

Alexandria Gazette Packet



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First responders and volunteers gather for a photo prior to the Friendsgiving Dinner celebration Nov. 26 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET
Alexandria Police Chief Tarik McGuire greets attendees at the Friendsgiving dinner Nov. 26 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Friendsgiving Hundreds turn out for community celebration.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Hundreds of children and families gathered at Charles Houston Recreation Center Nov. 26 as the annual Friendsgiving dinner was

“Building bridges with law enforcement in our community is so important.”
— Sheriff Sean Casey

celebrated in the community.

“We have been doing this for the last 20 years with all of our first responders,” said organizer Michael Johnson. “It started with Keith Burns, who went to T.C. then played with the Denver Broncos and is now coaching at Tennessee State. This is something he

wanted to do for the community.”

With Officer Bennie Evans as head chef, volunteers were on hand to cook and serve the pre-Thanksgiving meal to families from across the city.

SEE HUNDREDS TURN OUT, PAGE 11



A volunteer serves Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 26 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



Assistant Police Chief Easton McDonald gives a high five to fellow officers at the Friendsgiving dinner Nov. 26 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



Sgt. Benjamin Saks visits with a guest at the Nov. 26 Friendsgiving at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

THE CHAMBER ALX

Looking for networking events, business updates, and advocacy support in 2024? Join The Chamber ALX now at thechamberalx.com

NEWS BRIEFS

SOURCE: CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Webinar on Stormwater Utility Fee Credit Program

Alexandria residents are invited to learn about the Stormwater Utility Fee Credit Program during a live webinar on Thursday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m.

The webinar will be hosted via Zoom by the City's Department of Transportation and Environmental Services Stormwater Management Division. Staff will present information about the program and answer any questions participants may have during a Q&A session. Click here to join the webinar.

The City will accept applications for the Stormwater Utility Fee Credit Program December 1 through February 15. Property owners can apply for a reduction – or 'credit' – of up to 50 percent on their SWU Fee by installing and maintaining eligible stormwater management practices on their property.

The SWU Fee, which is paid by all property owners as a separate line item on real estate tax bills, is based on the amount of impervious area – or hard surfaces – on a property. The fee provides a dedicated funding source for the City's stormwater management programs, including flood mitigation capital projects under Flood Action Alexandria, and operational activities including storm inlet and pipe cleaning.

Approved credits are valid for two years.

Future of Market Square

Redesign of City Hall and Market Square Plaza is reaching a milestone, and city officials are seeking more engagement. Join us for the third community engagement series to help shape the future of this

project. At this session, you'll: preview refined concepts and see how community ideas have helped refine the design concepts; get an exclusive first look and be among the first to view the historical research the design team has gathered as they begin to shape the future of City Hall.

Register online for one of two meetings:

Monday, Dec. 9, 7-8:30 p.m., in person at City Hall

Thursday, Dec. 12, 7-8:30 p.m., virtual

Alexandria Recognizes World AIDS Day, Encourages HIV Testing

Alexandria Health Department recognizes World AIDS Day Sunday, December 1.

World AIDS Day is honored globally to remember those who have been lost due to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and to celebrate progress being made for people living with HIV/AIDS or at risk of future infection.

Over 35 million people have died of HIV and AIDS-related illness worldwide, including members of the Alexandria community. Anyone can be infected with HIV, but due to systemic racism and barriers to care, HIV disproportionately impacts people who identify as Black, non-Hispanic or Hispanic in Alexandria and the U.S.

Around the world, progress is being made against HIV and AIDS. As access to treatment has improved, people with AIDS have lived longer, healthier lives.

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, PAGE 3

FREE MONTH OF RENT!*

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*Limited time offer. Some exclusions may apply. Contact community for more details.

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NEWS

Joining Forces McEneaney becomes Corcoran affiliate.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

For more than 40 years, the name McEneaney has been synonymous with premier real estate services throughout the region. First established in Alexandria in 1980 by retired Navy Captain John McEneaney, the firm grew to encompass Northern Virginia, Washington D.C., and Maryland with agents known for providing elite customer service.

Under the leadership of Maureen McEneaney Dunn, the firm first founded by her father has now become an affiliate of the Corcoran Group, a leading residential real estate brand for 50 years. Through its New York City, Hamptons, and South Florida brokerages, along with its rapidly growing affiliate network, the firm has over 100 offices and more than 4,500 independent salespersons in key urban, suburban, and resort markets worldwide.

"We are going to be the same local company but now with the power of Corcoran," said Michael Day, executive vice president and managing broker of the Alexandria office. "Corcoran was recognized as the most ethical real estate company in New York for 13 years in a row and that aligns perfectly with the priorities that McEneaney has had for 40 plus years."

With more than 420 agents and 40 sup-

"We are going to be the same local company but now with the power of Corcoran."

