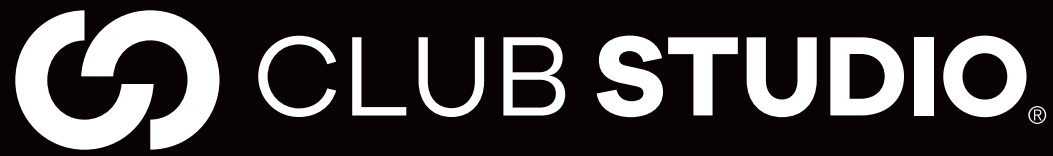




CLASSIFIED, PAGE 14 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 16

Children's & Teens'
Connection 2024

Crestwood Elementary,
Annie Vo, 5, kindergarten,
Snowman in the Snow.



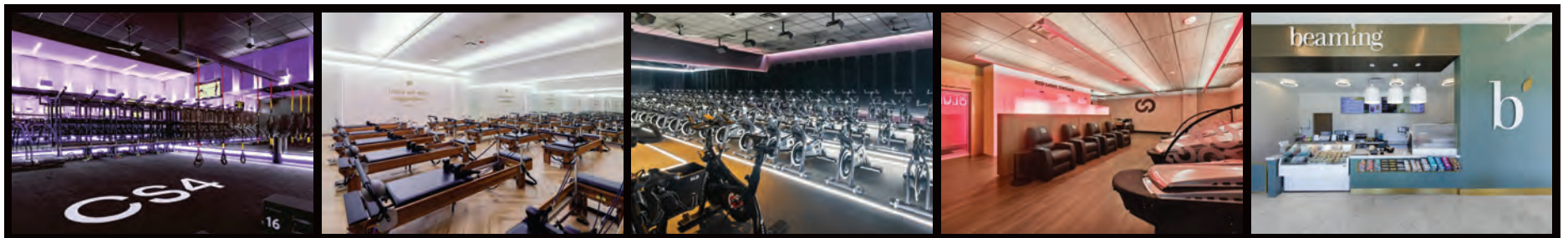
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Teenager Starts Business to Help Afghan Girls



PHOTOS BY DONNA PARRY

Display of Afghan crafts for sale at holiday party Sunday, Dec. 15.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Taiba carefully arranges the shoulder bags, tablecloths, handbags and shirts that have been made by girls in Afghanistan. She is selling them at a holiday party at Crystal Gateway on Sunday night where a friend of the family has invited her to display the crafts. Tomato-basil, Tuscan white bean and split pea with chorizo soups are being served in the room nearby along with appetizers and desserts provided by the residents.

Taiba Rahmani came to the United States from Afghanistan four years ago with her family after her father's car was blown up with an IED and their American friends there told them, "This is it; you have to get out." Her father had been working with the American government there.

Now Taiba is 14-years-old and a high school student at Wakefield High School in Arlington. She just started a business three months ago called Vibes LLC. She purchases handmade goods from girls in Afghanistan and sells them here. "This gives the girls financial stability and develops a skill. They will pass it to other girls who will learn how to do it too."

Taiba explains, for example, one girl in Afghanistan doesn't have a father, and her mother can't work. She has a little brother. "This is the only income they make, and the girl gets a decent amount by the standards in Afghanistan"

Another girl has a father who is paralyzed and two little brothers who are also paralyzed. This allows her to help support the family.

Taiba works through her aunt Zohal who lives in Afghanistan and who is the primary contact with the 18 girls now employed in the

business. "My aunt buys the material which she gives to the girls. It costs about \$5 each for a handbag and takes about 5 hours to make one."

But the complication comes with the shipping of the parcels. Her father Abdul Rahman Rahmani explains there is no direct flight between Afghanistan and the U.S. so they have to go through Dubai. This means it costs \$8 to send each parcel. "And the banks don't work between the countries so we have to send cash to pay the girls making it a little difficult."

Taiba has an online presence but has just sold her first handmade goods in person at the Wakefield High School holiday fair on Saturday morning. Sunday evening she is scheduled to have a table at the annual holiday party at Crystal Towers. Taiba says if you order online you can create your own design and they will make it.



Taiba Rahmani with her handmade goods made by girls in Afghanistan.

Abdul says the idea of starting this business got started when Taiba was making crafts like airplanes and butterflies out of paper. She brought them to him. He explained her younger sister is a writer who gets 2-3 stories a week published. Taiba was saying, "if my sister can do that, I can do this so why not produce something meaningful." And it became a business.

Although it is not currently possible for girls to get an education in Afghanistan, she is hoping to use some of the proceeds from the business to bring a girl or two to

America to get an education here.

Abdul says right now they are only able to manage the business they have but he is hoping if it goes well they can potentially hire more girls and turn it into something else. Taiba says, "I want to say I would like to be a global leader in these sustainable handmade goods."

Her father says, "She has great vision. This is very positive. It turns out to be a big thing. And the amount of love we have received from people in America is a treasure to me."

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.

ARLINGTON'S NEW STATE-OF-THE-'ART' FACILITY UNVEILED

The Arlington Transit (ART) Operations and Maintenance Facility (AOMF) is officially open, marking a major milestone in the County's transportation

future. A ribbon-cutting was held on Tuesday, Dec. 10, to mark the completion of the \$96.6 million project – designed to support the County's expanding public transit bus fleet for years to come.

The event on South Shirlington Road celebrated ART's permanent home

for maintenance and operations, the culmination of eight years of planning and more than two years of construction since the County broke ground.

