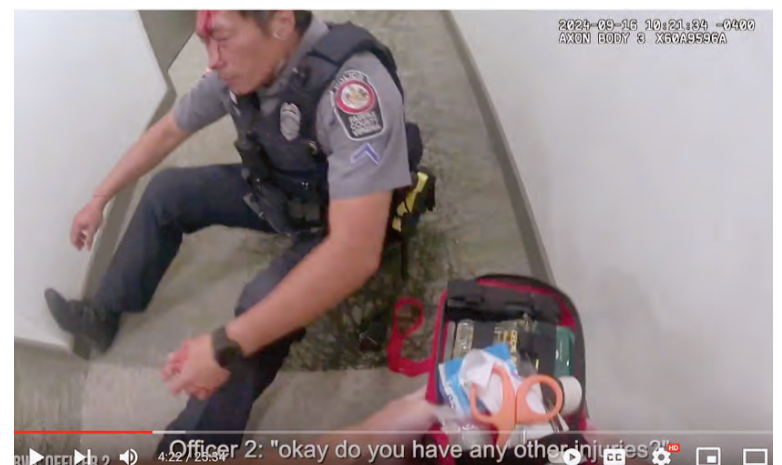
Time stamp 10:14:16



Time stamp 10:17:10



Time stamp 10:17:19



Time stamp 10:21:34

PHOTOS BY FCPD YOUTUBE

Vote for Democracy

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

Next Tuesday is Election Day – a historic inflection point in our US history. The question is do we, as a nation, choose another Trump administration or not? While we can hope and pray that a new Trump White House would not further weaken our system of checks and balances and erode the foundation of trust essential to a functioning democracy, we should know that we cannot afford to take that risk. The consequences of such a scenario run the gamut from dire to dystopia. While it may be argued that my concerns are unlikely to manifest as we survived the past Trump Adminis-

tration, the stakes are much higher this time as former President Trump has made clear in his numerous rallies, speeches, and campaign promises that this time his rule will be calculated and unforgiving.

His own former cabinet members have almost all come out against him as a clear and present danger to the future of our democracy and the values set forth in our constitution. Finally, the media is no longer the trusted bulwark against authoritarianism and misinformation. Just witness the fact that the LA Times and Washington Post both unilat-



Krizek

erally decided for the first time in decades to not endorse a candidate in the race at the risk of angering a second term President Trump.

What undergirds our American democracy is our system of checks and balances, which ensures that the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government act as restraints on each other. Should Trump attempt to bypass or dismantle these checks, as he has promised in his pronouncements of using the military to go after his domestic enemies, and to “terminate” the constitution that the American

people would elect him to take an oath to preserve, protect and defend, Americans might witness a consolidation of executive power unprecedented in modern history. Such changes could include purging agencies of civil servants deemed disloyal, increasing political control over the Department of Justice, and expanding the use of executive orders to circumvent Congress, to name a few. Weakening these democratic guardrails would give the executive branch unprecedented reach, raising serious concerns about government accountability and oversight.

Moreover, if the administration seeks to influence the judiciary by

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Police Fatally Shoot Woman During Welfare Check

FROM PAGE 4

shows Wilson opening the door at 10:14:16, closing it, and opening it again at 10:17:05 while holding a knife in her right hand. Liu retreats backward into a dead-end hallway and against an apartment door as Wilson advances toward him, slashing with her knife. Liu tells Wilson to “back away” multiple times. Liu fires his gun five times. The police narrator on the video reports that Wilson sustains three gunshot strikes.

The 25-minute press conference, which included a transcript, featured five minutes of Officer Involved Shooting (OIS) body-worn camera footage from multiple officers, followed by remarks from Chief Davis and a Q&A session with the media.

The department showed the body-worn camera (BWC) footage during the first five minutes of the 25-minute press conference. “A crisis intervention-trained officer was the first on the scene at approximately 10:07 a.m.,” says the narrator. Officer Liu knocks on the door, and Wilson answers. (0:57-1:07) After Liu identifies himself, Wilson closes the door and places her phone next to it, playing music that is audible on video. According to the narrator, Liu continues to knock for 2 minutes and 45 seconds, explaining that he wants to check Wilson’s welfare. Wilson returns and opens the door (2:16). Liu asks, “How are you?” (2:17), and Wilson brandishes a knife, slashing it (2:17) at Liu.

“Oh, Jesus Christ. Oh, Jesus Christ,” (2:18) Liu says, retreating backward down the hallway and calling out, “Back up. Back up,”

several times. According to the video’s narrator, Liu is trying to de-escalate the situation by giving verbal commands and retreating. Liu has backed into a dead-end hallway against a closed apartment door. Wilson moves toward Liu (2:42). Liu attempts to reposition himself away as Wilson attacks, striking him with the knife. Liu discharges his firearm (2:42-2:51). The video captures the sound of five pops. The narrator says, “[The officer] discharged his firearm, striking Wilson three times.”

Liu calls in on his radio. “531 Bravo. Signal. Shots fired.” (3:12-3:22) Blood begins to drip down on Liu’s hand. (3:22-.3:40) Bleeding increases. “Start medic, please. The suspect’s, the suspect’s down. I need medical, too,” Liu says. (3:41-3:52) The video shows the blood increasing, dripping to the floor. Liu drops his radio. “Units en route,” says the dispatcher. (3:53)

Additional officers arrive ahead of Fairfax County Fire and Rescue. One of them is a plain-clothes detective, identified later by Davis as a sergeant. The detective asks if anyone has gloves. No one does. Despite not having gloves, the detective begins CPR on Wilson, who can be seen blurred on the video. Liu sits on the hallway floor, feet away from Wilson, receiving aid. The video shows the detective continuing CPR on Wilson. Fairfax County Fire and Rescue transported Wilson to a nearby hospital, where they pronounced her deceased. Liu is transported to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Chief Kevin Davis said that during the press conference, Liu attempted to retreat from the sit-

uation and alter its outcome. “But he was just in a no-win position, and his life was being threatened.” Liu arrived at Wilson’s residence after a mental health professional reported that Wilson was in an “agitated state,” and asked police to conduct a welfare check on her. Davis said a mental health counselor did not join Liu on the welfare check. The mental health team was on another call for service. He added that Liu had received crisis intervention training.