— Corcoran McEneaney managing broker Michael Day

port staff across 13 offices, Corcoran McEneaney becomes the first affiliate operating in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

"Corcoran is the number one firm in Manhattan and we are the number one firm in the city of Alexandria so it was a strategic alliance," said principal and COO Peter Pejacevich. "Corcoran

was seeking a trusted and respected partner in our market, and the timing couldn't be more perfect."

The official announcement was made Nov. 19 by Pamela Liebman, President and CEO of The Corcoran Group.

"Through establishing a presence in a major city like Washington, D.C., as well as the marketplaces just outside this global hub, we are making a pivotal step in expanding our company's physical footprint and strategic network," Liebman said in a press release. "I am confident this partnership will flourish, ... the McEneaney team's commitment to excellent service resonates with our brand's premium offerings."

The addition of Corcoran McEneaney increases the total agents who carry the Corcoran name by nearly 10 percent, and increases its physical office count by close

reinforcing our commitment to delivering the exceptional service that has defined our company for 45 years."

McEneaney Associates joined forces with Middleburg Real Estate/Atoka Properties in June of 2023. Having led successful careers as agents, Pejacevich and Scott Buzzelli founded Atoka Properties and subsequently acquired Middleburg Real Estate in 2008.

Joining Dunn, Pejacevich and Buzzelli on Corcoran McEneaney's executive leadership team is David Howell, Executive Vice President & Chief Information Officer. Howell is a member of the Hall of Fame for both Virginia Realtors and the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors, where he also formerly served as President.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Local real estate firm McEneaney Associates is now part of the Corcoran Affiliate network.

NEWS BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 5

People around the world take steps every day to prevent future HIV infections by practicing safe sex and receiving pre-exposure prophylaxis, also known as PrEP. Through medical treatment, people with HIV can lower the amount of HIV in their body so much that it cannot be passed on to others through sex.

The best way for an individual to help fight HIV and AIDS and take charge of their own health is by getting tested for HIV. Affordable, confidential HIV testing is available for all people in Alexandria. For a list of local testing options, visit AHD's HIV Testing webpage.

To learn more about HIV and AIDS in Alexandria, visit the Alexandria Commission on HIV/AIDS website.

Housing Needs and Issues Impacting Alexandrians

The Office of Housing would like Alexandrians to complete a survey on housing needs and issues impacting their community to inform the Housing 2040 Master Plan goals and recommendations. The survey is open through Jan. 12, 2025 and is also available in Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, Dari and Pashto. Select your preferred language using the drop down menu in the upper right hand corner of the survey. Paper copies of the survey are available at the Office of Housing, 421 King Street, Suite 215, Alexandria, VA 22314 and at all upcoming engagement events. Surveys will also be mailed upon request. Please contact Christopher Do at 703.746.3084/christopher.do@alexan-

driava.gov to request a mailed copy.

The 2013 Housing Master Plan (HMP) established principles, goals, and strategies to address Alexandria's housing needs through 2025. In partnership with the community and local partners, the City is undertaking an update to the HMP through 2040. Starting with a Housing Needs Assessment, the Housing 2040 process will establish new housing affordability goals and examine housing policies, programs, and tools to support Alexandria residents and workers. The current Housing Master Plan ends in 2025.

Presentations and recordings of the Housing 2040 kick-off meetings are available at alexandriava.gov/Housing-Plan. In addition, the Housing 2040 Education website hosts information on affordable housing development and tools, homeowners programs and resources, and landlord-tenant topics.

“You are heroes every day and we look up to you.”
 — Miracle League president Mac Slover



Mac Slover pitches to Miracle League player Devon Brown during the Sept. 21 game in honor of first responders.



The City of Alexandria Honor Guard marches on the field at the Miracle League tribute to first responders Sept. 21 at the Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center.

Everyday Heroes

Miracle League salutes first responders.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
 GAZETTE PACKET

The Miracle League of Alexandria held its annual tribute to First Responders during the game held Sept. 21 at the Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center.

“Twenty-three years later we remember and strive to find hope, peace and goodwill even though we are haunted by the attack on the citizens of our nation,” said Miracle League president Mac Slover.

A pre-game ceremony included recognition of volunteers from the Alexandria City High School National Honor Society and the Honor Guard that represented first responders.

“Without our first responders this city does not function,” said Miracle League founder Bill Rivers. “Today we have a great opportunity to say thank you to them.”

Captain Bob Gilmore of the Alexandria Sheriff’s Office was on hand for the ceremony and recalled answering the call to help at the Pentagon when he was with the Alexandria Police Department.

“I can still smell the plane burning,” Gilmore said. “It is something I will never forget and I hope others will never forget the tragedy of that day.”

The game was in tribute to the city’s police, fire and rescue and sheriff’s department personnel.

“The Miracle League of Alexandria is proud to salute our men and women first responders,” Slover said. “You are heroes every day and we look up to you.”



