

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 19, 2024

## To the Rescue

Firefighters mark 26 years of toy donations.

By JEANNE THEISMANN  
THE GAZETTE

Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue marked more than a quarter century of serving families in need with its 26th annual toy distribution day Dec. 16 at Station 11 in Penn Daw.

"I have been coming to support this event

**"It's an exciting day for them and fulfilling for us to be here and see the smiles on the kids' faces."**

— IAFF Local 2068 President Robert Young

for 20 years now," said Robert Young, a 21-year Fairfax County Firefighter and president of IAFF Local 2068. "We come to help

Company 11 distribute toys through local schools and nonprofit agencies so kids have an opportunity to have a wonderful Christmas. In some cases they wouldn't otherwise have the availability to have toys under their tree so this is a pretty big thing for everyone each year."

Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue was founded by Willie Bailey, retired Deputy Chief of the Office of the Fire Marshal with the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. Among others, Bailey credits Bruce Witucki of Union Street Public House with generating significant early support for the organization.

"This is one of the best things I have been

SEE FIREFIGHTERS MARK, PAGE 3



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

A young boy selects a toy as part of the Firefighters and Friends annual toy distribution Dec. 16 at Penn Daw Station 11.



Alexandria police officer Benny Evans, right, helps a young girl select a present as part of the Firefighters and Friends toy distribution Dec. 16 at Penn Daw Station 11.



Volunteers help distribute more than 3,000 toys as part of the annual Firefighters and Friends toy drive Dec. 16 at Penn Daw Station 11.





# Something historic is happening in Old Town Alexandria.

McEneaney & MRE | AP are now Corcoran McEneaney.

*corcoran*

MCENEANEY

109 SOUTH PITT STREET | ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA | 703.549.9292 | CORCORANMCE.COM

© 2024 Corcoran. All rights reserved. Corcoran and the Corcoran Logo are trademarks of Corcoran Group LLC. The Corcoran System is comprised of company owned offices which are owned by a subsidiary of Anywhere Advisors LLC and franchised offices which are independently owned and operated. Corcoran Group LLC fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act.



## Firefighters Mark 26 Years of Toy Donations

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

FROM PAGE 1

involved in,” Witucki said. “It’s hard to believe this was our 26th year of providing for the community.”

The annual event has grown from serving the Route 1 corridor to helping families, schools and nonprofits throughout Northern Virginia.

“This year we gave away over 3,000 toys, 50 bikes, and \$3,500 in gift cards to over 50 schools and nonprofits,” Bailey said. “For 26 years now individuals like Bruce and our many business sponsors have helped us provide for those less fortunate in the community.”

Children from the Gum Springs Head Start program selected a toy of their choice while having the opportunity to visit with Santa and interact with Caring Angels Therapy dogs.

Sponsors for the event include: Ken & Kelly Savittiere Foundation; Apple Federal Credit Union; Progressive Firefighters of Fairfax; IAFF Local 2068; Fire & Rescue Retirement Association; Nationwide Credit Corporation; John & Jack Taylor; Five Guys (Sam Chamberlain); Chadwick’s Restaurant; Union Street Public House Restaurant (Bruce Witucki); Daniel Rowe; Bernie Cabral; Energesco Solutions LLC (William Bennett); Modern Technology Solution, Inc; Medocracy, Inc.; DWCNV; PRO-MAX Realtors; The Movement Studios; Accenture Federal Services; FRANSMART; FCAC Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; Mount Vernon Ga-



Children check out the selection of toys during the Firefighters and Friends toy distribution Dec. 16 at Penn Daw Station 11.

zette; Rotary Club of Tysons Corner; Caring Angels Therapy Dogs; Kelly’s Irish Times Restaurant; Walmart (Store #2258 - Richmond Hwy.); and Primo Family Restau-

rant. “It’s hard to believe but we have been providing gifts during the holidays for over a quarter-century now,” Bailey said. “I am so thank-



Caring Angels Therapy Dogs were on hand for the festivities Dec. 16 at Penn Daw Station 11.

ful to our sponsors and supporters for helping to make this a special time of year for so many families.”

