



Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

NOVEMBER 21, 2024

U.S. Air Force Opens Recruiting Office in Mount Vernon

Military service can provide training and skills to recent high school graduates.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

The United States Air Force got a foothold in the Mount Vernon area recently when they cut the ribbon on a recruiting office at 7828 Richmond Highway in the Gum Springs area.

The location of the recruiting office is across Richmond Highway from the Gum Springs community. This could provide high school students in that area a military opportunity when they get out of school and could be seen as be another option in career development, along with the WISH center that opened a few years ago in a for-



Military recruiting comes to a growing part of Mount Vernon. Air Force Recruiting Office, 7828 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22306

mer racquet club building around the corner.

The nearby WISH center is in the old Mount Vernon Tennis and Racquet Club building. WISH stands for the Workforce Innovation Skills Hub that offers training in industries that pay better than many retail and service-based jobs offered in the Richmond Highway corridor.

This Air Force recruiting facility is in the Franconia District where Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Fran-



The ribbon cutting at the 317th Air Force Squadron Recruiting Office on Thursday, Nov. 14.

conia) is leading the way to provide career advancement training for the area residents. Lusk is supportive of the WISH career center and the career center in the old Mount Vernon High School.

"One of my top priorities since taking office has been to provide

young adults in the Franconia District with alternative pathways to success after high school. Military service can be an excellent opportunity for public service, education, and career development, and I believe an Air Force recruitment center on the Richmond Highway

Corridor will help provide those opportunities," he said.

The ribbon cutting was chaired by the Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce and featured Lt. Col. Adrian Zollinger of the USAF 317th Recruiting Squadron, along with other Air Force officials.

All Fairfax County Ballots Fully Reported

Virginia saw its lowest overall voter turnout, just over 69 percent, in a presidential election since 2000 at the Nov. 5, 2024 General and Special Elections. Voter turnout is calculated by dividing the number of ballots cast by the number of registered voters.

Fairfax County pushed above the overall voter turnout, with a reported 71 percent from the locality according to the unofficial results from the Virginia Department of Elections on Thursday, Nov. 14, joining Fairfax City with 72 percent voter turnout and Falls Church City with 76 percent.

According to the unofficial results for Fairfax County, 100 percent of precincts reporting and all incoming ballots "fully reported,"

meaning ballots by early voting, election day, mailed, absentee, provisional, and post-election. Voter turnout in Fairfax County was 592,480 ballots cast by the 835,290 registered voters. Local office results become official after the locality's Electoral Board certifies the results.

Fairfax County Results

President and Vice President

Kamala Harris (D) won with 386,438 votes over Donald J. Trump (R) with 181,895 votes. Fairfax County votes only reported here.

Member, United States Senate

Timothy M. Kaine (D) won with 393,906

votes over Hung Cao (R) with 186,266 votes. Fairfax County votes only reported here.

Member House of Representatives (11th District)

Gerald E. "Gerry" Connolly (D) won with 264,725 votes over Mike L. Van Meter (R) with 130,368 votes. Fairfax County and Fairfax City make up 100% of the 11th Congressional District. Connolly won with more than 66% of the overall vote.

Member, House of Representatives (8th District)

Donald S. Beyer Jr. (D) received 111,763 votes beating Jerry W. Torres (R) with 49,648 votes.

(The Fairfax County portion makes up less than 44% of the 8th Congressional district; these are votes from Fairfax County only. Beyer won his district with more than 70% of the overall vote)

Member, House of Representatives (10th District)

Suhas Subramanyam (D) won with 6,238 votes, over Mike W. Clancy (R) with 6,182 votes.

(The Fairfax County portion makes up less than 3% of the 10th Congressional district; these are votes from Fairfax County only. Subramanyam won with more than 52% of the overall vote.)

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Something historic is happening in Old Town Alexandria.

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Leaves on the ground at the Sherwood Regional Library



Bagged leaves await pickup.



Leaves line many streets ready to be vacuumed.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Rethinking Autumn's Leaves

So many reasons to 'leave the leaves.'

BY GLENDA BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Autumn's leaf showers are well under way and many suburbanites are blowing, raking, bagging, vacuuming, cursing and sending the leaves away. Bulging bags of leaves and piles awaiting vacuuming line many streets.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website indicates that leaves and "yard trimmings" account for 12 percent of the nation's solid waste, 34 million tons a year. In 2023, in areas served by Fairfax County, yard waste collected totaled 1,591 truckloads or 17 percent of total waste generated. But the county provides leaf collection services only to 45,000 customers out of 426,400 housing units. Private haulers collect the remaining 90 percent.

Leaves are not trash, say entomologists and others. Fall leaves are assets. They should stay on the ground as nature intended.

"Composting is nature's way of recycling," says Fairfax County's website. Leaves and other plants, fruit and vegetable peels and other organic materials are biodegradable, which means that organisms break them down over time.

HEALTHY SOIL

Leaf mulch provides nutrients that enrich the soil and help suppress unwanted plants. Some gardeners call decomposed leaves "black gold."

Leaf mulch can improve soil's porosity, can retain moisture and reduce the need to water, which is especially important during the dry spells Virginia has experienced recently.

Another benefit: By making your own mulch, you don't have to buy it and lug it home.

CURB GLOBAL WARMING

A Sept. 22 Better Homes and Gardens article reports that leaving the leaves can help combat global warming because when leaves go to the landfill, they decompose without oxygen and produce methane, a potent



Redbud trees' heart-shaped leaves and seed pods are ready to fall.



Oak leaves go from green to red in the fall.



Hickory leaves turn bright yellow.

greenhouse gas that is warming the planet.

By not using a gas-powered leaf blower, you can also cut other air and noise pollution. Reducing truck traffic can curb vehicular pollution. Transportation accounts for around 43 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the county.

HOME TO CRITTERS

Leaves provide habitat for many critters. Turtles, toads, birds, mammals and invertebrates depend on leaf litter for food, shelter and nesting material.

There's a busy ecosystem in and under those leaves. Worms, snails, spiders, beetles, millipedes and microscopic organisms like bacteria and fungi find a home in dead organic material. Leaves insulate animals that hide in or beneath the soil from the cold.

Many insects overwinter in leaves and animals like chipmunks, turtles, birds and amphibians rely on insects for food. Most butterflies and moths overwinter as an egg, caterpillar, chrysalis or adult. The National Wildlife Federation reports that 94 percent of moths rely on the leaf layer to complete

Why Care About Insects?

The late biologist Edward O. Wilson said that insects are "the little things that run the world." In "The Diversity of Life," he wrote the following:

"So important are insects and other land-dwelling arthropods that if all were to disappear, humanity probably could not last more than a few months. Most of the amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals would crash to extinction about the same time. Next would go the bulk of the flowering plants and with them the physical structure of most forests and other terrestrial habitats of the world. The land surface would literally rot. As dead vegetation piled up and dried out, closing the channels of the nutrient cycles, other complex forms of vegetation would die off, and with them all but a few remnants of the land vertebrates."

their life cycle. Their caterpillars shelter under the leaves and emerge as adults in the spring. Caterpillars are a staple for many birds feeding their young in the spring. Removing leaves can mean reducing the number of beneficial insects and birds.