Members of the Miracle League of Alexandria pose for a team photo prior to the Sept. 21 game in honor of first responders.

Miracle League Salutes First Responders

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Miracle League president Mac Slover presents a certificate of appreciation to Honor Guard Captain Bob Gilmore of the Alexandria Sheriff's department Sept. 21 at the Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center.



Miracle League president Mac Slover presents a certificate of award to a member of Alexandria City High School's National Honor Society for its continued volunteer service to the Miracle League.

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53rd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade

Part of Alexandria's Biggest Holiday Weekend, Sponsored by Wegmans.

Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Old Town Alexandria

Source: Visit Alexandria
Alexandria was founded in 1749 by Scottish merchants and was named after Scotsman John Alexander who owned the land that became Alexandria. Today, the city continues celebrating its heritage with the iconic Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade on Saturday, December 7, 2024. Dozens of Scottish clans dressed in colorful tartans parade through the streets of Old Town, joined by pipe and drum bands, as well as terriers and hounds, community groups and more.



Bagpipers at the Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk.

PHOTO BY MATT CHENET FOR VISIT ALEXANDRIA

The Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade started as a community event more than 50 years ago to highlight the city's Scottish heritage and support the mission of the Campagna Center, then known as the Campagna Center. The Campagna Center partnered with St. Andrew's Society Washington, DC, Old Presbyterian Meeting House and the City of Alexandria to produce the parade and associated events led by Junior and Supporting

Friends of the Campagna Center. In 2022, to preserve the historic signature event that is a source of civic pride and a key economic driver for the city's small business and hospitality communities, Visit Alexandria took on the role of lead parade producer in partnership with the Campagna Center and the City of Alexandria. Parade will occur rain or shine. Text "ALX-EVENTS" to 888777 to receive event updates.

24th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights

Sponsored by Amazon
Part of Alexandria's Biggest Holiday Weekend

Dec. 7, 2024
Holiday Boat Parade of Lights starts at 5:30 p.m.
Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m.
Old Town Alexandria Waterfront

Source: Visit Alexandria
Old Town Alexandria's historic waterfront will shine for the 24th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights sponsored by Amazon as dozens of brightly lit boats cruise along one mile of the Potomac River shoreline. Enjoy dockside festivities in Waterfront Park including a pop-up beer garden from Port City Brewing Company, food, activities and more.



PHOTO BY MICHIO FOR VISIT ALEXANDRIA

The Boat Parade includes annual festivities at Waterfront Park along with the return of Canal Center festivities to the Old Town North waterfront. Make a day of it—or a weekend! The Boat Parade is part of Alexandria's Biggest Holiday Weekend and is the same day as the 53rd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk

Parade which starts at 11 a.m. Arrive early to enjoy both parades and enjoy local restaurants and shopping.
2 to 8 p.m.: Hands-on activities and food and beverage options at Waterfront Park (1 King Street) (Activities end at 5:30 p.m.)
2 to 8 p.m.: Holiday Festival at Torpedo Factory Art Center (105 N Union St)

ALEXANDRIA
Scottish Christmas Walk Parade
SPONSORED BY
Wegmans

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 / Parade starts at 11 am

PARADE ZONE Expect road closures **MARKET SQUARE** **REVIEWING STAND** **PORTABLE RESTROOMS** (ADA and regular)

2 to 8 p.m.: Canal Center Holiday Art Mart on the Old Town North waterfront (11 Canal Center Plaza)
3:30 p.m.: Santa arrives by fireboat as part of the Holiday Festival at Torpedo Factory Art Center (Alexandria Marina)
5:30 p.m.: Parade begins at the Alexandria City Marina and cruises southward (0 Cameron St.)
Parade start time varies by location: ~5:30 p.m. at City Marina, but earlier to north and later to south
Duration: 45-60 minutes
Note: Viewing locations north of Founders Park may see boats in staging process rather than single-file parade line.

Del Ray Holiday Season Kickoff

Dec. 8, 2024
Kick off the holiday season with the Del Ray Tree & Menorah Lighting, tunes, hot chocolate and much more! Enjoy hand-painted holiday windows in storefronts and start your holiday shopping with a stroll down Mount Vernon Avenue, which will be illuminated by thousands of luminarias.



People line up in the St. Luke's parking lot to buy Keckler's wares.

PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Oliver Keckler's Farm Stand, Here All Winter

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Outdoor temperatures have dropped, the growing season has waned and many farmers market vendors have closed up shop for the year. But all winter long, Oliver Keckler will be selling produce at his Saturday morning farm stand at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 8009 Fort Hunt Road. "In 2023, I only missed one day because the potatoes would have frozen on the table," he said recently. "I've been there in snowstorms, sleet storms and everything. We're farmers."