With nearly 80 ART buses on the road, the new facility in Green Valley is designed to accommodate up to 61 buses, with the capacity to charge

up to 47 battery-electric buses.

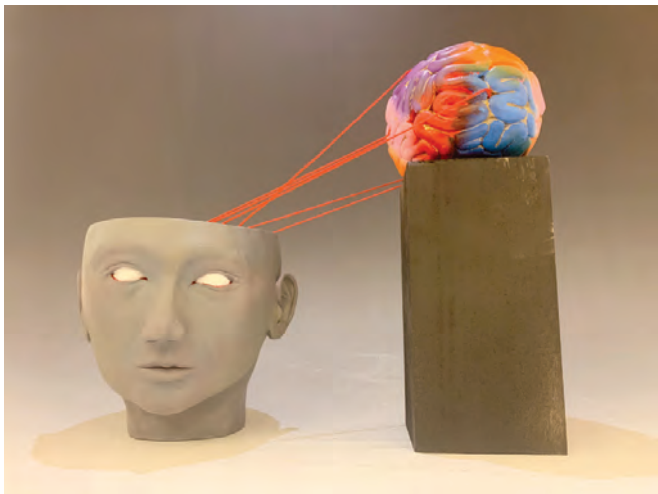
DONATIONS NEEDED

Pet Food Bank. AWLA has established a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to

afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 8

CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION



LynxSword, Grade12. AP3D Art and Design, Mind-Body



Reese Clark, Grade12, AP3D Art and Design, Breath



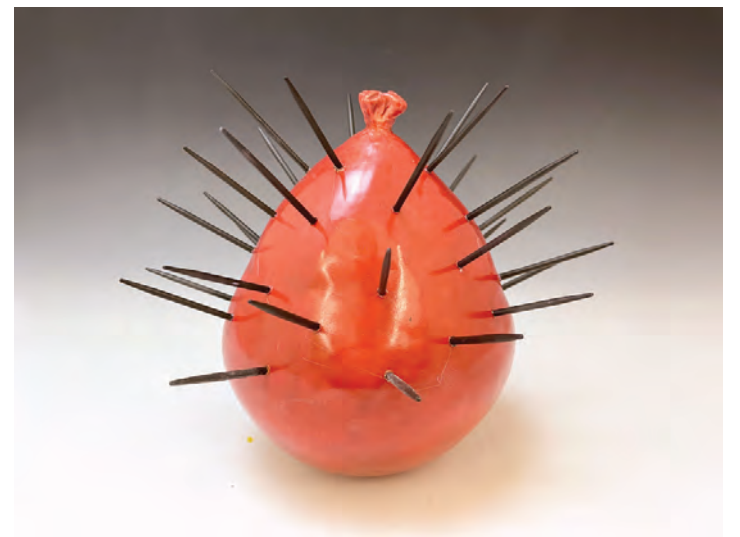
Greta Bensten, Grade12. AP3D Art and Design. Evolution



Ellie McCracken, Grade12, AP3D Art and Design, Conversation



Martha Gaginsky, Grade12-AP3D Art and Design-Hand



Bennett Greene, Grade11, Ceramics3. PinBallloon



Yorktown High School

CHRISTINE BOLON,
ART TEACHER

Emily Miller, Grade10,
Ceramics2, Sgraffito Teapot



Travis Dai, Grade12, AP3D Art and Design, Vase



Morgan Shelton-Grade12, AP3D Art and Design. Movement Vase



Elise Colwell, Grade12, AP3D Art and Design, Lobster



Ava Katona, Grade12,
Shark,
AP3D Art and Design

CIRT Investigates Officer-Involved Shooting Death in Rosslyn

A man is dead and two Arlington police officers are on “routine administrative leave” after one of the officers shot the man at the Rosslyn Metro Station.

The regional Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) is investigating the fatal shooting by the Arlington County Police Department at the entrance to the Rosslyn Metro Station.

At approximately 3:45 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 10, police were dispatched to the report of a suspicious person inside a business in the 1500 block of Wilson Boulevard. The preliminary investigation by responding officers indicates the adult male suspect engaged employees in conversation during which he displayed a knife from his pocket before leaving the scene.

Police report: Two responding officers located an individual they said matched the suspect description on the top floor of the Rosslyn Metro Station. During their attempt to detain the suspect, the suspect removed a knife from his person. A physical altercation ensued while the suspect was in possession

of the knife, and one officer discharged their firearm, striking the suspect. Following the shooting, officers rendered lifesaving measures before medics transported the man to an area hospital where he died. The deceased has been identified as Cedric Butler, 27, of no fixed address.


A knife was recovered at the scene.

The two officers were transported to an area hospital; one with non-life-threatening injuries and one for medical evaluation and both have since been released. In accordance with department policy, the officers have been placed on routine administrative leave. Following completion of the investigation by CIRT, the investigative file will be forwarded to the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office for independent review.

Anyone with information related to this incident is asked to contact the Arlington County Police Department’s Tip Line at 703-228-4180 or ACPDTipline@arlingtonva.us. Information may also be reported anonymously through the Arlington County Crime Solvers hotline at 1-866-411-TIPS (8477).