Margaret Fisher, Outreach Coordinator for Plant NOVA Natives/Plant NOVA Trees, offers, "We need native plants in our yards to support the insects that support the birds and the rest of the ecosystem. Many of those insects overwinter in the fallen leaves, but if we blow or haul them away, we don't allow those insects to complete their life cycles."

Fairfax County's website summarizes, "Leaves act as a natural fertilizer, create a winter haven for pollinators and provide weed suppression and moisture retention. Do not waste this valuable resource!"

FAIRFAX COUNTY

Leaf collection schedule, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/leaf-collection-dates> and vacuum collection in some areas, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/leaf>

Free mulch, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/free-mulch>



A Fairfax County co-responder program team.

FAIRFAX COUNTY

Is Fairfax County's Co-Responder Program the Right Fit?

Advocates, public cite concerns.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

It has been over three years since Fairfax County initiated its pilot co-responder program intended to help police respond to mental health emergency calls. Some county residents are raising multiple concerns about the program. The program

is a collaborative partnership between the Fairfax County Police Department and the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) and pairs a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trained police officer with a CSB Crisis Intervention Specialist to respond to public safety calls related to behavioral health issues. The Fairfax County Co-Responder Program is not yet fully fund-



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF VIENNA
Rev. Vernon C. Walton.

ed and staffed.

"The program has grown from one team in 2021 to now having "four teams of co-responders as well as over 600 sworn officers who are CIT-trained," said a FCPD spokesperson in an email to The Connection on Nov. 1. More than four teams are needed for the program to be fully staffed 24/7 and equitably, like the

SEE IS FAIRFAX COUNTY'S, PAGE 8

Sample: Three Response Programs in the U.S.

Mental health leads, not police, and at a savings.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Models of how police respond to mental health crises vary in Virginia. In the four 2024 Virginia mental health crisis fatal police shooting cases as of Oct. 30, three police departments, Fairfax County, Richmond, and Prince William County implemented similar models to Fairfax County's Co-Responder Program.

A significant model difference is evident in the fourth Virginia jurisdiction, the City of Newport News, Va. In 2021, the city launched

its CARE program to provide initial crisis intervention services for those experiencing mental or behavioral health issues. Unlike Fairfax County's Co-Responder teams, CARE teams consist of paramedics and mental health professionals. Police respond also but will only sometimes take the lead.

A program similar to that in the City of Newport News is an alternative behavioral health response to police called CAHOOTS in Eugene, Oregon, founded in 1989. CO-HOOTS stands for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets. The responders are unarmed, consisting of an unarmed mental health team, a medic and a crisis worker, who provide crisis intervention 24/7 and move as a team. The program is "staffed by White Bird Clinic personnel using City of Eugene vehicles. The relationship has been in place for nearly 30 years. The team answers suicide intervention and overdose calls, wel-

fare checks and most of the time without police backup. "CAHOOTS mobile crisis response is being recognized as an important and innovative public/private partnership delivering crisis and community health first response effectively and at significant cost savings," according to its webpage guide.

Denver started its own version of CAHOOTS, called STAR, the Support Team Assistance Response (STAR) program. "[It] is an alternative response team that includes behavioral health clinicians and paramedics to engage individuals experiencing mental health distress and substance use disorders. STAR responds to low-risk calls where there are no significant safety concerns. STAR is a civilian emergency response dispatched by Denver 9-1-1." according to Denver.org. City leaders from Oakland, Olympia, Washington and other places are considering similar pilot programs.



LEGACY.COM

Fairfax County police shot and killed Jasper Aaron Lynch on June 7, 2022.

Fatal Police Shooting in McLean Two Years Ago

Family's call for crisis help results in tragedy.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Using filtered matches from the Washington Post's Fatal Force, The Connection searched for any other fatal police shootings of individuals experiencing mental health crises in Fairfax County from 2015 to the present, other than the Wilson case. The results revealed only one other case in the nine years. On July 7, 2022, an on-duty police officer shot and killed Jasper Aaron Lynch in McLean

The video of the fatal shooting shown at the Aug. 4, 2022 press conference begins with the 911 redacted call on July 7, 2022. "911; what is your emergency?" [A caller gives his location, which is redacted] "We had an incident earlier where we called. We have one of the family members here is having a bit of a psychotic break. There were a couple of officers here earlier, and they weren't able to find him; he was upstairs. He's here now. So he is throwing some right stuff now. So, if you could get someone dispatched here, that would be helpful."

The end of the video shows that Aaron Lynch, a 26-year-old white man, had been armed with a bottle at his home in McLean, Virginia, just moments before an officer fatally shot him. The officer who shot Lynch had CIT training, said Davis. The county's Co-Responder Program's intervention specialist from Sharon Bulova Center for Community Health responded

SEE FAMILY'S CALL, PAGE 8

OBITUARY

Greg Rucker Died

Long-time Mount Vernon resident Greg Rucker recently died after a battle with cancer, leaving behind family including two children, friends and the Mount Vernon community he called home for most of his life. There is a memorial service at the Franconia Moose Lodge on Saturday, Nov. 23.

Greg Rucker was a long-time resident of Hybla Valley, steps away from the eastern side of Huntley Meadows park where he frequently walked his dogs and got away from busy Richmond Highway. Greg liked the beach, skiing, football, hanging out in Mount Vernon and following the Washington Nationals baseball team. He was an alumnus of Groveton High School and will be missed by many.

Greg followed in his father's footsteps and ran his own lunch wagon for over 25 years. Every weekday morning he got up at 4 a.m., cooked pizza, made sandwiches and stocked up his truck and then went out on his route around Mount Vernon, Fairfax County and Alexandria sites selling his food to construction workers etc. He made a name for himself in the lunch wagon business and many workers looked forward to his truck arriving during the breakfast and lunch hours at the work site.

Fundraising Underway to Expand Alexandria Seaport Foundation

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

When students are in the Alexandria Seaport Foundation learning boat building and woodworking skills, space is so limited that elbows rub and saw dust flies throughout this workshop designed to provide life and career skills to young people. Foundation leaders recognize the need for a bigger space so they've begun a fundraising campaign to expand their mission to improve the lives of at-risk students.

"Right now we're trying to do both in the same space," said Debra Roepke, an organizer and fundraiser behind the effort. "We're hoping to increase our capacity to serve more young people," she said.

They are aiming to raise \$1.5 million which is divided into \$1.1 million for a new building and the rest for new equipment. They have raised a substantial amount of those figures, thanks to the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, but still have more to go. They recently thanked their former supporters at a celebration in the Old Dominion Boat



A rendering of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation's new space along the waterfront.

Club ballroom where they talked about the final goal.

"We should be able to double or maybe triple our students," said Roepke. The students learn boat building and woodworking skills on the surface, supporters of this effort are hoping to provide positive

options to these students that are many times from low income areas of Alexandria. "They often don't have a support network," she added.