Davis made remarks from 5:06 to 15:56 and answered questions from 15:57 to 25:34. Davis said, “You saw the body-worn camera footage ... The second time she came to the door, she immediately attacked and slashed our police officer. It could have been much, much worse.” Davis explained that the officer did what the department trained and expected him to do when threatened. “If you can tactically reposition yourself, you do it. If you can use distance, use it. If you can seek cover and concealment, seek it. All those options weren’t available to him,” Davis said.

“I believe personally and based on my training and everything I’ve seen and my knowledge of how our co-responder teams operate and the proximity of our clinicians with our officers when they’re dealing with people who are in a crisis, a co-responder would have found herself or himself in a very dangerous position when this woman came to the door the second time,” Davis said.

Davis said that he believed the call for service was appropriately dispatched to a police officer with the training and experience to han-

dle it effectively. “I believe he was doing his very best to communicate with this woman before she came to the door a second time with a knife,” Davis said. According to Davis, the county employs a co-responder program, with clinicians accompanying officers to mental health crisis calls and responding to over 2,200 calls in 2024.

Davis expressed condolences to the family of Sydney Wilson. “Any loss of life is something that we all mourn, and the person whose life was lost in this particular case is no different. She has a family and friends and loved ones who love her very much who care about her and undoubtedly are grieving and upset; we acknowledge that.”

Davis discussed the department’s CIT training. According to Virginia’s standard, a police department should have 29 percent of its officers trained in CIT. “In Fairfax County, we have 59 percent of our sworn police officers who are CIT trained ... Between September 2023 and September 2024, we responded to 3,252 checks on the welfare type calls for service, so it is a routinely dispatched call for service in Fairfax County.”

“I am very grateful that our police officer is recovering, alive, and available to still do this very difficult job and under very difficult circumstances. I believe he did an excellent job,” Davis said.

Assigned to the Reston Police District, PFC Liu is currently on restricted-duty status, awaiting the outcome of the criminal and administrative investigations. The press conference is available for viewing at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=r1SiDfkl0qI>.

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Supreme Court OKs Virginia Voter Purge

Wednesday morning Oct. 30, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled lower court rulings; the Supreme Court action allows Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R-VA) to move forward with a voter purge that will impact Election Day Nov. 5.

“Despite clear law and undisputed evidence that the program removes eligible U.S. citizens from the rolls, the Supreme Court overturned two carefully reasoned federal court rulings in our lawsuit challenging Virginia’s illegal voter-purge program,” said Aaron Baird, spokesperson for Protect Democracy.

As a result, Virginia will not have to reinstate purged eligible voters.

“We know this program removes eligible voters,” Baird said. “Virginia has not presented any evidence of noncitizens participating in elections. Because there is none. And it’s actually eligible Virginia voters that have been caught in the middle of this election-subversion scheme.”

This includes people like Nadra Wilson, and other eligible voters removed in the purge. “I was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. — I’m a citizen,” Wilson said in an interview with NPR.

Protect Democracy is a nonpartisan group dedicated to preventing democratic decline in the U.S.

On Oct. 7, 2024, Protect Democracy — with plaintiffs the League of Women Voters and the Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights, and co-counsel the Campaign Legal Center, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and the Advancement Project — sued in response to Youngkin’s Executive Order 35, which created a voter purge program of alleged noncitizens.

A district court ruled that Virginia violated federal law and had to reinstate all 1,600 illegally-purged voters, and the Fourth Circuit denied an emergency stay pending appeal.

The order also said the state could still remove noncitizens through individualized review.

These last-minute purges make it harder for citizens to vote. In Virginia, many of the individuals who have been removed from the rolls are eligible voters who were born and raised in the United States, according to the coalition. The same is true in other states.

In the earlier round of this legal challenge, the Virginia Coalition of Immigrant Rights, the League of Women Voters of Virginia and African Communities Together successfully defended naturalized Americans and other citizens who were unfairly targeted in Virginia’s illegal and last-minute purge of voter rolls.

On Friday, Oct. 25, a judge ruled to temporarily halt the program and put purged voters back on the rolls. The plaintiffs are represented by Campaign Legal Center, Protect Democracy Project, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and Advancement Project.

On Sunday the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the Friday ruling.

“It should never be illegal to remove an illegal voter,” said Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares. “Yet, today a Court ... ordered Virginia to put the names of non-citizens back on the voter rolls, mere days before a presidential election.” The order said the state could remove noncitizens through individualized review.

“Last-minute voter purges not only violate the law but also un-

dermine the core principles of our democracy, especially when they are premised on xenophobic lies,” said Celina Stewart, CEO of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly wrote to Gov. Glenn Youngkin on Oct. 7, demanding a stop to the purge. “Given the potential for errors in

systematic voter purges, the rapid pace of the ongoing purges required by Executive Order 35, and the proximity to Election Day, the Commonwealth must cease any voter purging activities that violate federal law,” Connolly said, also notifying the Justice Department of the issues.

— MARY KIMM

If any voters have questions, call the Election Protection Hotline:

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League’s programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn

more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

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

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries,

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10

HALLOWEEN

Wait, Halloween Didn't Originate in the U.S.?

Born of telling tales and rooted facts as seen in Fairfax County, Va

BY MERCIA HOBSON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Pumpkins are everywhere as the leaves fall and the cool air settles in. They loom large at farmers' markets and overflow down porch steps. Some display eerie features, illuminated and sculpted. Halloween night in the United States is spooky fun for all ages, grounded in traditions transcending time, cultures, and continents.