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CHILDREN'S AND TEENS' CONNECTION



Washington Liberty High

Ghost Collins, Grade 10, Still Life, Pencil on paper, Washington Liberty High School, Arlington, VA, Art Teacher Gwenn Zaberer

Lucas Munoz Lopez, Grade 10, Still Life, Pencil on paper, Washington Liberty High School, Arlington, VA, Art Teacher Gwenn Zaberer



Misel Flores Jovel, Grade 11, Still Life, pencil on paper, Washington Liberty High School, Arlington, VA, Art teacher Gwenn Zaberer

Gretchen Virgadamo, Grade 9, Still Life Pencil on paper, Washington Liberty High School. Arlington, VA, Art Teacher Gwenn Zaberer



Maria Salgado Ulloa, Grade 9, Still Life, Pencil on paper, Washington Liberty High School, Arlington, VA, Art teacher Gwenn Zaberer

Maya Ensley, Grade 9, Still Life, Pencil on paper, Washington Liberty High School, Arlington, VA, Art teacher Gwenn Zaberer





PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Sip and Shop at J. McLaughlin: from left customer, Jasmine Witcher, Vice President of Development at Culpepper Garden and Laura Orihuela also from Culpepper Garden.

Sip and Shop Raises Funds For Culpepper Garden

BY SHIRLEY RUHEARLINGTON CONNECTION

The Sip and Shop Event held at J. McLaughlin on Thursday, Dec. 12 combined holiday shopping with glasses of sparkling Prosecco. Barbara Stimson, store manager, said J. McLaughlin holds the Sip and Shop events monthly to support non-profits in the community. The store is located at 6236 Old Dominion Drive in the Chesterbrook Shopping Center just on the border between McLean and Arlington.

Stimson said they have been lo-

cated in the strip of stores in the newly reimagined mall for about a year and a half. “We are a boutique specializing in men and women’s fashions. We offer cashmere, sparkles, boots, heels, whatever you need. When you leave you are put together.”

Culpepper Garden was chosen for the 15 percent of today’s proceedings on the advice of a very good customer who was shopping for her outfit for the Culpepper Barbecue and Blues annual spring fundraiser. Stimson says, “She asked us if we ever did fundraisers to help groups like Culpepper and

that led to today.”

Stimson explained, “We try to be part of the community and support schools and local groups. I’ve been loving every day.”

Jasmine Witcher, Vice President of Development at Culpepper Garden says the funds from today’s event will go directly to supporting affordable housing and essential services for seniors with limited incomes. Culpepper Garden is an award winning affordable non-profit retirement community that provides affordable housing and services for seniors in Arlington, Virginia.

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The art and writing of local students is always a bright spot. We offer many thanks to the art teachers who guided these artists and compiled the art to appear here, and the English and Creative Writing teachers who inspired their students to write poetry, essays and short stories.

We heard from students who have par-

ticipated in this edition for many years, and from teachers who also have compiled their students' art over the years, and in some cases from different schools and even school systems. We have homeschool families who have also made the Children's & Teens Connection or Gazette an annual tradition.

Take some time to browse this edition, it

is full of gems.

You can find the other Children's and Teens' editions by going to <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/> and then scrolling down to Children's. Thanks for reading.

Now the Connection will be on a break until after the New Year, with the exact

week we'll be back to be determined by ad revenue and other factors, but likely Jan. 8 or 15.

In the meantime contact us, for advertising, contact debfunk@@connectionnewspapers.com or sales@connectionnewspapers.com.

For content, contact me mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com.

Merry Christmas

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

The pages of the Connection, both paper and web, have been full of holiday spirit beginning before Thanksgiving. Amazing group and individual efforts to help the needy, holiday parades, Santa arriving by boat, Santa arriving by horse-drawn carriage, Santa arriving by fire engine, Santa arriving by motorcycle, tree lightings, Menorah lightings (coming soon), stories of giving, secular celebrations, religious celebrations. Shopping locally. Giving locally. It's been a holiday extravaganza.

Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in

spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.

It is also about embracing the teachings of Jesus: to love thy neighbor as thyself; to help the needy; to feed the hungry and clothe the poor; to care for the sick; to invite and welcome strangers; to treat others as you would have them treat you.

Matthew 7:12:

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 25:35-40:

“For I was hungry and you gave

me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

EDITORIAL

HERE IS the verse relating the birth of Jesus from the Bible, Luke 2: 4-19:

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David). To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in

the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, ‘Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.’ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

Merry Christmas to you.
And Happy Holidays.

— MARY KIMM
MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 3

link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYWdZm4tPw2.

Donations Needed. Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 2700 South 19th St., is seeking to replenish its food pantry. Particularly needed are rice (large bags appreciated, the pantry will rebag), dry beans, canned vegetables, soup, small jars of peanut butter, small jars of jelly, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations are collected during Mass each Sunday. Visit www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org for more.

ONGOING

Create a Wildlife Sanctuary. The Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary certification program assists homeowners in restoring their home's natural habitat by providing information on sustainable gardening practices. These practices include using native plants, removing invasive species, reducing use of pesticides and fertilizers, and creating space for native flora and fauna. Visit audubon-at-home-1/ for more.

Naloxone (Narcan) can save the life of someone who is overdosing, if given in time. Anyone who assists a person in need is protected from liability by the Good Samaritan Law. Naloxone (Narcan) is available without a prescription for a fee at all pharmacies. Obtain it for free by attending a REVIVE! training. Contact Emily Siqveland at 703-228-0913 or esiqveland@arlingtonva.us or visit health.arlingtonva.us/opioid-awareness/ for available training sessions. The Chris Atwood Foundation also offers training to the public. Visit www.chrisatwoodfoundation.org/naloxone for details.