The Alexandria Seaport Foundation

SEE SEAPORT FOUNDATION, PAGE 9

Celebrate

a Timeless Holiday at
George Washington's
Mount Vernon



mountvernon.org/Christmas

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S
MOUNT ★ VERNON

THE MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION



NEW! Afternoon Teas

Enjoy a holiday tea service, surrounded by live harp music and festive decorations at the Mount Vernon Inn Restaurant.



Winter Glow

Nov. 29-30, Dec. 15-19, 23

See George Washington's estate aglow with festive lights set to holiday music and roast s'mores at a crackling fire.



Christmas Illuminations

Dec. 20-22

At this family-friendly celebration, watch fireworks soar over the Potomac River and shop a winter market featuring colonial artisans.



Unique Holiday Shopping

Shop for one-of-a-kind gifts, including our new tartan products that are made in Scotland and feature the colors found in George Washington's Commander in Chief uniform.

Be Part of the Children's and Teens' Edition

Our annual Children's Connection and Children's Gazette have been a long-standing tradition. We are once again welcoming contributions from children, youth, and teens in public and private schools, as well as homeschool, after-school care, and other programs, art and writing classes, and from individuals.

We publish images of all types of visual art forms, from drawing, painting, printmaking, and graphic design to sculpture, extended media, crafts, and more. We welcome written works such as poetry, essays, opinion pieces, and short stories.

Visit <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/> and scroll down to the Children's Edition to see last year's editions. Our plan is for the Children's Connection/Gazette to publish as part of the edition for the week of Dec. 18, 2024.

Submission Directions

1. Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format. These can be submitted via Google Drive. Writing should be submitted in text format (docx or Google Docs) or pasted in the body of an email. We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email.
2. Identify each submission as follows:

Artwork example

Sean Murphy, 12, Grade 7, Springfield, Summer Morning, watercolor on parchment | Irving Middle School, Springfield, VA, Elizabeth Carr, art teacher, MS

Writing example

Martina Alvarez, 17, Junior, Alexandria, I'm Not Just a Teen, essay | Mount Vernon High School, Alexandria, VA, Gratia Rodriguez, English Teacher, HS

3. Please email your submissions by 6 p.m. on Wednesday, December 11, 2023, [Earlier is Better] to Editor Mary Kimm at kimm.mary@gmail.com and fill in the Subject Line as Children's Connection 2024. If you are sharing via Google Drive, please share to kimm.mary@gmail.com

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 21, 2023



Celebration Collage, Abram Larkin, 2nd grade, Fort Hunt Elementary, Andrew Green, Art Teacher.

Small Business Saturday: Support Local, Strengthen Community

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK

With Small Business Saturday on Nov. 30, I want to take a moment to highlight the vital role that small businesses play in driving Fairfax County's economic growth and success. As we celebrate these local entrepreneurs, we are reminded of their invaluable contributions, not only to our economy but also to the unique character of our neighborhoods. Supporting small businesses is not just good for business; it's good for education, growth and opportunity.

As the Chair of the Fairfax County Council on Economic Opportunity, I'm committed to helping create an environment where businesses of all sizes can thrive. Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, and their success directly impacts the prosperity of

our community. By shopping locally and supporting Fairfax County's small businesses, we invest in our own future, strengthening the local economy, creating jobs and ensuring that local dollars we spend here have a multiplier effect that benefits the services we all rely on, from our schools to our public services.

Fairfax County has earned its reputation as one of the best places in the nation to do business, and that's thanks in large part to the hard work and innovation of our small business owners. When we support these businesses, we are fostering a culture of growth and opportunity that benefits everyone. This is why, as part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening the local economy, I encourage all of us to make a conscious effort to shop local and support small businesses, not just on Small Business Saturday, but every day of the year.

By working together, we can help ensure that Fairfax County remains a thriving place to live, work and do business for generations to come. Thank you for your continued support of our local businesses and for being an essential part of

what makes Fairfax County such a vibrant and successful community.

Are you a local small business, or looking to start one? The County has information and resources for you! Check out Fairfax CORE - <https://fairfaxcore.com/>.

Submit a Letter to the Editor

To submit a letter to the editor, email editors@connectionnewspapers.com or via the following form <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/contact/letter/>

Ideally, letters will be original, about local issues and less than 300 words. Please submit letters by noon Friday before publication week, although letters received on Mondays can be considered. Letters must include your first and last name, home address and a phone number. Letters are routinely edited for libel, length, grammar, good taste and accuracy.

Your name and town will be published with your letter, other personal information will not be shared. If you are a student, your school name, age and grade will also be published.

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A Connection Newspaper



Yacht Haven Garden Club Holds Fashion Show Fundraiser



Guest Felicia Meyer-DeLoath, left, with Nancy Hawkins, Fashion Show Co-chair.

Beautiful contemporary fashions by designer Sara Campbell in Alexandria were featured at the Yacht Haven Garden Club's 40th annual Fashion Show and Luncheon, Oct. 16 at the Mount Vernon Country Club. Original designs and beautiful colors were well re-

SEE YACHT HAVEN GARDEN, PAGE 11



Karen Bennett, Fashion Show Co-chair.



Gail Mlinarchik.



Suzanne Scherrer

NOTICE OF WATER RATE AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING December 12, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 12, 2024, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2025, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,800 to \$4,930*.
- An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$22,910 to \$24,290.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,830 to \$1,840*.
- An increase in the Account Charge from \$47 to \$48.
- An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$15.60 to \$16.55*.
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$3.84 to \$4.03 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- An increase in the Peak Use Charge from \$4.10 to \$4.15.
- An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$57 to \$58.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and Peak Use Charge.
- An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge Inspection Fee from \$46 to \$47.

*Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$240 million budget for calendar year 2025.¹ Water sales are expected to provide \$209 million and the remaining \$31 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

Category	-- \$1,000s --	
	2024	2025
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$ 66,956	\$ 74,371
Power and Utilities	14,667	14,630
Chemicals	15,970	16,910
Purchased Water	7,713	9,013
Supplies and Materials	6,871	7,401
Insurance	1,507	1,558
Fuel	776	890
Postage	620	642
Contractual Services	12,667	14,194
Professional Services	1,191	1,940
Other	2,605	3,168
Sub-Total	131,543	144,717
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(11,014)	(12,005)
Total	\$ 120,529	\$ 132,712

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$49,871,656
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$43,885,000

¹ Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

A copy of the proposed changes can be viewed on our website at fairfaxwater.org/rates.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Jessica Love at 703-289-6029. Interested parties may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on **Wednesday, December 11, 2024** to be included in the record of the public hearing.

Is Fairfax County's Co-Responder Program the Right Fit?

FROM PAGE 4

county's police and fire and rescue services.

Kevin Davis, the police chief of Fairfax County, said in an Oct. 20, 2023 letter to the Board of Supervisors that the program would need significantly more than "eight co-responder units required to maintain around-the-clock coverage in the community." With a population of 1,186 million people, if Fairfax County were a city, it would rank as the tenth largest in the nation, and it covers 391 square miles.