The Connection reached out to community members to reminisce as they looked back on their Halloweens as a youth. Could any of them explain why a fruit, the pumpkin, is an integral component of American Halloween and why we carve them into Jack-o'-lanterns? And how did Halloween become an American tradition?

On Friday, Oct. 25, U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly paused while in Europe serving as president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to share his best childhood Halloween experience with us. "One year as a kid, the Cub Scouts were having a Halloween costume contest. I had nothing with which to buy an outfit, and I absolutely had no ideas. My Irish grandmother arrived to save the day," said Connolly. "She was a gifted seamstress, and she designed and stitched a surgeon's gown, cap, and gloves for my costume — all in a matter of a few hours. My mother was a nurse and loaned me a stethoscope. I won first prize that night."

The Malone family owns The Old Irish Brogue Pub in Great Falls. Colin Malone said he grew up in Philomont, Virginia, as did his wife, Carleigh. The small village, then more rural than now, is in western Loudoun County. "Everyone would meet at the community center for apple bobbing and other games," he said. Due to the distance between the farms, the children would take hay rides to reach their trick-or-treating destinations. "A tractor would take us kids to all the farms," Malone recalled.

Bob Matthews and Colleen Delawder own The Historic Herndon Halloween House at 610 Spring Street. The couple aims to make the Town of Herndon known as Virginia's #1 Halloween town. This year, there is a contest with awards for the best-decorated Halloween homes in the town.

Matthews is the gruntman behind this year's impressive Space Alien-themed display. On the evening of Sunday, Oct. 27, Matthews shared that his most memorable childhood Halloween experience occurred when he was a St. Paul VI Catholic High School student. "That is when I helped friends create an elaborate in-home basement haunt for Halloween each year," he recalled.

Aal, Natasha, Donna and Greg are four adults who visited the Historic Herndon Halloween House that evening. When questioned if they knew the origins of the American Halloween, they had no clue: "I have no idea; I don't know," they said.

A week earlier, Karen Rosenberg in Great Falls said she believed there was a connection between the American Halloween and the witches of Salem, Massachusetts. "I saw that in a movie, but I'm from Belgium. We don't really celebrate Halloween."



Kid friendly, The Beastro at Queens Row, 415 Queens Row, Herndon



"Space Aliens" invade the Town of Herndon for Halloween, landing at 610 Spring Street.



The Beastro at Queens Row, 415 Queens Row, Herndon

tion between the American Halloween and the witches of Salem, Massachusetts. "I saw that in a movie, but I'm from Belgium. We don't really celebrate Halloween."

Gabriel Ahrens, 11, in Great Falls for the day, said Halloween came to be because "there was an Anglo-Saxon tribe that did rituals to prevent evil spirits from coming into their houses."

Delawder is the creative force behind the yearly designs of The Historic Herndon Halloween House. With such Halloween dis-

plays, she knows the holiday's origins and how the American celebration of Halloween came to be.

"As a person of Scottish descent, the Celtic end-of-summer festival of Samhain (in Scottish Gaelic, Samhain is pronounced Sah-vin), from which Halloween originates, can be seen each year in our display with our Scottish Clan Skeleton Army, which is most often featured in the graveyard section ... Oct. 31 is when the worlds of the living and the dead become blurry, and the ghosts of the dead



It's pumpkin mania, eerie skeletons and a slightly frightening burnt-out bus at the local pumpkin patch.



The Historic Herndon Halloween House, at 610 Spring Street, Herndon, is celebrating its 20th year with "Space Aliens."

can return to earth," Delawder said.

Since the Celtic day started and ended at sunset, the celebration began on the evening of Oct. 31. The Celts lit towering bonfires and adorned themselves in animal skins to blend in or scare away the wandering spirits and fairies. According to The Celtic Roots of Halloween, "Samhain continued despite the coming of Christianity. Nov. 1 became known as All Saints Day, while the night before, Oct. 31, was Eve of All Saints' Day or All Hallow's Eve — now better known around the world

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



All sorts of creatures, scary and adorable, are making their appearance on area lawns, like these seen annually on a corner of Hooes Road, Springfield



Some ghouls on Houndmaster Road, Springfield, reach 2nd story heights of scary, leading one adult passer-by to comment, "I'm not scared to walk by ... during the day."

Trick or Treat?

Candy treats for kids who brave the path through seasonal ghouls.

BY SUSAN LAUME
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

When the kids step out of the door in costume on Halloween with their treat buckets in hand, you can be sure they won't be planning to offer prayers in exchange for candy at the houses they visit. No doubt they have never heard that trick-or-treating developed from the practice of "souling" in medieval Britain, where poor people went door to door on All Saints' Day saying prayers for the dead in exchange for food. It was typically a small round cake that was given. And today's parents following their children from house to house are watchful for modern day hazards, including cars and nefarious candy additions, not the Celtic fear of blurred boundary between the living and dead and harmful spirits that were thought to roam the earth at this harvest time of year.

Over time, these early rituals have morphed into the fun, non-religious activity where children dress up to visit houses to receive candy.

Decorating for Halloween gained popularity in



Workhouse Arts Center's creepy outdoor haunted trail, Haunt 2024: Twisted Tales of Terror, provides a frightening journey with gruesome characters around every corner for a proper fright.

the United States in the early 20th century. At first it was Halloween parties and haunted houses that became common in the 1920s and '30s. Outdoor decorations, like jack-o'-lanterns and spooky themed yard displays became widespread in the 1950s and 60s. Now the trend has escalated, with many homes adorned with skeletons, gravestones, blow-up ghouls and elaborate light displays.



Most area children in search of candy treats are brave enough to pass temporary graveyards, like on this one on Falling Leaf St, Springfield.

as Hallowe'en," wrote Norry Wilson at Scotland.org.