Monthly Memory Café. 1-3 p.m. at 7910 Andrus Road, Suite 6, Alexandria. The Memory Café, a social gathering for individuals living with memory loss and their families, virtually. Registration is free and highly recommended to reserve spots, which are open on a first come first served basis. To reserve a spot, please call 571-210-5551 or email bdesai@seniorhelpers.com. Visit www.dementiacareconnections.com/memory-cafe or www.seniorhelpers.com/arlington-alexandria-va for more.

Aging Matters. 2-3 p.m. Tuesdays on WERA 96.7 LP FM on Arlington's

community radio station. Each week host Cheryl Beversdorf interviews individuals with expertise about a broad array of aging related topics affecting the lives of older adults and their loved ones. Visit www.facebook.com/agingmatterswera to listen to programs. <https://www.mixcloud.com/AgingMatters/>

Volunteer Bike Repair Night. First Tuesday of the month, 6-9 p.m. at Phoenix Bikes, Barcroft Park, 4200 S. Four Mile Run Drive. Volunteers gather to refurbish bikes, sort parts or help with essential tasks. No experience necessary.

Public Financial Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline. Arlington County public hotline that offers a confidential and secure way to report suspected incidents of financial fraud, waste and abuse. Anyone can submit a complaint to the hotline at 1-866-565-9206 or at arlingtonva.ethicaladvocate.com. The hotline website is available in English and Spanish. Phone calls can be taken in many languages.

Created by the Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy (AIRE) in partnership with the Arlington Public Library, the nation's First Energy Lending Library made its debut on Earth Day. Meant to resolve energy issues in the Arlington community,

efficiency tools can be borrowed, such thermal imaging cameras, energy meters and books play a vital role in achieving a “greener” home. Open Sun-Sat 10 a.m.-9 p.m. 1015 N. Quincy St. Visit library.arlingtonva.us/locations/central-library or call 703-228-5990.

Arlington PFLAG Community Group. 7:30-9 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, PFLAG promotes the equality and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people and their families. Meets at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, 4444 Arlington Boulevard. Contact arl.pflag@gmail.com for more or go to www.pflagdc.org

Arlington Rotary Club Lunches. Thursdays, 12 - 1:30 p.m. Club meetings are at 12:15 to 1:15 on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. On the 2nd Thursday we meet at a restaurant in Arlington (currently Texas Jacks BBQ). On the 4th Thursday we meet via Zoom (click HERE to join). Newcomers are welcome to join the Zoom meeting.. Organization comes together for humanitarian services. Listen to guest speakers on various topics of interest. Visit <https://arlingtonrotaryclub.org/JobSeekingHelp>. 5-9 p.m at Columbia Pike Branch Library, 816 S.

Walter Reed Drive. Receive job-related help from the staff and volunteers with applications. Free, but requires registration. Visit www.arlingtonva.libcal.com.

Helmets Toastmasters meet Thursdays, 7:30-8:45 a.m. at Pentagon Library and Conference Center. Toastmasters is an international organization that helps everyone speak, think, lead and listen better. Most clubs are meeting online at this time. Contact Carl Sabath carl.e.sabath.civ@mail.mil or 703-695-2804 or Elizabeth Femrite elizabeth.m.femrite.civ@mail.mil or 571-256-8674.

Soil Testing. Virginia Cooperative Extension is offering soil testing services to analyze soil and determine what is needed to condition soil for plantings. The routine soil test is all one normally needs for a fertility evaluation. Pick up soil sampling box at the Virginia Cooperative Extension Arlington office, 3308 S. Stafford St., 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Send filled soil sample box with form and fee to the Virginia Tech Lab for analysis. Fees vary, visit www.soiltest.vt.edu/Files.

ST. STEPHEN'S AND ST. AGNES SCHOOL



Alex Kocsis, Grade 9



Lila Mclean, Grade 7



Alex Michael, Grade 9



Mia Reinke, Grade 9



Piper Fraley, Grade 5



Cambell Nguyen, Grade 8



Ruby Carnahan, Grade 9



Max Gura, Grade 6

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Lucas Zang, Grade 4



Luca Vallozzi, Grade 6



Rendering of Innovation Campus two story loft, outside view.

Virginia Tech's Innovation Campus to Open Soon

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

For the last three years, many people zipping by on the Metro or driving on the George Washington Parkway have commented that the glassy, oddly-shaped building rising just north of Alexandria's Potomac Yard Metro Station looks like a cruise ship. Others describe it as "gem-shaped."

Its rather bland name – Academic Building One – belies the complexity of its offerings. It sits on Virginia Tech's 3.5-acre Innovation Campus, a 300,000-square-foot, 11-story building at 3000 Potomac Avenue that will open in January to graduate students and focus on studies and research in several cutting-edge computer science and computer engineering fields.

The lead architect, Sven Shockey of the SmithGroup, who earned a master's in architecture degree from Tech, said in an online video that the building is shaped "to adapt to the movement of the sun," to maximize light exposure for solar cells. Photovoltaics are typically put on roofs, he noted, but on this building, they are on the façade and the roof and they generate electricity. The building's base is made of Hokie stone, the signature limestone rock on Tech's Blacksburg home campus. The building is a "calling card for Virginia Tech in Northern Virginia," Shockey commented.

To Nourish Curiosity

Shockey "wanted the building to invoke curiosity," he said. Students will put their curiosity to the test in four areas: artificial intelligence-machine learning; wireless-next generation technology; intelligent interfaces; and quantum architecture and software development, explained Shannon Andrea, Director of Communications. She reported that currently 455 master of engineering students are enrolled and by 2030, there will be between 700 and 800. The faculty



Rendering of Virginia Tech Innovation Campus Academic Building One.

will grow from 17 today to 50 by 2029. Tech will not offer undergraduate courses on this campus.