He has the most products between May and Thanksgiving, but throughout the winter he will have acorn, spaghetti, honey nut, butternut and delicate squash; turnips; potatoes; sweet potatoes and beets. His greenhouses will yield fresh greens, including lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard, kale and bok choy all winter. "I grow them in the ground, in actual dirt like in the field," he explains, "with a cover, the greenhouse, on top. It heats up and it's like they're growing in South Carolina."

Multiple Products

Keckler drives 109 miles from Orchard Country Produce, the 50-acre farm he manages with his father, Gregg, in Gardeners, Pennsylvania. They raise about 25 acres of vegetables, 10 acres of peaches and nectarines and one acre of strawberries. Thanks to his 250 laying hens, he sells fresh eggs year-round.

He brings apples from Hollaughbaugh Brothers, in nearby Biglerville, Pennsylvania, and some beef products from another farm. Keckler's hogs, up to 40 in some

years, eat the excess produce and end up on dinner plates as pork chops, bacon, breakfast and grilling sausages and smoked kielbasa.

Loyal customer Suzanne Lepple emailed, "Our grandchildren love his kielbasa as does a friend in the Northern Neck who says it is as delicious as the kielbasa he ate as a child in Pennsylvania. I just wish our grandchildren loved his veggies as much as they do his meats. Our son and his family enjoy the grillers so we always keep some in the freezer for when we see them. We also buy Oliver's lean shoulder bacon and his chickens are great on the grill. We often give Oliver's products as gifts."

At times, Keckler offers homemade cider, honey, jams, shagbark hickory syrup, bread and butter pickles, apple butter and apple sauce.

Faithful Customers

Keckler had just turned 17 and gotten his drivers' license in 2012 when he started selling in the St. Luke's parking lot. By 2018, it was a year-round market. Why that spot? He had started community supported agriculture (CSA) in the Mount Vernon area and some of his fans persuaded church officials to allow staging the market in the parking lot, right next to Fort Hunt Road.

"I started with two tents and card tables," Keckler chuckled, and now in the summer he has as many as 12 tents. His customer base has steadily grown and many people are regulars. The COVID-19 virus lockdown in 2020 had a silver lining. "People were scared to go to grocery stores and our market went crazy. People realized we were there," he said.

From May through mid-November on Thursdays, he also sets up on Belle View Boulevard at the Belle View Condominiums, another high-visibility spot. "We love Belle

View and Belle View loves us," he touts.

The Rewards

Though many days are long and the work can be taxing, he loves farming. "Growing up, I always had a garden. I always enjoyed seeing things grow in the dirt," he said.

"Going to a market is the reward of growing food. Selling and having customer appreciation is the reward of the week," he contends.

He enjoys interacting with customers. "I try to get to know people, to know their names," he says. The scene is so friendly that many customers knew when he got married and had children. "It's like we're all family," he said.

His family is all in. He and his wife, Elisabeth, have two boys and two girls, from age one month to seven. Living on a farm and dealing with many people are "a good life for the children," he believes. "They think we are giving away stuff," he jokes. With his new double-cab truck that holds six, the whole family can go to the summer markets. "Last summer on Saturdays, we were all there," he said. Keckler's father sells at a Columbia, Maryland, market and Fairfax City during the growing season.

"We can't wait until it is strawberry season again," wrote Lepple. No doubt others eagerly await his raspberries, peaches, sweet corn, tomatoes, eggplants, zucchinis and more.

He will be at St. Luke's on Dec. 7, 14 and 21 and in 2025, on January 4 and every Saturday thereafter, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

More information: www.orchardcountryproduce.com

ENTERTAINMENT

ANNUAL OLD TOWN HOLIDAY OUTDOOR DECORATING CONTEST

The Old Town Walled Garden Club announces the annual holiday outdoor decorating contest.

Founded in 1959, this will be the 55th year the Old Town Walled Garden Club has sponsored this contest. From traditional greens to more contemporary designs, Alexandria's decorations make Old Town a holiday destination. The contest recognizes the most striking holiday exterior decorations in the Historic District. In keeping with Old Town's historic provenance, contest rules require that - except for festive bows and ribbons - the decorations should feature only natural materials. For the residential contest, the decorations must all be made by the homeowners themselves. Professionally-made decorations are not eligible for the residential contest. For the commercial contest, decorations can be professionally created, however decorations should only feature natural materials. Judging criteria include originality of design, scale, color, contrast, and attractiveness from the street. The first, second, and third place winners for the residential contest will receive gift certificates from local area restaurants or businesses. Judges will consist of Old Town Walled Garden Club members and judging will take place Wednesday, December 11th., so they encourage everyone to start planning today. The contest is free to enter. If you're interested in participating in the contest, send an email to OT-WGClub@gmail.com and provide your name, address, email address and telephone contact, and our judges will be sure to come by and check out your décor.

ENDING DEC. 8

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

THROUGH 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.

ENDING 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.