Delawder said that the American version of this holiday became popular in the mid-1800s when many Irish immigrants came to the United States during the potato famine. In Ireland, people had light inside their homes from fireplaces. However, when they traveled by foot from one place to another, they carried torches to illuminate their way for extended travel. Still, for short walks, they made lanterns made from small vegetables, like the plentiful turnips. They scooped out the inside of the turnip, carved it with holes for airflow, and placed small, burning

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coals inside it from their fireplaces, providing some illumination as they walked.

Pumpkin carving and Halloween are two traditions that have a rich history, cultural value, and old mythology that go hand in hand. Pumpkin carving was inspired by a multi-variation of Irish folklore about an Irish drinker, Stingy Jack, who deceived the Devil. Neither the Devil nor Heaven wanted Jack's soul when he died. The Devil sent Jack off to roam the night with a burning coal to light his way. Hollowing out a turnip, Jack put the coal inside it and became known as Jack of the Lantern, shortened to "Jack O'Lantern."

Irish immigrants brought this folklore to

America. They discovered that pumpkins grew well and worked for carving. The tradition of carving faces into pumpkins was born and symbolized the souls trapped between worlds.

"The celebration of Halloween continues to change and evolve each year," Delawder said. "Jack O'Lanterns and bobbing for apples are quickly replaced with twelve-foot skeletons and elaborate animatronic characters. "However, as a household that now has over 800 children visiting each Oct. 31, the one thing that hasn't changed through the years is the excitement of children receiving candy as they trick-or-treat each Halloween night,"

she said.

The Town of Herndon's cultivating community group has partnered with The Historic Herndon Halloween House at 610 Spring Street and The Beastro at Queens Row, 415 Queens Row, Herndon, to sponsor a townwide Halloween theme of "Space Aliens." Keven Leblanc co-chairs the community group. "We are judging homes in three categories: Most Creative, Kid-Friendliest, and Spookiest. The two heavily Halloween homes, Historic Halloween House and Beastro are helping us advertise and vote. We will give a gift card and recognize the winning homes," LeBlanc said.

MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE ♦ OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 6, 2024 ♦ 7

ENTERTAINMENT

ONGOING

Alexandria Ghost Tours and Haunted Pub Crawls

Alexandria Ghosts offers guided ghost tours and adults-only haunted pub crawls nightly that highlight the city's dark history and unique local lore highlighting Alexandria's haunted history. The tours feature stories from historic sites and iconic locations like the Carlyle House, Ramsey House, and the infamous Wilkes Tunnel. Each experience transports you to the city's eerie past, a time before it was a trendy place to live, work, and play. Alexandria has a tragic history so disturbing it's often hidden from tourists who descend upon the city daily.

The Four Terrifying Tour Experiences of Alexandria Ghosts:

1. Alexandria Ghosts: Phantoms of the Potomac: Explore Alexandria's haunted history as you follow in the ghostly footsteps of George Washington and other restless spirits in this colonial city.
 2. Alexandria Ghosts Boos and Booze Haunted Pub Crawl: Combine history, hauntings, and a lively pub crawl in Alexandria's haunted bars.
 3. Alexandria Ghosts Ultimate Dead of Night Haunted Ghost Tour: A deep dive into Alexandria's eerie past, from Native American history to Civil War hauntings.
- ❖ Meeting Locations: 323 Cameron St, Alexandria, VA 22314 (Phantoms of the Potomac); 138 N Royal St, Alexandria, VA 22314 (Pub Crawl & Ultimate Dead of Night Tour); 301 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (Washington's Footsteps). Visit <https://alexandriaghosts.com>.

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

Tours Aboard Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner Maritime Heritage Center. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Alexandria's Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. Guests of all ages are recruited into the Continental Navy aboard Tall Ship Providence with legendary Captain John Paul Jones. Recruits are assigned jobs on the ship, learn



Alexandria Ghost Tours and Haunted Pub Crawls have started at various locations in Old Town Alexandria.

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/>

GROW WITH YOUR GARDEN AT GREEN SPRING GARDEN TALKS

The Park Authority is here to help gardeners this fall with a plant-tastic lineup of Green Spring Garden Talks, 4603 Green Spring Road in Alexandria. Learn some tips and techniques that will spruce up your plants and other "soil-mates" with the help from fellow gardeners, VCE Master Gardeners and naturalists. All events are held at Green Spring Gardens and are \$12 per person. Additional fees apply for out-of-county residents.

Composting Made Simple. Friday, Nov. 8, 1:30-2:30 p.m. Learn the value that comes with putting compost into your yard and garden instead of your trashcan.

Adapt & Thrive with Climate Change. Saturday, Nov. 16, 10:30-11:30

a.m. Extension Master Gardeners share ways to adapt your garden practices to changing climate patterns through plant selection, water management and more!

OCT. 24 TO DEC. 21

"A Focus on Nature." At Coldwell Banker Realty, 310 King Street, Alexandria. Opening reception Oct. 24 from 6-7:30 p.m. Art exhibit featuring the nature-themed photographs of Steven Halperson and mosaics of Nina Tisara. Steven Halperson, Tisara Photography, has over 30 years' experience in portrait and event photography. For this exhibit, he is returning to his roots in fine art photography and making use of digital camera software to create strikingly beautiful images. Nina Tisara retired from the photography studio in 2007 and began creating intricate mosaics which are now widely exhibited and collected. Nina is the founder of Living Legends of Alexandria. A portion of all sales will be donated to the Coldwell Banker Realty Cares Foundation, a program that helps support selected nonprofits in Alexandria and throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. For additional



"A Focus on Nature" can be seen Oct. 24 to Dec. 21, 2024 at Coldwell Banker Realty in Alexandria.

information, contact Rachel Carter, RCarter@cbmove.com or Nina Tisara, Ninat@ninatisara.com.