The university's press announcement said, "We are committed to equipping graduates to become leaders in their careers while helping them gain real-world experience solving urgent challenges alongside researchers, industry executives and national policymakers." When asked to clarify the "urgent challenges," Andrea wrote, "A major component of Innovation Campus courses is project-based learning, in which industry and government bring actual problems they are trying to solve to students, who work together on them in teams over the course of the semester or year."

Inside the building, among other features will be a 3,000-square-foot classroom-auditorium for 200 people classroom style or 300 auditorium style; 14 classrooms with 25 to 90 seats; three studios for on-

line teaching and learning; and 32 "huddle rooms" for student-faculty collaboration; a 1,340-square-foot cyber physical lab; and a two-story drone testing "cage." The roof will have a 4,500-square-foot deck for up to 300 people with views of the Washington, D.C., skyline.

Tech is partnering with its south Arlington neighbor Amazon HQ2 in machine learning programs. Amazon's 2023 move to the area, announced in 2018, was a catalyst for Tech officials' choosing the Alexandria site. The aerospace company Boeing made a \$50 million investment to create scholarships, help recruit faculty and researchers and fund STEM programs for kindergarten through 12th-grade students. Northrop-Grumman committed \$12.5 million for quantum information science and engineering.

Students will commute to the campus. The Metro subway is a five-minute walk and buses regu-



The Virginia Tech Innovation Campus building under construction in 2023.

PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH



The closest Metro subway station is at Potomac Yard.

PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

larly run nearby, but the building will have 169 parking spaces each costing \$140 a month. Virginia Tech has agreements with three Northern Virginia firms to house students.

Officials plan to eventually build two additional buildings there, each around 150,000 square feet.

Though classes will begin in January, the university will hold an official opening celebration on Feb. 28, 2025, open to the public and featuring a keynote address

by Regina Dugan, a two-time Virginia Tech alumna and now president and chief executive officer of Wellcome Leap, a nonprofit that its website says, builds, "Programs that aim to deliver breakthroughs in human health over five to 10 years and demonstrate seemingly impossible results on seemingly impossible timelines."

To learn more, including details on classes and research topics, visit <https://www.vt.edu/innovation-campus/index.html>.

SENIOR LIVING

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Department of Parks and Recreation
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55+ Programs are in person at 55+ Centers unless otherwise noted. A 55+ Pass is required to participate starting at a \$20 annual fee. To join or register, go to registration. arlingtonva.us or call 703-228-4747.

Arlington County's 55+ Centers will not be open Tuesday, Dec. 24 and Wednesday, Dec. 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday.

Holiday charcuterie, learn how to make your charcuterie healthy, delicious and festive, Wednesday, Dec. 18, 10 a.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Presented by Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteers. Registration # 912501-01.

Holiday social at Langston-Brown 55+ Center, Wednesday, Dec. 18, 11 a.m., sponsored by the Center's Advisory Committee. Enjoy treats, trivia and games, Registration # 912890-02.

Walk Fit, a free weekly walking program hosted by Virginia Hospital Center at Lubber Run Community Center, includes 45-minute walk on the indoor track and 15-minute guided stretch exercise to promote balance, flexibility and mobility, Thursday, Dec. 19, 8:30 a.m. Drop-in. Open to all ages; no 55+ Pass required.

Aurora Hills 55+ Center is including a coat drive at their holiday party, Wednesday, Dec. 18, 12:30-2:30 p.m. in partnership with Burke and Herbert Bank and Crest Advanced Dry Cleaners. Gently used coats and jackets of all sizes to be distributed by The Salvation Army. Registration # 912890-03.

Accessories Swap at Walter Reed 55+ Center, Thursday, Dec. 19, 2-3 p.m. Bring no more than five accessories (think purse, scarf, jewelry) to swap with other participants. Registration # 912801-05.

Merry Mocktail recipes demonstrated by Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Food Volunteers, Thursday, Dec. 19, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912501-02.

Genealogy at the Library of Virginia, virtual presentation by Peter North, Library of Virginia Outreach Specialist, Thursday, Dec. 19, 3 p.m. who will describe the Library's extensive genealogical resources. Registration # 912400-17.

Old-time and string band jam, bring a banjo, guitar, fiddle, mandolin or dulcimer for an open jam with Fred Winter, co-founder of New York City Old-Time Music Project, Thursday, Dec. 19, 5 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. All skill levels welcome. Registration # 912304-17.

The Tea Cart in Berryville, VA is on the agenda for the 55+ Travel group, Thursday, Dec. 19. Enjoy the art of an afternoon tea. Cost \$86, Arlington resident; \$99, non-resident. Registration # 902412-12.

Wake and make, early morning art activity with Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Friday, Dec. 20, 9 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912303-17.

Arlington County's 55+ Centers will not be open Tuesday, Dec. 24 and Wednesday, Dec. 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday.

Coffee, Tea or Thee, purely social get-together to meet new friends, Monday, Dec. 23, 9 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Meet every Monday and Wednesday except Dec. 25, Jan. 1 and Jan. 29. Drop-in.

Tai Chi practice, Yang style, gentle martial arts practice, Monday, Dec. 23, Dec. 26, 11:30 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Total body fitness to improve muscle strength, balance and flexibility, Monday, Dec. 23, 10 a.m. and Friday, Dec. 27, 10:15 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Drop-in.