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 Event. 6:30-10:30 p.m. At The Atrium, 277 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Campagna Center and partners will celebrate the Scottish Christmas Walk Weekend from December 6 - 7, 2024. This holiday party always occurs on the Friday before the Scottish Christmas Walk parade and offers guests the chance to sample Scotland via its distinct spirit, Scotch, as well as to enjoy delicious catering, music, and entertainment, with all proceeds supporting the nonprofit's work. For the past 50 years, Campagna Center, which is committed to improving the lives of Alexandria's children and families through a variety of impactful programs that promote learning and growth for everyone, has embraced the Scottish-filled event as tradition. Visit the website: <https://www.campagnacenter.org>.

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



Veterans' Remembrance Wreaths posted on over 4,000 Veterans' graves at Alexandria National Cemetery, December 2023.

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 Joy. 2024 Senior Citizens' Holiday Luncheon. 2-4 p.m. At

Alexandria City High School Cafeteria, 3330 King Street, Alexandria. Sponsored by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Zeta Chi Omega Chapter and the Ivy Foundation of Northern Virginia. Featuring games, prizes, gifts and dancing.

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, 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. 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 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. 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.

THURSDAY/DEC. 12

Joe Jamaldinian "Us" Exhibit. 6:30-8:30 p.m. At Principle Gallery, Alexandria. "Us" is a 12' x 4' piece by Virginia artist Joe Jamaldinian executed in acrylic paints on raw canvas, and depicts 15 human qualities through the ages that enrich and plague humanity, driving both progress and conflict. The Dec. 12 event will include a talk by the artist at 7:15 p.m. and feature other selections from Jamaldinian's work, including his series, Androgyny; his "Women" collection; and his signature piece, In Search of One's Self; as well as a collection of his drawings.

DEC. 12 TO JAN. 12, 2025

A Gentle Unroot: A Latinx Perspective. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Curated by Claudina Hannon. Artist Reception: Sunday, December 15, 4 - 6 p.m. Artist Talk: Sunday, January 12, 2:30 p.m. A Gentle Unroot: A Latinx Perspective uncovers the possibilities for what happens when someone leaves their native Latin American land to reside elsewhere, and what they choose to keep with them physically and mentally throughout their daily lives.

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 Marche 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.

CAPITAL ART & CRAFT

FESTIVAL/DEC 13-15
Join 300+ artists and vendors, and thousands of attendees at the Winter Capital Art and Craft Festival. Enjoy shopping for beautiful one-of-a-kind art, jewelry, clothing, furnishings, pottery, décor, and more. www.capitalartandcraftfestivals.com

ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Wreaths Across America-Alexandria. 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. At Alexandria National Cemetery, 1450 Wilkes Street, Alexandria. The 9:30 a.m. kickoff ceremony commences with a 10-minute tribute, including Civil Air Patrol Cadets escorting eight military service representatives (active duty or retirees) carrying ceremonial wreaths to hang at the Alexandria Cemetery American Flag Pole. Come early for a free parking spot, on the streets local to the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex. About 250 cars will be admitted into the Bethel Cemetery access roads and parking spots as well. VFW parking attendants will assist. Then the public volunteers who show up are admitted to the cemetery and are normally issued two wreaths each to respectfully place on the 4,229 veterans' graves within the cemetery bounds. For the past three years, over 60 active duty military attaché officers from foreign embassies joined us wearing their respective country's uniforms, in paying their respects.

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

Fine Art Photography, Food and Merriment. 2-4 p.m. At Multiple Exposures Gallery, Studio 312, Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 North Union Street, Alexandria. Enjoy light refreshments, the Capital Perspectives exhibition that decks the walls, and an abundance of holiday cheer. This Holiday Open House is also a special chance to wish MEG member Tim Hyde a fond farewell as he gets ready to leave at the end of the year. (Special bonus — you might also meet the two talented artists who'll be joining us in 2025.)

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 21

The Gift of Music. 7:30 p.m. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, Alexandria. Join the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra with this holiday musical tradition. Celebrate the season with family and friends. Join Conductor James Ross and the Alexandria Symphony for carols, classics, and sparkling holiday favorites. Plus, special guest violinist, Chelsey Green and The Green Project, fuse classical and contemporary, jazz and R&B.

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



The Nutcracker Ballet will be presented by the Metropolitan School for the Arts on Dec. 14-15, 2024 in Alexandria.

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.

CHRISTMAS EVE DINING, DEC. 24

Ada's On the River, 3 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Open from 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., Ada's will be serving two delicious Christmas Eve specials, the Chilean Seabass made with cherry tomatoes, asparagus, fingerling potatoes, herbs, and miso brown butter for \$45 or the Prime Kansas City Strip 24 Oz for \$89.

BARCA Pier & Wine Bar, 2 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria.