"Mental health should not be a risk factor for the use of deadly force," Vernon C. Walton said in a Nov. 4 email to The Connection. Walton made this statement as a community member and one of the ten former members of Fairfax County's Police Reform Matrix Working Group on May 12, 2023. He is also the senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Vienna. Walton said he is concerned, and that the co-responder program has issues that require resolution.

The Washington Post Fatal Force database, 2015-2024, contains records of every person shot by an on-duty police officer in the U.S. since Jan. 1, 2015, with the capacity to refine search results by using filters, including mental illness-related only. Open to the public, the database is updated regularly as fatal shootings are reported and as facts emerge about individual cases, according to the Post.

From Jan. 1, 2015, to Oct. 31, 2024, after receiving calls requesting assistance, Fairfax County Police Department on-duty officers shot and killed two people experiencing mental health crises, according to the database. The Co-Responder Program was in operation but not fully staffed. In the U.S., 1 in 20 adults experience serious mental illness each year, according to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, citing a Samhsa.gov study.

Data on the victims by the Post:

❖ July 7, 2022, Jasper Aaron Lynch, a 26-year-old white man armed with a bottle, was killed in [his] house in McLean, Va., body cam footage. The footage confirms Lynch dropped the bottle seconds before the officer fatally shot him.

❖ Sept. 16, 2024, Sydney Wilson, a 33-year-old Black woman armed with a knife, was killed in [her] apartment building



FCPD PRESS CONFERENCE VIDEO 10.14.24
A behavioral health clinician was not available to join police on the welfare check; a Fairfax County police officer, alone on the scene, shot and killed 33-year-old Sydney Wilson of Reston, armed with a knife on Sept. 16, 2024.

in Reston, Va.; body cam footage.

Chief Kevin Davis said during the Sept. 16, 2024, press conference to release the body camera footage of the Wilson fatal police shooting that the county's co-responder program is "normally a clinician inside of a police car with the police officer. ... Year to date there are already well over 2,200 calls for service." They are routinely dispatched to calls involving a person in a mental or behavioral health crisis, according to Davis. They can also self-dispatch if they hear a suspicious call and believe it may involve a mental or behavioral health crisis.

Fairfax County's co-responder program expanded in 2023 to seven days a week, from 12 p.m. to 12 a.m., said a spokesperson for FCPD.

Professional training for behavioral health clinicians surpasses FCPD officer training.

FCPD's officer training consists of the 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program on how to respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis and how to de-escalate the situation. Davis said during the Sept. 16 press conference that 59 percent of the department's sworn officers are CIT-trained. Fairfax County officers also take a 12-hour ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics course for situations involving persons who are unarmed or are armed with weapons other than firearms and who may be experiencing a mental health or other crisis. As of June 2024, Fairfax County police said in May that their entire department had received ICAT training.

Even though the annual number of all mental illness-related fatal police shootings in the state has decreased from 261 in 2015 to 136 this year as of Oct. 31, according to the Washington Post Fatal Force database,



FCPD PRESS CONFERENCE VIDEO 10.14.24
Kevin Davis, Chief of Police, Fairfax County.

2015-2024, individuals across Virginia with mental illness, including Fairfax County, continue to be shot and killed by police following a 911 or 988 call for assistance. Such a demonstrable role of mental illness, especially when the person is in crisis, leading to the use of deadly force by law enforcement against them can indicate the need to consider rethinking the type of response and policy protocols. and who has the "first touch" at the scene with the individual.

Walton said that families should "not have any pause about calling for assistance when family members are in crisis."

If the behavioral health clinician cannot physically co-respond to a mental health assistance dispatched call, could virtual or phone advice benefit responding police officers in the current Fairfax County co-responder model? Could this provide key advice in determining if and how an officer or officers could respond to an incident, whether to wait, or proceed? A behavioral health clinician was not available to respond to either the Wilson case or Lynch case, Davis said.

Restonstrong is a 501(c)(3) community action group co-founded by Sarah Selvaraj-D'souza, executive director. She, like Walton, has concerns about Fairfax County's Co-Responder Program. Selvaraj-D'souza posted, "This is a system failure yet again that ends in tragedy. ... It's time we treat mental health with the same urgency as physical health."

Selvaraj-D'souza's post states that the video footage of the Wilson shooting was "disturbing, to say the least," and their hearts were "breaking for both the victim and the officer involved ... Restonstrong has been advocating for a dedicated mobile mental

SEE IS FAIRFAX COUNTY'S, PAGE 10

Family's Call for Crisis Help Results in Tragedy

FROM PAGE 4

to the home earlier that evening. Davis said in the Aug. 4, 2022 video that the program had a single clinician who rode with a police officer on specific days and times of the week; however, the clinician was unavailable when the officer made a second visit to the house (20:33).

Nearly two years later, on April

5, 2024, Commonwealth's Attorney Steve T. Descano (D) issued a five-page report that said all five shots by Officer George were legally justifiable. Three officers who responded to the second call "acted in an objectively reasonable manner, based upon the totality of the circumstances."

On June 12, 2024, Patrick Winston Lynch, as Personal Representa-

tative and Administrator of the Estate of Jasper Aaron Lynch, filed a wrongful death lawsuit for \$10 million in the Circuit Court for Fairfax County. The defendants are Kevin Davis, three officers, and John Does1-3 defendants, "employees of FCPD charged with the responsibilities of training and developing training methods and, policies and procedures for the FCPD regarding

(1) the use of deadly force and (2) responding to individuals suffering mental health crises, and with properly supervising the Defendant members of the FCPD."

The plaintiff alleged that "the officers did not communicate with anyone who had specific mental health training or wait for someone with that background to arrive at the Lynch family home ...

[and that] Officer George fatally shoots Aaron, who was unarmed and restrained while attempting to flee. When the officers entered the home, despite his knowledge that he would be interacting with an individual suffering a mental health crisis, Officer George chose not to carry his FCPD-issued taser, which he instead left in the trunk of his patrol car."

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



At the recent fundraiser, a Seaport Foundation supporter speaks at the Old Dominion Boat Club.

Seaport Foundation

FROM PAGE 5

started their efforts in 1992 when they began construction on the McIlhenny Seaport Center on the Alexandria waterfront. It evolved into an effort to improve the lives of at-risk youth, and this is done through boat building and woodworking skills as well as improved academic and social competence. A 42-foot replica of a Potomac River Dory was the first project they completed years ago.

Since then, many area teens

have come through the doors to learn these skills and more. A couple of recent success stories include one student who earned a scholarship to George Mason University, and another who went on to join the U.S. Air Force.

To learn more about how to contribute to “change, educate, and save the lives” of young people who have yet to find their way in life, go to AlexandriaSeaportFoundation.com. On-site volunteers are also needed.



Inside one of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation workshops, it's a tight fit for all the woodworking and learning going on.

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CIRQUE: SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS | SNOW FLOW MOUNTAIN
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SO MUCH CHRISTMAS

GAYLORD NATIONAL

Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
STAFFORD	18062	1	ROUTE 0001	RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER	11/1/2024
LUNENBURG	11672	688	OWL CREEK ROAD	OWL CREEK	10/11/2024
PETERSBURG	21087	0	FORT LEE ROAD	INTERSTATE-85	10/8/2024
LOUDOUN	11300	709	SANDS ROAD	TRIBUTARY OF CROOKED RUN	9/30/2024

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

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

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota 804-786-4064.