55+ ice skating, Monday, Dec. 23, 8:40 - 9:50 a.m., exclusive senior hour, at the MedStar Capitals Iceplex at the Ballston Common Mall garage, roof level 8; skate rental \$1. Pre-registration required at www.medstarcapitalsiceplex.com, register for public skate..

Mexican Train Dominoes, fun and easy to learn, Monday, Dec. 23, 9:30 a.m.- 12 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center, Mexican Train Dominoes is also an NVSO event. Visit www.nvso.us for more information.

Rummikub, the original rummy tile based game, combines elements of gin rummy and Mah Jongg, Monday, Dec. 23, 1 - 3 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Drop-in. Rummikub is also an NVSO event. Visit www.nvso.us.

Virtual Central America tour, El Salvador is the second in a series of presentations on Spanish speaking countries to be featured by Ashley Gomez, Director, Lubber Run 55+ Center, Thursday, Dec. 26, 1 p.m., virtual. Program will cover history, culture, food, geography, politics and more. Registration # 912400-37.

Pickleball practice with an experienced volunteer, bring your own equipment. Thursday, Dec. 26, 2 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Woodcarvers meet to enjoy camaraderie and pursue their craft of carving and turning wood into objects of Beauty, Thursday, Dec. 26, 1-4 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Fortunes in the attic, send a photo of an interesting object you own to sashon@arlingtonva.us prior to class and Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen will research and discuss during a virtual presentation on how to identify authentic antiques, Friday, Dec. 27, 9 a.m. Registration # 912302-09.

Cribbage games, a classic yet challenging card game, easy to learn, Friday, Dec. 27, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Drop-in. Cribbage is also an NVSO event. Visit www.nvso.us for more information.



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.

County	File No.	Route #	Route Name	Structure	Posted Date
GRAYSON	8878	678	FOX CREEK ROAD	MIDDLE FOX CREEK	12/2/2024
GRAYSON	8755	58	HIGHLANDS PKWY	STREAM & CATTLE PASS	11/19/2024
LEE	10775	600	ROUTE 600	BLACKWATER CREEK	11/19/2024
BRUNSWICK	3662	613	GILLS BRIDGE ROAD	NOTTOWAY RIVER	11/14/2024
LEE	10759	70	ROUTE 70	POWELL RIVER	11/13/2024
BEDFORD	2798	680	MURRELLS GAP ROAD	SHEEP CREEK	11/13/2024

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 at 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.

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NATURE

PHOTOS BY ALONSO ABUGATTAS



Winterberry holly with berries in the snow



A common grackle with numerous fall cankerworm caterpillars



American robin with winterberry holly berries



Food for birds, a trio of oakworms



Brown hooded owlet caterpillar



Canadian Owlet caterpillar



Smartweed dagger moth caterpillar

‘Re-naturing’ Suburbia

Birds, Bugs and Berries, habitat for birds.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

What Is a Native Plant?

People could “make a big difference,” if they planted native plants in their yards and even in balcony pots, explained Alonso Abugattas to an attentive audience of 55 on Dec. 8 at the Friends of Mason Neck State Park meeting held at Gunston Hall.

Abugattas, an Arlingtonian, is the founder of the Capital Naturalist, an online platform, a Facebook

“A plant is native if it has occurred naturally for thousands of years in a region, ecosystem or habitat without human introduction. These plants have formed symbiotic relationships with native wildlife over thousands of years, meaning that many native animals are dependent on these particular species to survive.”

– National Wildlife Federation

group and a YouTube Channel with over 30,000 followers, on which he explores the wonders of the natural world.

His overriding message to the

Friends of Mason Neck State Park was that native plants are critical to the insects and other wildlife with which they co-evolved, nature’s

SEE BIRDS, BUGS, PAGE 13

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Alonso Abugattas stressed the importance of planting native plants in his presentation to the Friends of Mason Neck called Birds, Bugs, and Berries, habitat value for birds.



Around 55 people heard the talk and enjoyed snacks.



Capital Naturalist logo on a t-shirt.



Hillary Clawson, President of the Friends of Mason Neck State Park, welcomed attendees.



Virginia House of Delegates member Kathy Tran and Gina Lynch discussed the presentation.

Birds, Bugs and Berries, Habitat for Birds

FROM PAGE 12

biodiversity on which life depends. Around 90 percent of insects are “specialists,” meaning that they require one family of plants to feed on and cannot survive without them. To support birds, we need caterpillars, he said, noting that 96 percent of land birds feed insect caterpillars to their young as a major food source. “The big bugs we have to worry about the most are caterpillars,” he maintained.

Supplying what insects and other wildlife need “can make a big difference locally,” he argued. Northern Virginians can choose from over 1,600 native plants and trees.

Nature Is Interdependent

Abugattas offered many examples of interdependency in the natural world. Chickadees, a common black-and-white bird seen in suburbia, need 70 percent native biomass for their territory and 8,000 to 10,000 insects to raise one brood of chickadees. University of Delaware entomologist Dr. Doug Tallamy estimates that chickadees feed their young from 390 to 570 caterpillars a day. “Nestlings don’t need seeds,” Abugattas explained. “They need insects.” Also, all of the mid-Atlantic’s 18 native bats feed on insects and many prefer moths.

Abugattas singled out oak trees especially, reporting that over 600 species of wildlife rely solely on oak trees for food. This includes 40 mammals, 60 birds and 557 caterpillar species. “These would disappear if oaks went extinct,” he stressed.