Added Young, “It’s probably overwhelming for the kids as they

get off the bus, with Santa’s helpers helping them select toys. It’s an exciting day for them and fulfilling for us to be here and see the smiles on the kids’ faces.”

### BULLETIN BOARD

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

#### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League’s programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

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

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit [www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm](http://www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm) or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteers@alive-inc.org](mailto:volunteers@alive-inc.org).

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to [cancer.org/drive](http://cancer.org/drive).

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at [\[volunteerfairfax.org\]\(http://volunteerfairfax.org\) or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit \[www.rsvpnova.org\]\(http://www.rsvpnova.org\).](mailto:chubicki@</a></p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria’s pre-teens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for “Space of Her Own,” and “Space of His Own,” serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult role models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit [www.spaceofherown.org](http://www.spaceofherown.org) and [www.spaceofhisown.org](http://www.spaceofhisown.org). For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at [sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov](mailto:sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov) or phone at 703-746-4687.

Farmer’s Market Volunteers Needed. To volunteer for the Farmer’s Markets, email Brian Morreale, [brianmorreale@gmail.com](mailto:brianmorreale@gmail.com)

#### SUPPORT GROUPS

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth.

Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at [suzjdoyle@gmail.com](mailto:suzjdoyle@gmail.com) or 571-403-0673.

The Parkinson’s Disease Support Group of Alexandria meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. At the Hollin Hall Senior Center, Room 109, 1500 Shenandoah Road. All Parkinson’s patients and caregivers are welcome.

The Caregiver Support Group is facilitated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center, 1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 8