NOV. 1 TO DEC. 1

Del Ray Artisans "\$100 & Under" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Showcases members' artwork all priced at \$100 or less. The art is sold on an art-to-go basis. The gallery walls are packed with great art at prices all art-lovers can afford. Opening Reception: Friday, November 1, 7-9pm. Open Thursdays 12-6pm, Fridays 12-9pm, Saturdays & Sundays 12-6pm. Closed Thanksgiving Day. Details: DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

SATURDAY/NOV. 2

Forest Bathing. 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Ave., Alexandria. Forest Bathing, also known as Forest Therapy, is a slow, mindful immersion in nature. During a two and a half hour period, we move through the Forest and con-

nect with the environment using all of our senses. This practice is deeply grounding and has many health benefits. The total distance traveled is often less than a mile. Forest Bathing is not a hike, and it is not a plant identification walk. Leading the session will be Emily Hampton, an Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs (ANFT) certified guide. She is a graduate of Stanford University and a 23 year veteran of the U.S. Navy. Emily is also a certified yoga teacher and Nidra meditation teacher. Cost: \$30.

SATURDAY/NOV. 2

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

ENTERTAINMENT EXTRA

FAMILY SKATE AND DANCE NIGHT

This fall, the Family Skate and Dance Nights at Franconia Rec Center will feature a lively schedule. Skaters of all ages will enjoy the festive themes, tasty food and fun music of these skate nights hosted by the Fairfax County Park Authority.

Join the fun and break out your quad skates, inline skates or dancing shoes (bring your own skates/footwear) and take a spin around Franconia Rec Center's gym floor. Each skate night includes music from a guest DJ, as well as food, snacks and drinks available for purchase (Please note that outside food/drink not permitted). Tickets for everyone (skaters, dancers, spectators and chaperones) cost \$10 and can be purchased in advance online. Or you buy them at the door for \$15.

Nov. 16: Franconia Hold 'Em Skate and Dance Night (Country Night) (6-9 p.m.)

Dec. 21: Holiday and Ugly Sweater Skate and Dance Night (6-9 p.m.)

UNTIL NOV. 2

Workhouse Haunt: Twisted Tales of Terror. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, plus Halloween night. Gates open at 6:30 p.m. Back for its 11th season, one of Northern Virginia's most popular Halloween events is bringing even more scares (and laughter) to its creepy outdoor walk-through trail. The Haunt will lead guests on a frightening journey that brings them along the abandoned, historic buildings of the former prison, where they will encounter terrifying characters and sights and sounds that are not for the faint of heart. This year's theme, Twisted Tales of Terror, features more than a dozen creepy live-action scenes portraying classic fairy tales gone wrong, including Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, Pinocchio and more. To keep everything moving along, guests will travel in small groups via a timed entry. While waiting for their timeslots, or following



The Workhouse Haunt: Twisted Tales of Terror takes place thru Nov. 2, 2024 at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

their trail experience, guests can enjoy Halloween fun in the Rizer Pavilion: DJ-mixed music (Fridays, Saturdays, and Halloween Night); refreshments at the bar,



BLACK COMMUNITIES of FAIRFAX

A History



The Burke Historical Society will discuss the book, Black Communities of Fairfax: A History, on Sunday, Oct. 27, 2024 at Pohick Regional Library in Burke.

including Halloween-themed alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks; sweet and savory food

truck treats; and Halloween art and trinkets in the Haunt Pop-up Shop. Tickets are on sale now; prices start at \$25 per person. Visit www.workhousearts.org for schedule and event details.

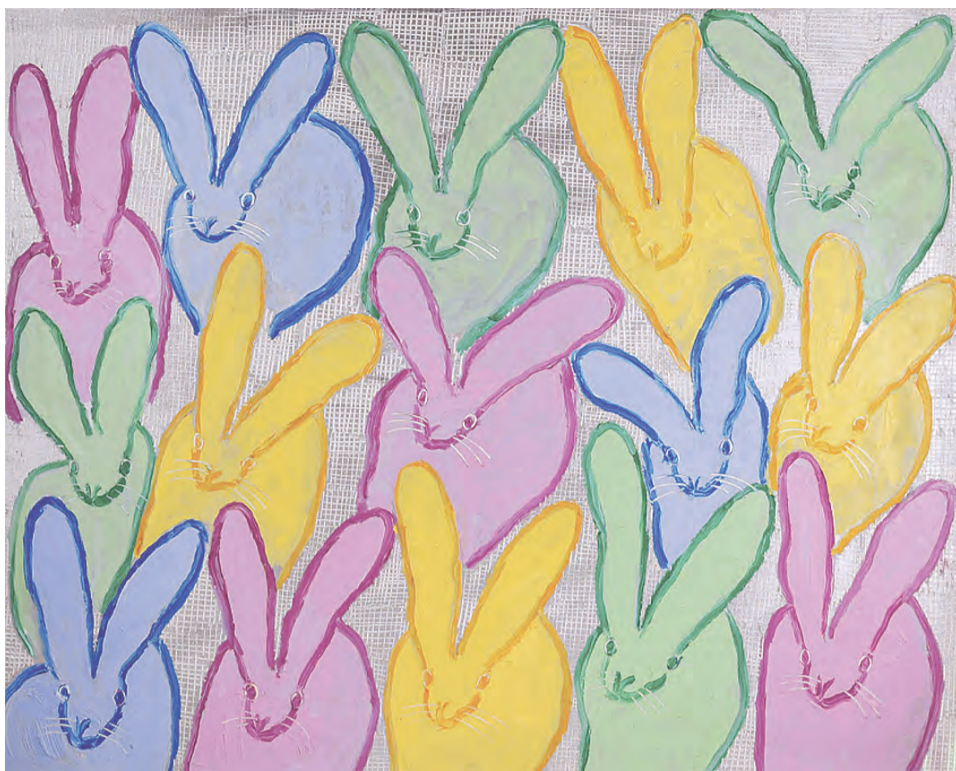
SUNDAY/NOV. 3

Venture Into Volunteering. 12-4 p.m. At Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield. Attend this annual event to meet representatives from various nonprofits and local government agencies who will tell you about ways to volunteer in the community and answer your questions. Visit the website: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/volunteer-solutions/volunteer-fair>

SATURDAY/NOV. 9

Fall Civil War & Militaria Show and Sale. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Arlington-Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Books, relics and memorabilia from all wars. Admission is \$5 per person. Vendors welcome.