Other examples are native asters which host 112 butterfly and moth



Tom Blackburn and Brenda Frank made “caterpillar cookies” for the event.

species. Of Virginia’s 450 bee species, 30 percent require the nectar of specific plants, like dogwoods and sunflowers. He said that flowering dogwoods host 118 caterpillar species and 93 bird species and 16 mammals feed on the dogwood’s drupes or fruits. Forty-nine bird species feed on American holly berries.

Abugattas cited Tallamy’s estimate that if all U.S. landowners converted just half their lawns to productive native-plant communities, people could create a 20-million-acre area larger than the combined acreage of 13 national parks -- the Everglades, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Teton, Canyonlands, Mount Rainier, North Cascades, Badlands, Olympic, Sequoia, Grand Canyon, Denali and Great Smoky Mountains.

“My bottom line is,” he said, “if possible, go with native plants be-

cause that’s what nature and evolution chose, not man.”

Mount Vernonite Donna Stauffer applauded the talk. “Alonso is a local treasure, so knowledgeable and interesting,” she commented. “I will use what he told us to improve the mix of plants in my yard to benefit local wildlife, especially birds.”

The Friends Group

Hillary Clawson, President of the Friends of Mason Neck State Park, welcomed Abugattas as an award-winning, 30-year naturalist and environmental educator. She described her organization’s annual spring Eagle Festival, their work to introduce underserved communities to the park and efforts to make the park more accessible to people with disabilities. “Everyone should have access to the park and all it has to offer,” she stressed.



Wildlife-themed decorations on the tables.



Tables had holiday, wildlife-themed decorations.

More information

Capital Naturalist, <https://capitalnaturalist.blogspot.com/>
Friends of Mason Neck State

Park, <https://friendsofmasonneck-stateparkinc.wildapricot.org/>
Homegrown National Park, <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

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ENTERTAINMENT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS VACANCIES

The Friends of Arlington's Planetarium seeks to fill three vacancies on its 2025 Board of Directors. Interested candidates seeking information and an application can find details on the FOAP Elections web page. The deadline for submission is Dec. 31, 2024.

CENTERS FOR OPPORTUNITY ARLINGTON

The Centers for Opportunity Arlington is a safe, stigma-free place to spend time for those recovering from homelessness, substance use, and mental illness. It has a donation closet that needs adult clothing and shoes. Some participants at the Center are looking for jobs and need the proper attire. Located at 3219 Columbia Pike, Suite 101, Arlington. Contact Greg, Program Coordinator at 703-567-1346.

VOLUNTEER FOR ARLINGTON'S COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Arlington Neighborhood Village, in partnership with Arlington County and Marymount University, has started the Community Ambassador Program (CAP). CAP is a volunteer fueled system that identifies "Ambassadors" connected with civic associations, faith communities, senior centers, apartment buildings, etc. These individuals will be trained to be a reliable source of information about the many opportunities available to older adults in Arlington.

Ambassadors will spread the word about programs and support services, opportunities for social and civic engagement, and educational and enrichment activities for older adults in their own neighborhoods. They are actively recruiting ambassadors to act as a bridge between their community and the Arlington safety net, providing information and soliciting feedback to improve offerings that help older adults remain safe, independent, engaged, and connected to their community. Contact cap@anvarlington.org if this is something you are interested in or want to learn more. Let's work together to create a supported and connected community for all ages! Receive Support Services

Are you a senior in Arlington? Do you need support services but don't know where to look? Are you looking for fun and enriching activities in Arlington? Email or call 703-509-8057 and they will connect you with an Ambassador.

FREE HOLIDAY LYFT RIDES

A local nonprofit organization announced that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during this holiday season. Offered by the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2024 Holiday SoberRide program will be in operation nightly from 10:00 p.m. until 4:00 a.m. from Friday, December 13, 2024 until Wednesday, January 1, 2025 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers. Each evening during this six-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app's 'Payment' tab (under the Add Lyft Pass option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's separate 2024 Holiday SoberRide promo codes will be posted at 9:00 p.m. on December 13, 20 and 31 on www.SoberRide.com.

UNTIL JAN. 26, 2025

Assembly 2024: Horizon Scanning Exhibit. At the Museum of Contemporary Art, Arlington. The exhibition is organized by MoCA Arlington Curator of Exhibitions Blair Murphy and guest curator Jared Packard. Launched in 2019, Assembly highlights current material and conceptual trends among contemporary artists. Since 2022, the exhibition has had a national focus, showcasing work by some of the country's rising stars and giving them a platform on the doorstep of the nation's capital. Assembly 2024: Horizon Scanning opens on the eve of the presidential election, four miles from the center of Washington, DC. In



The Holidays at Amazon HQ2 take place Dec. 18 in Arlington.

Holidays at Amazon HQ2

The holiday season is officially here, and Amazon HQ2 in Arlington is kicking it off with exciting, family-friendly events that will bring joy and festive cheer. Here are a few events you don't want to miss:

❖ MoCA Handcrafted Holidays – Every Wednesday through Dec. 20th: 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Get into the holiday spirit by creating unique, handmade gifts at the Museum of Contemporary Art's Innovation Studio. Dec. 18: Super-Size Snowflakes

this time of multiple, overlapping, and seemingly perpetual crises, and with that proximity in mind, the exhibition brings together artists whose work can help us grapple with our tumultuous present by offering strategies to navigate and reimagine the future.