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



Mental Health First Response and Mobile Crisis Intervention since 1989

[HTTPS://WHITEBIRDCLINIC.ORG/CAHOOTS](https://whitebirdclinic.org/cahoots)

How can I support you today? The CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) program in Eugene, Oregon, consists of an unarmed mental health team, a medic and a crisis worker. The team is a mobile health unit and provides crisis intervention 24/7 in a wide range of services including crisis counseling, welfare checks, suicide prevention, assessment, and intervention.”

[FAIRFAXCOUNTY.GOV/COMMUNITY-SERVICES-BOARD/SERVICES/CO-RESPONDER-PROGRAM](https://fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board/services/co-responder-program)

Fairfax County is 391 square miles, and has only four co-responder program teams to cover the entire area, and they do not work 24/7. The program will be expanding.

Is Fairfax County’s Co-Responder Program the Right Fit?

FROM PAGE 8

health crisis unit for Reston since 2021. We don’t need wellness checks to end in death. Supervisor Walter Alcorn, please consider a dedicated mental health crisis unit for Hunter Mill [District].”

A third Fairfax County resident raises concerns about the Fairfax County Co-Responder Program. Adrian Steel, a former member of the Fairfax County Police Reform Matrix Working Group, which disbanded in 2023 and the first chairman of the Police Civilian Review Panel, discussed challenges and potential actions regarding the county’s co-responder program, primarily in light of the Wilson case. He questioned several aspects of the program, including the police department’s knowledge of an incident involving Wilson the day before her fatal shooting, as well as why the officer was alone and did not have a Taser or other less-lethal options available.

According to FCPD General Order 540 – Use of Force, “officers shall carry their ECW at all times. ... Exceptions may be made by commanders based upon safety factors relative to mission objectives or where a sufficient number of functional ECWs are not currently available to equip all operational officers within their purview.”

Steel emphasized the importance of examining the co-responder structure and scrutinizing the dispatch process to ascertain whether the call went to the 988 crisis line or 911. He discussed the police chief’s lack of neutrality, the chief interjecting his opinion during his statements when releasing the Wilson case body-worn camera footage. The transcript shows several instances during which Davis opines. For example, Davis commented, “My (12:33) personal thoughts about, ‘Would a co-responder have,



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Sarah Selvaraj-D'souza, co-founder of Restonstrong, asks for a dedicated mobile mental health crisis unit for Reston.



FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/FAIRFAXCOUNTY/

Adrian Steel questions why the officer in the Wilson case acted alone and further why he did not have a Taser or other less-lethal options available to him.



INSTAGRAM.COM/SUPERVISORLUSK/

Supervisor Rodney Lusk says the co-responder program will be “expanding to include more teams and extended hours of service.”



“made a difference”? I’m not too sure that it (12:38) would have.” He says the comment before the criminal and administrative investigations into the incident and the review by the county’s Office of the Independent Police Auditor.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, chair of the Board of Supervisors Safety and Security Committee, said on Nov. 8 in an email to The Connection that he had the opportunity last week to ride with a co-responder team and see firsthand how they operate.

“Since Supervisor Alcorn and I proposed the Board Matter that initiated this program, I have always believed that it was the right thing to do, and seeing them in action has only reinforced that conviction. I am extremely proud that the Board of Supervisors not only approved but has continued to support this program, which has gained widespread support. This includes expanding the program to include more teams and extended hours of service.”

Lusk said he will continue to look for ways to support the co-responder program in coordination with the Fairfax County Police Department and the Community Services Board to ensure its continued success.

“The Co-Responder Program aligns with other Fairfax County initiatives, including the Diversion First continuum of services. The Co-Responder Program also aligns with the Marcus Alert. Virginia law requires 9-1-1, crisis call centers, law enforcement, and behavioral health agencies to work together to improve responses to individuals experiencing behavioral health crises,” according to the county web page devoted to What is the Fairfax County Co-Responder Program?

CAHOOTS is a mental health first response and mobile intervention model that responds to non-violent crises instead of police, such as welfare checks, public assistance and transportation to services. “The program mobilizes two-person teams consisting of a medic (a nurse, paramedic, or EMT) and a crisis worker with substantial training and experience in mental health.”

[WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com)

Yacht Haven Garden Club Holds Fashion Show Fundraiser

FROM PAGE 7

ceived by attendees.

The club's mission is to "provide education, resources, and networking opportunities for its members and promote the love of gardening, floral design, and civic and environmental responsibility."

Proceeds support the National Capital Area Garden Clubs projects, such as the NCA Scholarship Fund and Friendship Garden and Fern Valley at the National Arboretum. The club contributes to the Honey Bee Project studying the health of bees at the University of Maryland. The club beautifies local sites, such as Sherwood Hall Regional Library and Yacht Haven Estates entrances with seasonal annuals, and more.



Patsie Uchello



Rodica Sandor-Scoma.



Marcia Siegert.

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ENTERTAINMENT



“Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” can be seen Nov. 15-24, 2024 at Bryant Alternative High School in Alexandria.

OCT. 31 TO DEC. 8

Susan J. Goldman Exhibit. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Artist talk, Saturday, November 30, 1 p.m.

OCT. 24 TO DEC. 21

“A Focus on Nature.” At Coldwell Banker Realty, 310 King Street, Alexandria. 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 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

NOV. 10 TO DEC. 10

Pope-Leighey House Tours. 12-1 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. By 1941, the year Pope-Leighey House was completed, Frank Lloyd Wright had studied Japan for almost a half-century. He had become a serious collector of woodblock prints—even writing a book on the subject—and had won acclaim for his design of the Tokyo Imperial Hotel, one of the few buildings to survive the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. On this special tour, visitors will discover how the famous American architect incorporated his love of Japanese art, architecture, and philosophy into Usonian homes, and how this East Asian influence shines in Wright’s Pope-Leighey House.

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.

NOV. 15-24

“Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.” At Bryant Alternative High School, 2709 Popkins Lane, Alexandria. Presented by Mount Vernon Community Children’s Theater (MVCCT). Featuring 44 young actors between the ages of 8 and 18 from 27 schools across the DMV. The show will have a six-day run: Nov. 15 at 7 p.m., Nov. 16 at 7 p.m., Nov. 17 at 3 p.m., Nov. 22 at 7 p.m., Nov. 23 at 7 p.m., and Nov. 24 at 3 p.m. For tickets, visit MVCCT.org.

THURSDAY/NOV. 21

Jennifer Barlow: Food Inspired Art. At the Nepenthe Gallery, 7918 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. Jennifer

Barlow is a local oil painter with a sweet tooth! Come to Nepenthe Gallery to meet her and see the collection of unique and fun original artworks — just in time for the holidays! Barlow is absolutely an artist whose art will lift you up!