ENTERTAINMENT



The Nepenthe Gallery is offering original works by Hunt Slonem on Thursday, Nov. 7, 2024, in Alexandria.

backs. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

NOV. 3 AND NOV. 7-10
18th Annual Alexandria Film Festival. Featuring more than 60 films and 40 filmmakers at four venues. For the schedule, tickets, and passes, visit AlexFilmFest.com.

THURSDAY/NOV. 7
Nepenthe Gallery Exhibit. At 7918 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Nepenthe delights in offering original works by the renowned, devoted and whimsical artist Hunt Slonem. Slonem is celebrated around the world for his vibrant and joyful paintings of bunnies, birds, butterflies and beyond. Known for his distinct neo-expressionist style, Slonem blends Pop Art with expressionism and captures the magic and energy of the natural world. His works can be found in the permanent collections of more than 250 museums, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and New Orleans Museum of Art. Five new works will be unveiled and added to the current collection of original pieces by Slonem.

THURSDAY/NOV. 7
Evening of Perfect Pairings: Wine + Chocolate, Women + Business. 5:30-7 p.m. At Goodwin House Alexandria, 4800 Fillmore Ave., Alexandria. Presented by The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network. Join in an unforgettable night of curated wine and food pairings, networking, and celebration. Contact Maria Ciarrocchi at mciarrocchi@thechamberalx.com

SATURDAY/NOV. 9
Designing American Living. 3-4:30 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Hwy, Alexandria. Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House provide a unique opportunity to put two American styles of architecture – separated by over a century – in conversation with one another. Take a close look at both houses to examine what it was that the architects who built these homes were trying to convey about the people who lived here, the period they lived in, and what they thought the future held. Cost \$25 for adults, \$12 students (K-12). Website: <https://www.woodlawn-popeleighey.org/upcoming-events/2024/10/12/designing-american-living>

NOV. 15-23
"A Man for All Seasons." At Bishop Ireton High School, Garwood Whaley Auditorium, 201 Cambridge Road, Alexandria. It runs November 15, 16, 22 and 23 at 7 p.m., and November 17 at 2 p.m.

SATURDAY/NOV. 16
Celebrate Gum Springs' 191st Anniversary. 6-9 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon. Celebrate Gum Springs -- The oldest African American community in Fairfax County with Keynote Speaker Don Scott. Tickets \$125. Event host: The Gum Springs Historical Society and Museum and the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.

SATURDAY/NOV. 16
Alexandria Symphony Orchestra Presents Carmina Burana "Abound". 7:30 p.m. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall &

Arts Center. Featuring the Chorale and Youth Choir with Ingrid Lestrud, Artistic Director. Visit alexsym.org.

SATURDAY/NOV. 23
Alexandria Cider Festival. 1 to 5 p.m. At Lloyd House, 220 N. Washington St., Alexandria. Celebrate Virginia Cider Week with a special tasting event on the grounds of the historic Lloyd House in Old Town Alexandria. Event tickets include cider tastings, live music, a tasting glass and a little history, too. This event will take place outdoors. Proceeds benefit the historic Alexandria museums. Admission: \$50 (Presale through October 31); \$55 (November 1 to 22); \$65 (at the door); \$25 designated driver purchase.

SATURDAY/NOV. 23
The Good Folk Performs. 7 p.m. At Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church, 8531 Riverside Road, Alexandria. FocusMusic and WFMA present The Good Folk at Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church. The Good Folk, Meghan Mette, Eileen Estes, Joanna Clare, Sophie Chang, Agi Kovacs, and Patrick Winch, deliver powerful instrumentals, haunting vocals and three styles of percussive dance. Cost is \$25 in advance (members \$22.50) / \$30 at door (members \$25) Virtual Tickets: \$15 (\$13.50 for members. Info at <https://focusmusic.org/shows#sat-11-23-the-good-folk-alexandria-and-virtual>

TUESDAY/DEC. 3
Yoga Nidra. 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. Experience Pope-Leighey

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 11



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BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 5

and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org. Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive. RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org. Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed. To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, brianmorreale@gmail.com

SUPPORT GROUPS

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at suzjdoyle@gmail.com or 571-403-0673. The Parkinson's Disease Support Group of Alexandria meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. At the Hollin Hall Senior Center, Room 109, 1500 Shenandoah Road. All Parkinson's patients and caregivers are welcome. FACE Center Support Groups provide parents with a space to share their daily parenting frustrations and triumphs while offering new strategies for helping parents to cope, build positive parent-child relationships and best support their children's learning.

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

Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free. Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us for more. Divorce Workshop for Women. Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King St. The workshops are designed to provide education on the legal, financial, family and personal issues of divorce in a logical, yet compassionate way. The workshop fee is \$25. Visit www.novasecond-saturday.com for more.

ONGOING

Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assis-
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Vote for Democracy

FROM PAGE 4

pressuring judges or dismissing unfavorable court rulings, the judiciary's role as an impartial interpreter of the law would be undermined. This erosion of judicial independence would risk turning the courts into tools of political maneuvering rather than impartial protectors of the Constitution. Americans may face a judiciary increasingly perceived as politicized, challenging their ability to trust it as a fair arbiter in disputes.