BARCA Pier is inviting guests to enjoy two festive specials in addition to their regular menu on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Featured specials include the Catalan Lamb Kebab for \$26 or the Crab Stuffed Jumbo Shrimp for \$27. BARCA Pier will open on Christmas Eve from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and 12 to 9 p.m. on Christmas Day.

The Majestic, 911 King Street, Alexandria.

Open from 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., Majestic will offer two special additions to their regular menu on Christmas eve. Guests can enjoy Pan Seared Duck Breast made with butternut squash purée, honey glazed parsnips, and orange sauce for \$35 or Oven Roasted Rockfish made with zucchini, eggplant, red peppers, onions, tomato-caper sauce, and herb oil for \$32.

Mia's Italian Kitchen, 100 King Street, Alexandria.

On Christmas Eve, Mia's will be open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., offering two special dishes. Guests can enjoy

Veal Chop Parmigiana, made with a pounded and breaded bone-in veal chop, spicy rigatoni pomodoro, melted mozzarella, and saba for \$39, or Lobster Ravioli, featuring Maine lobster, pecorino, lobster sauce, ricotta, and sherry cream sauce for \$29.

Vola's Docksider Grill, 101 North Union Street, Old Town Alexandria. On Christmas Eve, Vola's will be open during regular hours, from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., ensuring a smooth and festive transition into the holiday spirit. For \$35 each dish, guests can enjoy two special dishes: Lobster & Spinach Ravioli with asparagus, tomato cream sauce, pecorino romano, and fried sage, or King Salmon with quinoa, confit pearl onions, roasted butternut squash, watercress, and salsa verde. The regular menu will also be available.

CHRISTMAS DAY DINING, DEC. 25

Ada's On The River, 3 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Ada's will be open from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Christmas Day, offering a three-

course prix fixe menu for \$79 per person. The menu features dishes like Preserved Root Vegetable Tartare, Shrimp-Stuffed Halibut, Coal-Roasted Rack of Lamb, and more. For \$29, kids can enjoy options such as White Cheddar Mac & Cheese and Petite Filet Mignon.

Joe Theismann's Restaurant, 1800A Diagonall Road, Alexandria.

Indulge in a sumptuous Christmas Day Buffet, available from 11:30am to 9pm. The buffet features a Carving Station, a Salad Table, a Bread and Dessert Table, and a Hot Table. Priced at \$59 per person and \$19 for kids, this festive buffet promises a delectable spread to satisfy every palate with dishes like Praline-Sweet Potato Casserole, Spiral Ham, Brioche Stuffing and more.

The Majestic, 911 King Street, Alexandria.

On Christmas Day from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Majestic will offer a Christmas dinner for \$79 per person, featuring a four-course prix fixe menu with a variety of delicious options. Dishes include Butternut Squash Soup, Crab Croquettes, Roasted Turkey,

Truffle Mash Potatoes, and more. The Majestic will also offer a Thanksgiving Bar Menu with an array of starters, main dishes, sides, and desserts. Children ages 12 and under can enjoy the Kids Menu, which includes three delicious courses.

Mia's Italian Kitchen, 100 King Street, Alexandria. Mia's Italian Kitchen, the beloved traditional Italian eatery located at the riverside end of King Street in Old Town Alexandria, is offering a three-course Christmas feast for \$49 per person. The menu includes dishes like Shrimp Fra Diavolo Bruschetta, Lobster Ravioli, Braised Lamb Shank, and more. The restaurant will be open from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Christmas Day.

Royal Restaurant, 730 North Saint Asaph Street, Alexandria. Royal will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., offering its regular menu, along with a new breakfast, lunch, and dinner menu, plus two Christmas specials. Guests can choose between Prime Rib with garlic mashed potatoes, honey-glazed carrots, horseradish cream, and au jus for \$35, or Spiral Ham with mashed sweet potatoes, candied pecans, garlic green beans, and pineapple glaze for \$25.

Vola's Docksider Grill, 101 North Union Street, Old Town Alexandria. Spend Christmas Day at Vola's Docksider Grill and enjoy a special three-course prix fixe menu for \$49 per person. The menu includes dishes like Charred Octopus, Pork Shank Osso Buco, Lobster & Spinach Ravioli, and more. Vola's will be open from 11:30am to 10 pm, offering plenty of time for friends and family to gather and savor a festive holiday meal with a beautiful waterfront view.

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.