SATURDAY/NOV. 23

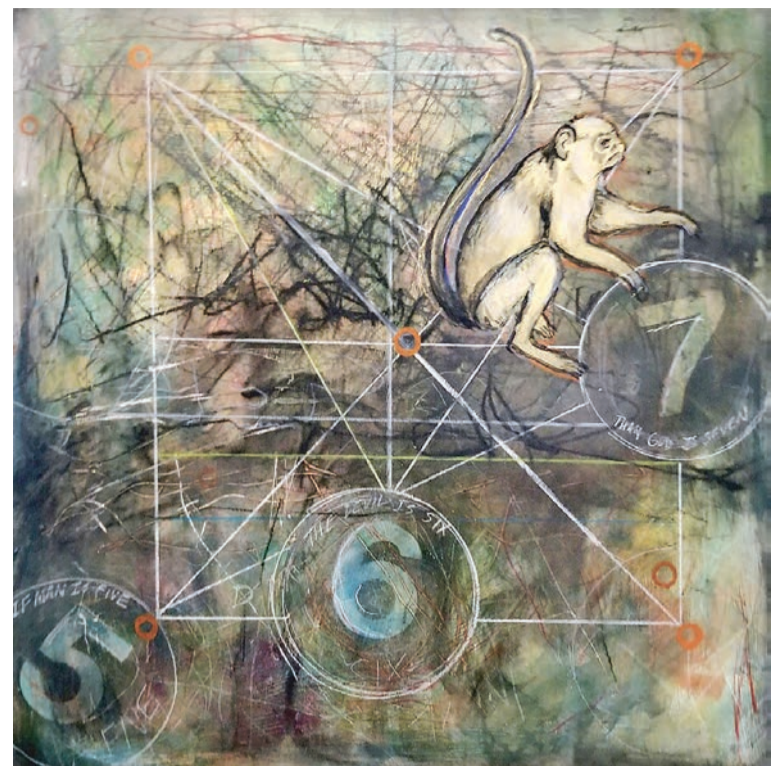
Tree Lighting Ceremony. 6 p.m. Celebrate the city’s official start to the holiday season at the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, with appearances from Major Justin Wilson, the Town Crier and even Santa himself. A few weeks later on December 8, take part in the Del Ray Tree and Menorah Lighting as you enjoy tunes and hot chocolate and hand-painted holiday windows along Del Ray’s storefronts.

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

Holiday Shop 2024. 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, 1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria. Over 50 vendors including Pottery, Ceramics, Glass, Wood, Metal, Fabric, Jewelry, Yarn, Paintings, Photography, Mosaics, Cards, Books, Bags, Candles, and Soaps, Baked and Canned Goods, Household Collectibles and Lunch.



The Del Ray Artisans “\$100 & Under” exhibit runs now through Dec. 1, 2024 at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, Alexandria.

Quilt Raffle “Yakata Dreams” \$3 per ticket. Free entry, Free parking, Cash and cards accepted - some vendors may not be able to accept cards. Visit the website www.MVUC.org.

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>

SUNDAY/NOV. 24

Georgetown Saxatones. 2 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Get ready to rock the house with everything from alternative to pop to soul with the Georgetown Saxatones. As Georgetown’s only community service a cappella group, they are passionate about sharing their music in support of worthy causes. Donations are welcome during the performance and the Saxatones will donate all of their proceeds to a humanitarian charity.

FRIDAY/NOV. 29

Plaid Friday Alexandria. Alexandria’s 50 Small Business Black Friday returns for another holiday season to highlight and celebrate Alexandria’s iconic array of independent businesses. Known as the top destination for locally owned retail, 50 participating businesses are asking customers to shift their shopping this holiday season by kicking off Black Friday shopping at Alexandria boutiques for steals and deals on Friday, November 29. Several participating businesses will open

at 6 a.m. For more details on participating businesses and special offers, visit plaidfridayALX.com.

SUNDAY/DEC. 1

8th Annual Old Town Tuba Christmas. Presented by WMPA - Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association. 3 p.m. At Market Square/Old Town Farmers Market by City Hall, Alexandria. Free. Christmas carols and holiday tunes with tubaists of all ages. Free.

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 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.woodlawnpopeleighey.org/upcomingevents/2024/12/3/yoga-nidra>

DEC. 6 - 8

Alexandria’s iconic holiday weekend. Taste of Scotland. Friday, Dec. 6. The 53rd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade is Saturday, Dec. 7, followed by the 24th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights. <https://visitalexandria.com/holidays/biggest-weekend/>

FRIDAY/DEC. 6

Taste of Scotland. 6:30 p.m. At The Atrium, Old Town Alexandria. Campagna Center and partners will celebrate the holiday season and its Scottish heritage during the Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend in Alexandria, starting with the 2024 Taste of Scotland. This festive party, held on the Friday before the parade, invites guests to sample Scotch and enjoy delicious food, music, and entertainment, with all proceeds supporting the Campagna Center. For 50 years, this beloved event has helped improve the lives of Alexandria’s children and families through impactful programs. Visit <https://www.campagnacenter.org/tasteofscotland2024/>

ENTERTAINMENT



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

DEC. 6-21

Holiday Tours. 5-7:30 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. Tour the Pope-Leighey House during special evening tours and see the home decorated for a mid-century holiday. Tours are offered Dec. 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, with tours every half hour between 5 and 7 p.m. Space is limited, advance registration is recommended. Cost: \$20. Visit the website <https://www.woodlawn-popeleighey.org>

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 nonprofit. 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

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Holiday Parade Day. Alexandria’s two signature holiday parades starting with the 53rd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade sponsored by Wegmans at 11 a.m. followed by the 24th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights sponsored by Amazon at 5:30 p.m., with riverside festivities for the whole family starting at 2 p.m.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Fall Book Sale. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library, 717 Queen Street, Alexandria. The Friends of Barrett Library will hold their annual Fall Book Sale. Come browse a great selection of fiction, nonfiction, and children’s books, as well as DVDs and CDs. Prices are \$3 for hardbacks, \$2 for paperbacks, and vary for special volumes and collections. Info: (703) 746-1703.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Support Youth Musicians. WMPA – Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association. 3 p.m. At Bishop Ireton High School, 201 Cambridge Road, Alexandria. Join both the Washington Metropolitan Youth Orchestra and the Washington Metropolitan Concert Orchestra as they perform. The program offers a variety of music: Hoffmeister Viola Concerto, Mvt. I - Isaiah Reed, soloist Seitz Viola Concerto, Mvt. I - Tate Commission, soloist Capriol Suite - Peter Warlock Slavonic Dance in C - Furiant - Antonin Dvořák. Free.