Trump's divisive style of governance, coupled with his policies that severely restrict and even demonize immigration, impose censorship, and threaten to jail his opponents, would deepen ideological divides and fuel domestic unrest. Social tensions, already on high alert, would escalate further as policies stoke conflicts over racial, social, and economic issues. Aggressive immigration enforcement, restrictions on LGBTQ+ rights, undermining the legal electoral process, policing healthcare decisions, and attempts to curb social protest movements would be seen by many Americans as attacks on civil rights, leading to large-scale

protests, boycotts, and other forms of resistance. This could lead to more frightening instances of political violence. The result may be a more fractured society, where people are increasingly unable to find common ground or engage in productive civic discourse. It is already difficult to debate in the public square without people attacking the messenger rather than the message.

Amplified social tensions could lead to a profound erosion of trust in American institutions. With executive overreach and a politicized judiciary, many Americans may decide that the government no longer represents or protects their interests. Trust in public institutions is a cornerstone of democratic stability; when citizens doubt the government's impartiality, they are less likely to participate in the democratic process, follow laws, or feel secure.

All of these factors together would make bipartisan governance exceedingly difficult. With political polarization at unprecedented levels, any future efforts to govern in a balanced, collaborative way as I try to do here in the Virginia General Assembly would face

significant hurdles. Parties that view each other as enemies rather than opponents are less likely to compromise, potentially leading to more government stalemates and gridlock. Consequently, Americans might see their government become less responsive to extremely pressing issues that matter to them, including the economy, environmental concerns, and international relations.

A Trump presidency characterized by weakened checks and balances and heightened domestic tensions would present significant risks to America's democratic system, social cohesion, and public trust. Without the stabilizing forces of an independent and free press, fair and impartial judicial oversight, and a commitment to bipartisan dialogue, the United States would face a turbulent period where governance becomes unpredictable and society grows increasingly divided, even more so than it is now. For all of us as fellow Americans, these potential developments should be a sobering reminder of the fragility of democratic institutions and the importance of protecting them to ensure a stable and inclusive society.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 9

House in a unique way through Yoga Nidra, a type of guided meditation that allows participants to achieve deeper states of relaxation. Cost: \$25. Visit the website: <https://www.woodlawnpop-leighy.org/upcoming-events/2024/12/3/yoga-nidra>

DEC. 6-22

29th Annual Holiday Market. At 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Del Ray Artisans 29th Annual Holiday Market offers unique handmade fine arts and

crafts from local artists. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and much more! Plus 2025 wall calendars support Del Ray Artisans non-profit. Free admission. Holiday Market is the first three weekends in December (Dec 6-8, Dec 13-15, Dec 20-22). Different artists each weekend! Open Fridays 6-9 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Details: DelRayArtisans.org/holiday-market-2024

THE BIRCHMERE

At **3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria.** All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

NOVEMBER

Fri. 1: The SteelDrivers w/ Wood Box Heroes \$55.00 **SOLD OUT!**
Sat. 2: The SteelDrivers \$55.00 **SOLD OUT!**
Sun. 3: Sixpence None The Richer w/ Dawn Landes \$35.00
Tue. 5: Gaelic Storm \$55.00
Thu. 7: The Hot Sardines \$45.00
Fri. 8: Jeffrey Osborne \$99.50 **SOLD OUT!**
Sat. 9: Jeffrey Osborne \$99.50 **SOLD OUT!**
Sun. 10: Jonathan Butler \$59.50 **SOLD OUT!**

Tue. 12: Bruce Cockburn \$49.50
Thu. 14: Mac McAnally \$79.50 **SOLD OUT!**

Fri. 15: After 7 \$79.50
Sat. 16: After 7 \$79.50
Sun. 17: Keiko Matsui \$55.00
Tue. 19: John Splithoff \$29.50
Wed. 20: Eric Benet \$79.50
Thu. 21: Ohio Players \$79.50
Fri. 22: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
Sat. 23: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
Sun. 24: Marshall Crenshaw w/ James Mastro \$35.00
Mon. 25: Girl Named Tom: The Joy of Christmas Tour \$55.00
Fri. 29: The Seldom Scene & Dry Branch Fire Squad \$45.00
Sat. 30: The Manhattans Featuring Gerald Alston \$65.00

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 10

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

Robust Walking. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 9 a.m. at Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701 Commonwealth Ave. Free 55+ robust walking 1-hour exercise class (with chair exercise option). No class on holidays. Contact jjkingconsulting@yahoo.com.

Seeking Donations. Computer CORE, which is dedicated to helping low-income adults become computer literate is seeking donations. Visit www.computercore.org/contribute.

Senior and Job Programs. 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Queen of Apostles Church, 4650 Taney Avenue, Alexandria. St. Martin de Porres Center offers senior and job placement programming Monday through Friday at the parish. Email Kathryn Toohey, ktoohey@ccda.net. Be Heard at the City's Monthly Public Hearings.

A schedule of the meetings can be found at www.alexandriava.gov. Voice opinions, speak about something on the docket or just speak about something you are concerned about. Sign up in advance to speak through the city's website. Anyone is welcome at any of the public hearings.

Public Space Recycling. Alexandria has placed more than 80 bright blue recycling containers next to public trash cans in the commercial districts along Mount Vernon Avenue and King Street, as well as other public spaces, including parks, recreation fields, and other high-traffic pedestrian areas. Visit alexandriava.gov/Recycling.

Composting and Food Waste. Alexandria now has Resource Recovery Stations, located at the City's Farmers' Markets (Old Town, Del Ray) to collect food waste. More than 270 people have participated in the food waste program over the last several months. Participants drop off items weekly, over eight tons of waste has been collected, to be composted to make a natural fertilizer. To learn more about composting visit alexandriava.gov/YardWaste.

English as a Second Language Class. Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, 5005 Duke St. Tuesdays and Thursdays, all levels 10 a.m.-12 p.m., intermediate workshop 3-5 p.m. All classes free. Call the information desk, 703-746-1702.