DECEMBER

Wed. 4: Aimee Mann & Ted Leo Xmas Show ft. Paul F. Tompkins, Nellie McKay & Josh Gondelman \$69.50 SOLD OUT!
 Thu. 5: Hot Tuna Acoustic \$69.50 SOLD OUT!
 Fri. 6: Chris Botti \$110.00
 Sat. 7: Chris Botti \$110.00 SOLD OUT!
 Sun. 8: The Musical Box - The 50th Anniversary of Genesis - "Selling England By The Pound" \$59.50
 Mon. 9: Musiq Soulchild \$95.00 SOLD OUT!
 Tue. 10: Musiq Soulchild \$95.00
 Thu. 12: Micky Dolenz of The Monkees: Songs & Stories \$75.00 SOLD OUT!
 Fri. 13: Don McLean "A Starry Starry Night" A Night of Hits & Holiday Favorites \$79.50
 Sat. 14: Southside Johnny & The Asbury Jukes \$59.50
 Sun. 15: The String Queens "Home For The Holidays" \$35.00
 Mon. 16: A Christmas Brass Spectacular feat. The Capitol Bones All-Brass Big Band \$39.50
 Tue. 17: Tab Benoit w/ Jesse Dayton \$49.50
 Wed. 18: A John Waters Christmas 2024 \$59.50 SOLD OUT!
 Thu. 19: Carbon Leaf "Time Is The Playground Tour" \$49.50
 Fri. 20: Carbon Leaf "Time Is The Playground Tour" \$49.50 SOLD OUT!
 Sat. 21: Pieces of a Dream \$49.50
 Sun. 22: Luther Re-Lives 'Holiday Show' starring William "Smooth" Wardlaw \$49.50
 Thu. 26: Tarsha Fitzgerald Prod. Presents VOICES OF MOTOWN Christmas Concert! \$39.50
 Fri. 27: Charles Esten "Love Ain't Pretty Tour" \$59.50
 Sat. 28: A Very MAYSA Christmas \$69.50
 Sun. 29: Bela Dona Band \$39.50
 Tue. 31: New Year's Eve with The Seldom Scene and Tim & Savannah Finch & Eastman String Band -7:30pm- \$49.50

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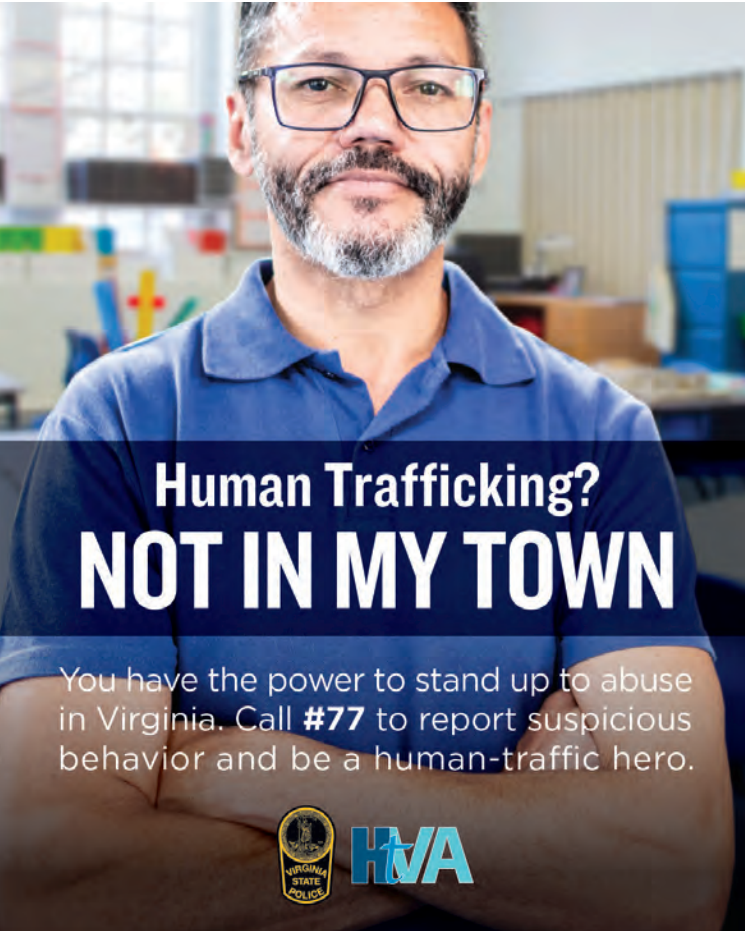
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Gazette Packet



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An independent, locally owned weekly
newspaper delivered
to homes and businesses.
**Published by
Local Media Connection LLC**
1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Free digital edition delivered to
your email box. Go to
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A Connection Newspaper
The Alexandria Gazette Packet is distributed weekly
to selected homes in the City of Alexandria.
Any owners or occupants of premises that do not
wish to receive the paper can notify the publisher
by telephone at 703-778-9426 or by email to
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com, and the
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Hundreds Turn Out for Community Celebration

FROM PAGE 1

“Officer Evans has been cooking for us for the last 18 years,” Johnson said. “My role is to make sure that families have turkey and Thanksgiving baskets and we try to feed them as well.”

Supporters and sponsors include the Alexandria Sheriff’s Office, the Alexandria Police Department, Alexandria Fire Department, the Keith and Michelle Burns Foundation, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, the Social Responsibility Group and My Fathers Church.