SUNDAY/DEC. 8

Holiday Dreams Orchestra Concert. 3 p.m. At the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Street, Alexandria. Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic performs with the Alexandria Choral Society. Duke Ellington’s “Nutcracker Suite” headlines, under the baton of Music Director Anna Binneweg. This concert promises to transport the audience into a realm of festive delight, “Holiday Dreams” offers a captivating blend of seasonal cheer and musical charm. Grace-Evangeline Mason’s “The Imagined Forest” sets a magical tone, weaving together melodies that evoke the spirit of the holidays. Tickets \$35 adults, \$30 seniors, 18 & under just \$5.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

At Joe Theismann’s Restaurant. 8 a.m. Located at 1800A Diagonal Road, Alexandria. Dates: Saturday, Dec. 7, 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 8, 15, 22. This holiday season,



The Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library is holding a Fall Book Sale on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024 in Alexandria.

create unforgettable memories with Breakfast with Santa in the enchanting Old Town Alexandria at Joe Theismann’s Restaurant. Start with a festive family-style breakfast featuring delectable options like french toast, smoked salmon, and tater tots. Children will love the take-home treats and a magical moment meeting Santa Claus, complete with a keepsake photo. Adults can indulge in bottomless Prosecco bellinis or classic mimosas for \$15. Babies join for free, while kids are \$29.50 plus tax and adults are \$53 plus tax.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

At Mia’s Italian Kitchen. 8 a.m. Located at 100 King Street, Alexandria. Dates are Saturday, Dec. 7, 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 8, 15, 22. Celebrate the season with a festive breakfast feast featuring a delicious spread served family-style, including breakfast pastry & bagel basket, smoked salmon, and scrambled eggs. At Mia’s Italian Kitchen, children will enjoy take-home treats and a magical visit with Santa Claus, complete with a keepsake photo that captures the Christmas spirit. Adults can enjoy bottomless classic mimosas and Prosecco bellinis for \$18. Babies join for free, while kids are \$34 plus tax and adults are \$57 plus tax.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

At Ada’s on the River. 8 a.m. Located at 3 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Dates are: Saturday, Dec. 7, 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 8, 15, 22. Join Ada’s on the River for a festive breakfast feast, where you’ll enjoy a delicious family-style spread including breakfast pastries, pancakes, yogurt parfait, and tater tots. Children will receive take-home treats and a magical visit with Santa Claus, complete with a keepsake photo that captures the Christmas

spirit. Adults can indulge in classic mimosas, bellinis, or Prosecco. Adults can indulge in bottomless Prosecco bellinis or classic mimosas for \$15. Babies join for free, while kids are \$29.50 plus tax and adults are \$53 plus tax.

THURSDAY/DEC. 12

Del Ray Holiday Sip & Shop. Special promotions and complimentary wine and refreshments.

DEC. 13-15

Gustave Marche de Noel Gift Market. New this year, be immersed in a magical new European Christmas market experience in Del Ray during the inaugural Gustave Marché de Noël Gift Market, a weekend chock-full of holiday happenings including the Old Town North Holiday Market & Farmers Market, Christmas Market & Holiday Craft Show at John Carlyle Square and more.

DEC. 14-15

Nutcracker Ballet. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, 4915 E. Campus Drive, Alexandria. At 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. both days. Presented by the Metropolitan School of the Arts. Veronica Quezada, MSA alumnus and part of the International Tour of West Side Story, will play the part of Sugar Plum Fairy, joining a cast of 150 MSA students. Tickets are \$21 to \$35. Visit www.metropolitanschoolofthearts.org

TUESDAY/DEC. 24

Waterskiing Santa Show. 1 p.m. Begins at BARCA Pier, 2 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. For a sight you have to see to believe, head to the waterfront between BARCA Pier and Founders Park to witness the Waterskiing Santa Show, featuring Santa and his friends gliding along

the Potomac River. There is also a rumor the Grinch will try and steal the show at 12:45 p.m. before the show starts. Santa and his pals begin at BARCA Pier at 1 p.m. and ski north to Founders Park before circling back south and finishing at Ford’s Landing.

DEC. 31, 2024

30th Annual First Night Alexandria. 2 p.m. - 12 a.m. Throughout Old Town Alexandria. Experience the region’s signature family-friendly New Year’s Eve festival of music and more. A community celebration of the performing arts, First Night Alexandria rings in the new year with music, comedy, and dance. This year’s celebration will feature a twilight fireworks display at 6 p.m. on Alexandria’s waterfront geared to families who want to enjoy the show with their kids and loved ones. First Night Alexandria will also still host an abbreviated encore display of the New Year’s fireworks at midnight on the waterfront. Visit <https://visitalexandria.com/events/30th-annual-first-night-alexandria>

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

Wed. 20: Eric Benet \$79.50
Thu. 21: Ohio Players \$79.50
Fri. 22: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
Sat. 23: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
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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 Manhattan Featuring Gerald Alston \$65.00

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LETTER

Preserving Democratic Norms & Values Transcends Party Lines

In response to the opinion piece by Greg Paspatis published on Nov. 14, 2024 in the Mount Vernon Gazette, it's important to address several points raised.

Firstly, the assertion that Delegate Krizek's piece is merely Democratic Party propaganda overlooks the fundamental concern he raises about the state of democracy. His call to vote against Trump is rooted in a broader discussion about preserving democratic norms and values, which transcends party lines. It's not about fear mongering but about highlighting the importance of safeguarding democratic institutions.

Secondly, the absence of mention of the Democratic ticket of Harris and Walz does not diminish the validity of his argument. The focus was on the broader implications of Trump's potential return to power, which is a legitimate concern for many Americans who value democratic principles.

Regarding the lack of a Republican rebuttal, it's worth noting that the media landscape is diverse, and there are ample platforms for Republican voices to be heard. The notion that the American people are being coerced into a particular way of thinking undermines their ability to make informed decisions. Voters can discern the information presented to them and making choices based on their values and beliefs.

The suggestion that the Democratic Party needs to take stock of itself is valid for any political organization. Self-reflection and adaptation are crucial for any party to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the electorate. However, it's equally important for all parties to engage in constructive dialogue and address the real issues facing the nation, rather than resorting to divisive rhetoric.

In conclusion, democracy thrives on informed debate and the exchange of ideas. It's essential to respect differing viewpoints and engage in discussions that contribute to the betterment of our society. Let's focus on the issues that matter and work together to uphold the democratic values that define our nation.

Martin Tillett
Alexandria, Virginia

Holiday Open House at Water Treatment Plant

Attend a holiday-themed open house at the Noman M. Cole, Jr. Pollution Control Plant in Lorton on Saturday, December 7 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

With facility tours and hands-on family activities planned, the Open House will be a rare opportunity for Fairfax County residents to see the vast, intricate operations and infrastructure of the plant that are typically not open to the public.

❖ **WHERE:** Noman M. Cole Jr. Pollution Control Plant, 9399 Richmond Hwy., Lorton, VA 22079

❖ **WHEN:** Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

❖ **PARKING:** Enter the open gate, where staff will direct visitors to available parking at the plant or a nearby overflow lot with shuttle service.

Operated by the Wastewater Management Division of the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, the plant runs all day and night, 365 days a year to intake the county's wastewater and

transform it into sparkling clean water that is returned to Gunston Cove and flows into the Potomac River.

While wastewater may be considered “out of sight, out of mind” for most people, the hard work of cleaning from an average of 40 million gallons up to 67 million gallons of wastewater every day is the top priority for the 160 talented professionals employed at the plant, whose efforts in managing the massive facility result in safe water for public health and the environment. The campus also has a thriving ecosystem of birds and other wildlife.