The Talking Book Service at Alexandria Library will now operate Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-3

p.m. Patrons may also reach the service at 703-746-1760.

Digital Magazines. Patrons of Alexandria Library will have unlimited access to read digital magazines, which can be viewed on most Internet-enabled devices inside or outside of the library. Accessible through www.rbdigital.com/alexandriava/zinio.

Eligible low income households can now use their SNAP benefits to buy local foods at the Old Town Farmers' Market. SNAP customers are able to use their electronic benefits transfer cards to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and other eligible food products at the market. The Old Town Farmer's Market is located at 301 King St., and is open on Saturdays, year round from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Opera NOVA has begun collection of used musical instruments. Any instruments welcomed, regardless of type. Snare drums, clarinets, and violins are just some of the instruments that could bring joy to a home or school. Any recorders donated will be sent to an orphanage in Haiti in order to build a musical presence there. Opera NOVA has tax-exempt status. Contact Miriam Miller at 703-536-7557 or mcdm1@verizon.net to arrange for delivery.

The Military Officers Association of America's scholarship fund gives out loans and grants to children of military families. To learn more, apply or donate visit www.moaa.org/scholarshipfund.

Now That's What I'm Talking About



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

"Double Chocolate Chip Bagels." How long do you think it took me to grab that item off the shelf? We'll just say, "not long," and leave it at that. You regular readers, especially those from the last few weeks when I've immersed you all in my Entenmann's Bakery issues, probably know. I love "chocolot." Rarely do I "chocolittle." It's likely that I eat more chocolate in a day than any of you eat in a week - or maybe a month. Let me clarify, I don't simply eat chocolate, like a normal person might. I consume chocolate. As in once I get started; unwrap a candy bar, tear open a bag, rip the top off a cardboard box or unseal a pint of ice cream, I'll finish what I start.

Though my regular chocolate items dominate my purchasing tendencies, I am not above scanning the supermarket shelves looking for a new candidate to satisfy my cravings. I must be honest here about my chocolate consumption: I'm the kind of customer who can make a product profitable and keep the production lines moving. If this were baseball, I'd be your number four/clean-up (pun intended) hitter. I can do more damage to a bowl of Halloween candy, brimming with bite-size favorites for trick or treaters than any group of elementary school kids dressed in costumes - or not, could possibly imagine.

Nor could I imagine that I would unexpectedly find in my local Walmart, this combination of bread and chocolate together as a gourmet bagel. (After all, it was on the top shelf.) In addition to this gourmet chocolate fantasy item, one shelf below were the regular bagels. And in the bread pecking order, for me anyway, bagels are at the top. Combined with chocolate, this purchase was the definition of a no-brainer.

One of my earliest memories in life (aged four or less) was accompanying my father to buy bagels at a man's house in Dorchester, Ma. I remember waiting in a line as we snaked through this hallway to where one of those half doorways was open at its top half. Ten feet or so beyond this door was a man scooping out bagels or something. My father said something, and we got a bag of bagels. Sometimes, when those bagels were still warm, my father would hand me one to eat on the way home. To this day, if I buy a dozen bagels, I always feel around the bag. If there's a warm bagel in there, I'm eating it - in my late father's memory. And what a memory it is. I can't recall if there was a double chocolate chip bagel in the bag. Hardly. The bagels were usually egg, plain, poppy, and maybe an occasional pumpernickel.

But now I know, the varieties have evolved. I thought a blueberry bagel was pushing the bagel envelope. But now, a chocolate variety has been added. And oh, what a addition. It's the greatest pairing since Reese's paired peanut butter with chocolate, a combination known worldwide as Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. The first candy bar to be selected for a place in the candy Mt. Rushmore. Likely future candidates are the Hershey's kisses - now that they've created the technology to fill the kisses with all sorts of goodies, the Mars confectioner for all its iconic candies, especially the M&Ms, and lastly, whomever decided to try combining chocolate and caramel in the same bar (Milton Hershey maybe). I could go on, but I think you get the picture. Chocolate and bagels are both extremely important to me. They're staples of my diet/existence. But I digress.

Having lived 70-plus years, one would have thought chocolate and bagels would have been combined before. Maybe they have. But not to me. This item is a first for me. I didn't anticipate this marriage of bagels and chocolate. Sure, I've eaten pastry and croissants that married the two, but bagels were never involved. And I never even wondered why. I just ate my bagel and cream cheese - with American cheese, like always. Now I know. Better late than never. Don't worry, I'll make up for lost time.

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

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"From start to finish, Chris white and team provide exceptional service and value. I retained this agency to sell my existing home in Mt. Vernon and represent me in the purchase of another home in Springfield. Their marketing acumen and process is top notch, my house showed exceptionally well thanks in large part to their process and the team of pros that work alongside them. I achieved a sale within a few days above my initial target price. My home, built in 1960, although in great condition, had several inspection items that needed to be addressed. Chris's team negotiated our response adroitly and expedited the addressing of the issues with fast, reasonable contractors. The team stayed in touch via email, text and telephone and I always knew that an answer to a question was at the ready. On the buyer's side, the team's negotiation acumen is responsible for enabling our family to secure a house in an amazing neighborhood that has a very specific feature set, including a move-in ready accessible addition for an elderly family member. Due to Chris's experience and the team's grasp on the market, we were able to close the deal prior to other potential buyers initiating a bidding war which surely would have priced us out of the market. When our buyers couldn't close on the target date, Chris worked with the title companies to ensure that the slippage did not endanger our purchase closing. Chris's referral network of contractors provide great value as well. The team is professional, offering sober advice while being some of the nicest folks you're going to deal with in this business. I never thought I'd say this about a realtor, but these folks really earned every dollar they made. Chris and the team played a huge role in helping us make a profound and positive life change." -Mclean Family



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