OCT. 29 TO JAN. 12

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum." At Signature Theatre, Shirlington, Arlington. It's a comedy night in Sondheim's zany, hysterical, Tony Award-winning musical romp. In one of the greatest musical comedies of all time, three households reside next to each other in ancient Rome. Just outside their doors, the exploits of a quick-thinking Roman slave, a braggart soldier, a beautiful courtesan, a lovesick young man and others devolve into uproarious chaos in a fast-paced, witty and monumental escapade. With mistaken identities, wily ruses, madcap chases, a love story, and a happy ending of course, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum's" audacious and irreverent spectacle has something for everyone.

DEC. 19 TO JAN. 4, 2025

"The Little Comedies." At Theater-on-the-Run in Arlington. Spon-



Arlington's Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. takes place on Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025 at Wakefield High School in Arlington.

Sunday/Jan. 19

Arlington's Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 5:30-6 p.m. At Wakefield High School Auditorium, Arlington. Join Arlington County as they honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the 2025 MLK Tribute event. This year's production, "Dreams, Faith, and Justice in Action" showcases local talent in the form of dance, music, and storytelling while also highlighting local organizations that live out the importance of Dr. King's work right here in Arlington. Visit: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/Parks-Recreation/MLK-Tribute>

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sored by Synetic Theater. Expressed through body and facial masks, pantomime, and dazzling choreography, this reinvention of a Synetic classic, "The Music Box," treats audiences of all ages to a series of enchanting, wordless vignettes set to mesmerizing music. Watch as a janitor and businessman discover a magical mask that transforms their lives and two cowboys in the Wild West who hilariously attempt to tame a loose bull in an unforgettable journey through fantasy and comedy.

SATURDAY/JAN. 11 Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show. 7:30 p.m. At Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle. Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the D.C. area's finest comics. The headliner for January's show is the hilarious Umar Khan.

SATURDAY/JAN. 11 Paint, Build, Create. At Fairlington Community Center, Arlington. Paint, Build, Create is an annual Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (S.T.E.A.M.) special event brought to you by the Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation. Visit: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/Parks-Recreation/Programs/>

This Time The Cookie Didn't Crumble



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not that you all want/need to hear about my life or that what goes on (what I eat is the subject of this column) in it is of particular importance. Hardly. In fact, it's doubtful that any of it is relevant in your lives. But most of us eat food everyday and think of food every minute (you mean some of you don't?). Nevertheless, I thought I'd share a slice of my life that "plated" itself today. First, a little context:

We went away for the weekend to have turkey and fixin's with our oldest friends. They live in Ocean City, MD (Berlin, actually) so when we visit them it's for a couple of days. As I often joke about our stay – since it's Ocean City, it's "a two-night minimum" (per the typical hotel policy). This time, we stayed three nights. Given that Thanksgiving was/is on a Thursday, our friends who are still working, amazingly had both Friday and Saturday off so it made for a more sociable/available stay. Usually, their work schedules interfere. However, on this occasion, it did not so we were invited/stayed a bit longer than we otherwise would.

Since we were going away for three days and nights, it made little sense to stock/replenish our refrigerator/pantry with edibles and "drinkables." And when we got home Saturday afternoon (after arriving in Berlin Wednesday late afternoon) after enduring and semi unexpected delay crossing the Bay Bridge, the four hours-plus home sort of took the stuffing out of us and the last thing we wanted to do when we got home was to go back out to the supermarket/for dinner. "As such," to quote my 10th grade Western Traditions' teacher Mr. Roberts, we were not high, but we were certainly dry. The cupboard wasn't exactly bare but hardly was it or the refrigerator up to its usual standards. Therefore, to simplify our transition back to normalcy, we simply got "Take away" as the Brits say and decided to call it a night after we ate dinner and watched a movie.

Waking up in our own bed on Sunday morning, however, did nothing for our household/dietary needs. Most of which is my fault since I'm the shopper in the family. And later that Sunday, after not watching the Redskins/Commanders for three hours, whatever I did, oddly enough, had nothing to do with food and drink. And as of Monday real time, as I write this, I'm still stuck in neutral and the house is still empty, comparatively speaking.

Having provided three-fourths of this column as context I now finally segue to the point. Since I haven't gone shopping means that I haven't bought any chocolate. And that's a problem not just for me, but for millions of other people worldwide who crave it as much as I do, so I'm certainly not alone in this admission/predicament. A predicament of my own lack of doing so I have no one to blame but myself. And as I was contemplating my situation, thinking about where I might have/hid (Dina doesn't need to know everything) some chocolate in the house, I was reviewing – in my mind, all the locations in the house where I might have stored/hidden the object of my desire. Then I "double-downed" by going around the house opening drawers and cabinets to confirm and sure enough, I came up empty handed. Disappointed by my search, I sat back down in my office chair and thought of an odd/uncharacteristic place where only recently had I used as a new hideout. I then looked down to the right and pulled open my desk drawer and thought: "Wouldn't that be great/funny if there was some chocolate in this drawer that I completely forgot?" Forgot about because this drawer is too obvious/convenient a location and one that's hardly hidden at all so I would temp fate by using it. Well, at a loss/need for chocolate and only partially desperate, I opened the drawer and guess what? Paydirt! A half-full box of fudge-covered Oreos. "How'd that box get there?" I sort of thought (Knowing full well I was responsible; just in this instance, a tad forgetful.) Six cookies. What a reward for my poor planning. "I can't go on like this," I thought. I must go shopping. I can't rely on this kind of random good luck. I know it's said that even blind squirrel finds a nut. But it says nothing about the squirrel being stupid and ill-prepared.

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