“Our facility tours will show guests the depth of our tanks, our complicated infrastructure, our dependence on microorganisms, our massive machinery, the pipes and tunnels, our round-the-clock sample testing and inspections, and more,” said Outreach Manager Lisa Good, Fairfax County Wastewater Management. “We hope that when guests see how hard it is to clean the water, they will feel inspired to go home and

be extra careful about not flushing wipes, medicines, fats, oils and grease down their pipes,” Good said.

OPEN HOUSE EVENT DETAILS

Bring the family, gather your co-workers, and stop by this truly extraordinary facility. Visit the Open House web page for more details.

ACTIVITIES:

Plant tours* at 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.;

Tunnel tours* every half hour

Ongoing activities for family members during tours.

Touch-A-Truck: Come see and sit in the coolest trucks!

Closed-Circuit TV Robot: Try your hand at operating our robot!

Job Info: HR staff will be on hand to discuss career opportunities at the plant, including engineers, electricians, mechanics, office staff, heavy equipment operators, and more.

Refreshments: Festive, holiday-themed refreshments will be provided

8 Things about Domestic Violence and Homelessness

Learn more about the connection between domestic violence and homelessness and how to find available resources. Survivors of domestic violence deserve to feel safe, and securing housing is a crucial step in their healing journey. No survivor should be forced to stay with someone who harms them just to keep a roof over their head.

SOURCE: FAIRFAX COUNTY

1. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness; studies show it is a reason for between 22% and 57% of homelessness among women. More than 90 percent of homeless women experience severe physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives, and 63 percent have been victims of intimate partner violence.

2. Housing is safety. Survivors of domestic violence often must flee their homes to escape life-threatening violence from an abuser. Securing safe, affordable housing is a crucial step on the pathway to a survivor's long-term security and often means the difference between being able to leave and having no choice but to stay.

3. Thousands of adults flee domestic violence with nowhere to land except transitional housing. Emergency shelters are often the first step for survivors fleeing abuse, which means shelters and local programs must have the resources to keep space available for victims in need. When shelters are full, survivors are often faced with an impossible decision between returning to someone who caused them harm or risking homelessness.

4. Housing remains a critical unmet need for survivors. In one study, 84% of survivors in domestic violence shelters say they needed help finding affordable housing. In another nationwide study, more than half of the victims who identified a need for housing services were not able to receive them.

5. Housing insecurity leaves survivors vulnerable. Survivors who experienced food or housing insecurity in a 12-month period faced a significantly higher likelihood of rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner in that same time period compared to those who did not have these same vulnerabilities.

6. Domestic violence programs provide more than emergency shelter. The National Network to End Domestic Violence found that after receiving services from a local domestic violence program, 90% of victims of domestic violence were aware of resources and knew more ways to plan for safety. Safety planning is an important step to ensure long-term security. In Fairfax County, this vital assistance comes from the Advocacy Services team in Domestic and Sexual Violence Services. To reach them for support, call 703-246-4573.

7. Financial violence impacts a survivor's ability to access housing. Domestic abusers commonly sabotage a victim's economic stability, making them more vulnerable to homelessness. Many survivors can't rent an apartment because their credit, rental, and work histories have been damaged.

8. There's a nationwide shortage of affordable, safe housing. Only a small percentage of eligible people receive public housing, and the number of low-income households who receive housing assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development programs is often far fewer than those who need it.

If you or someone you know has experienced interpersonal violence, call the Domestic and Sexual Violence 24-Hour Hotline at 703-360-7273 for more information about resources and support.

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Bar Mitzvah Boy



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

On Wednesday Nov. 20th, my former puppy/now adolescent golden retriever Burton will become a dog (meaning no longer a puppy). What I mean to say is on that day, two years, and three months after his mid-August 2022 birth – and subsequent early October arrival in my arms (given to me as a surprise birthday gift from my wife, Dina), Burton will be neutered. It is advised that larger breeds have this procedure later in their lives to allow for their normal and complete growth. Having waited, we will now be dropping him off at the spay clinic between 7:00 and 7:30 Wednesday morning and picking him up between 2:00 and 3:00 pm later that same day. If my previous experience as an owner of a golden being who was neutered is any indication, when I see Burton at the clinic, after his procedure, he will be his old/new self. Dogs' resilience is amazing. When I picked-up my last male dog, Bailey, after his being neutered, he came running over to me like nothing had happened to him. And of course, something most definitely had happened to him.

If I am to be honest, Burton's procedure seems more of a problem for me, than it does/will be for him. And so, I've taken to calling this procedure Burton's Bar Mitzvah, the day when Jewish boys, me included, become men. And even though there was no surgery with that occasion, I will admit that singing my Bar Mitzvah part (a section of the Torah) in front of a congregation of hundreds of attendees (I shared the stage with two other boys) can be painful, especially if you never sing – which I never did, and then while singing your 'part,' your voice cracks. Then you overcorrect by repeating the crack (which you were advised not to do) until you “baritone” it down to a more singable tone. Such was my life on October 20, 1967. Not exactly a day in infamy, but a day to remember for sure.

And though singing in front of a congregation was incredibly stressful for me, it was/is nonetheless, a rite of passage of sorts. “Today, you are a man” is the refrain of the day, uttered by your rabbi and is a summary of the event. There won't be much I can say to Burton on his big day since he won't understand any of it. But I will follow doctors' orders and keep him calm for two weeks and make sure he takes his medicine and wears his “e-collar” (“E” for Elizabethan) to prevent his licking at the incision. But I won't be having a party for Burton back at the house as my parents did for me. I will be happy to get him home though so he can curl up on his bed and start to recuperate.

Once Burton's recovery period is over, he'll likely lead a healthier and less complicated life. Much less wandering, less territorial, no more being attracted to females in heat, and less aggressive in general, which for a golden translates to less excitement/exuberance in all things of interests to a dog, especially greeting people. As I often joke about goldens, the only risk to someone breaking into your home, a home protected by a golden retriever, is if the thief is allergic to dog saliva. But they're loud, almost ferocious barkers so with Burton in the house, we feel safe and secure. (However, once the intruder is in the house, it might be a different story.)

Hardly a problem if you're a golden retriever owner. You don't get a golden retriever as a guard dog. You get a golden retriever as the perfect family dog: loving, affectionate and playful. And as a member of the family, he is entitled to all the benefits forthwith. One of which is to maintain his health. (As an example, I just spent \$170 yesterday on an emergency veterinary appointment because he had a loose stool two nights in a row.) And the prevailing opinion about neutering dogs is, unless you're using them to stud/breed, it's better, all things considered, to neuter/spay the animal – and that's not just Bob Barker speaking.

Nevertheless, though this procedure is a net positive, it's still surgery. I'm sure I'll have to sign some sort of waiver. But I have been down the road before, not literally (I'm using a spay specialist-type veterinarian that's a referral) so I'm not worried, exactly. I'm more anxious, as I would be about any family member having any a medical procedure, no matter how minor. Stranger things have happened on an operator table, maybe even in an examining room. I'll be glad when it's over. Identical to how I felt on the days leading up to my Bar Mitzvah. I survived that. I'm sure I'll survive this.

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

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