The dinner is a way for members of the community to get to know their local first responders.

“Building bridges with law enforcement in our community is so important,” said Sheriff Sean Casey. “We want to be friends with you, we want to be partners with you. We don’t always want to see folks when they are at their worst, we want to see folks at their best which is here having dinner with all of you.”



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET
Pastor Elwood Jones of Landmark Church with his family at the Nov. 26 Friendsgiving dinner at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



An attendee enjoys the Friendsgiving dinner Nov. 26 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



Attendees are served turkey as part of the Friendsgiving dinner Nov. 26 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



Beatrice Cross Taylor, seated, shakes hands with Police Chief Tarik McGuire as Michael Johnson looks on during the Nov. 26 Friendsgiving dinner at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteerallexandria.org
 ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program

will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteerallexandria.org/ALIVE>
 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.
 Join Friends’ Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City’s most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria’s top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.
 STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s STEM Volunteer Program, stem-volunteers.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 donaledge@aol.com.

A New World Record



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Typically, an in-building task at your local MVA is not grounds for excitement/enthusiasm; you name the positive adjective. And this might apply whether you have an appointment or whether you’re taking a number upon arrival and sitting in their ample waiting room. The MVA is rarely described as an-in-and-out experience. It’s known more as an “in” experience where the ‘out’ comes much later. To survive the ordeal, aside from being 100-percent sure you have all your documents, all your signatures, all your proofs of identification, bring all your patience, too. Also, it might be further advised that you should pack a lunch, or at least a snack, because the likelihood that you’ll be waiting long enough to get hungry is high.

With this opinion in hand – and head, I had reason for an in-building visit recently which didn’t offer an appointment: returning license plates for a car we no longer owned and one which, if I understood MVA guidelines, entitled me to a one-year’s registration refund: \$67.50. Furthermore, if I wanted to collect, showing up in person was the best way. Going to one of the MVA’s self-service kiosks, or to one of their inside-the-MVA-building machines was not recommended. For me especially, the chance for operator error was also high. Therefore, I decided to go to the local MVA office and to quote my old friend and long-ago softball coach, Marty B. who used to implore our team whenever we needed to overcome some game-related issue: “Suck it up, Line.” (Our team’s name was “The Fine Line.” The roster included several architects.) Given the “adult beverages” consumed during these once-a-week games, our team’s name should have been “The Blurry Line.” There was no avoiding this issue however, I had to show up in person at the MVA and/or suffer the consequences. I could not conduct/complete my business otherwise. But since I was expecting a refund, I figured that in this rare case, the MVA was sort of paying me for my time. I also was hoping, naively, that completing this process in person might result in an immediate refund. Unfortunately, that was not the case. However, it eliminated any delay caused by yours truly attempting to do it myself. This way, I was guaranteed the process was proper and that the refund would be forthcoming. (I have experience in these matters. As such, I’ve learned, repeatedly, that often it’s best left to the professionals.)

Brimming with anxiety and presumptive stress over the time yet-to-be-served, I got in my car and headed down the road. In preparation for the day ahead, I had filled my pockets with some bite-size Dove chocolates. Targeting a mid-morning arrival, thinking that it was off peak, I turned into the MVA lot and ever hopeful I drove to the front of their parking lot hoping for a miracle. And there it was, the closest available space to the building located between the handicapped parking spots and the one reserved for police officers. what my friend Sean describes as “rock star parking.” I went in headfirst and didn’t look back. Taking a deep breath, I not only parked the car but my patience too; I got out of my car and walked the 10-yards or so to the revolving front door and in I went.

Once inside, I looked around to get my bearings. To my left were several self-service machines already backed up 5-plus deep. Ahead was the information station. There was one person in line and another in conversation with the MVA representative. I walked up to the desk and excused myself as I asked the employee where I go to turn in license plates on a car I no longer own. The man said: Right here.” Super. I walked around the security rope and got in line. The person already at the desk finished his business as soon as I got in line. The man ahead of me stepped up to the desk and asked/said something. Whatever it was, it meant that he couldn’t get any more help from this MVA employee. Within 30 seconds or so, the man was politely dismissed, and it was my turn. I told my license plate story as I handed them over to the MVA staffer. He took the plates and immediately began typing into his computer. Soon I heard the printer printing. The employee then handed me the receipt for my plates. The same receipt confirmed the refund. It said I would be receiving it in the mail in six to eight weeks. “Is that it, I asked?” “Yes,” I was told and likewise politely dismissed. My task completed; I turned around to leave the building. I walked back out through the revolving doors outside to my car.

Incredulous at my amazing good fortune to be finished so quickly, I looked at my watch: Five minutes after I had arrived, the deal was done. I hadn’t even started on the Dove chocolates yet. I think I’m going to call Ripley’s. I need to have this experience documented for posterity. Otherwise, who would believe it?

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



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