# HYBLA VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Alexandria

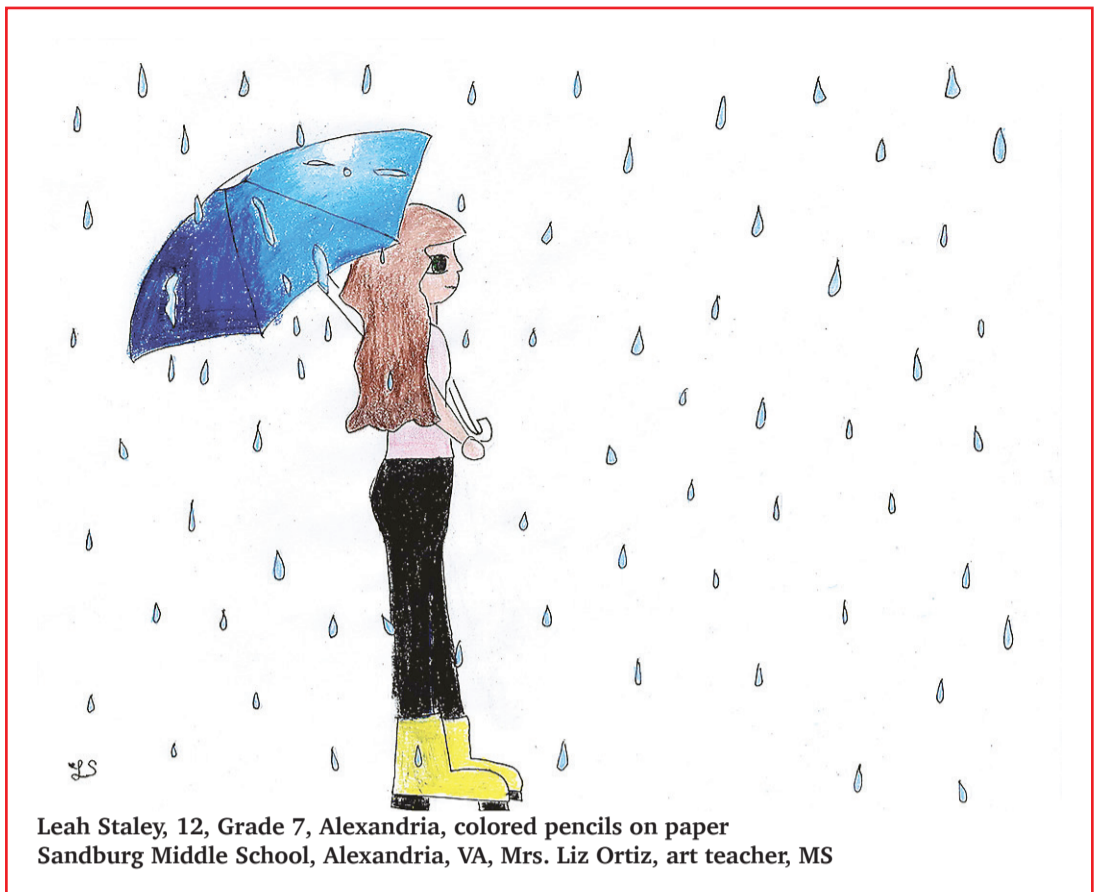
SUZANNE PARRISH  
ART RESOURCE TEACHER



Adelina, 9, 2nd Grade, Festival Kite, Marker



Genesis V. Hernandez, 8, 1st Grade, Amate Bird, Tempera



Leah Staley, 12, Grade 7, Alexandria, colored pencils on paper  
Sandburg Middle School, Alexandria, VA, Mrs. Liz Ortiz, art teacher, MS



Astrid, 7, Kindergarten, Mitten,  
cut and stitched stamped paper



Alvaro, 9, 2nd Grade, Celebration Kite, Marker

## Garden

JOONWON LEE, 16, JUNIOR, RESIDENT OF  
FAIRFAX  
THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE  
AND TECHNOLOGY  
ALEXANDRIA, VA, SHERWOOD WILLIAMS, ENGLISH  
TEACHER, HS

My name is JoonWon Lee. I am a junior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. I enjoyed reading the Children's Connection every year, which led me to participate numerous times over the course of the last few years. I am very excited to share my poem to the Children's Connection once again. This poem represents my inner "garden" of memories, a garden that roots me down and prevents my conscious and soul from drifting apart. I hope to give readers a sense of fulfillment and hope towards themselves.

A quiet stretch of earth  
My soul awaits patiently  
The seeds I carry  
Each memory dropped into the soil  
Flowers blooming where they fall  
A golden daisy of a friend's laughter  
A soft lavender of a warm morning  
A bright marigold of courage despite failure  
A wild rose of fleeting moments of love  
Etched into the scents and sights of spring  
Roots reach deep to bind  
The fragments of my passion  
Holding me together  
Through the storms of self-doubt  
The fires of anger  
The icy winds of loneliness  
That threaten to consume  
However  
The rains of dread soften the earth for new life  
The ash becomes rich soil that feeds vitality  
Icy winds carve the edges  
Sharpening my resolve  
Shaping my strength  
Wild, radiant, and unbroken  
Grows my garden of memories



# Share Your Land Use Ideas

The Fairfax County Site-Specific Plan Amendment (SSPA) process opens Jan. 13, 2025, providing an opportunity for the public to propose land use changes in the county's Comprehensive Plan. An eligibility map and submission guide are available online to support the community in submitting nominations by the Feb. 13, 2025, deadline.

Community input will shape the review process, which includes county staff, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

Site Specific Plan Amendment (SSPA) process is the county's process for giving the public an opportunity to propose a land use change, known as a "nomination," in the Comprehensive Plan for a single site or collection of sites.

The Comprehensive Plan guides land use and development decisions in the county and sets forth the community's future vision. The nomination period will run from Jan. 13 through Feb. 13, 2025, and nominations will be accepted online.

SSPA community resources include:

- ❖ Eligibility Map – shows the areas that are eligible for SSPA.

- ❖ 2025 Countywide SSPA Guide – provides details on the nominating process, submission requirements and the criteria that will be used to evaluate nominations.

- ❖ SSPA Schedule – documents the timeline for the 2025 SSPA process.

A unique feature of the SSPA process is that anyone can participate and offer ideas for land use changes. This process provides the community with a hands-on opportunity to shape the county's long-term vision alongside their neighbors.

Following the nomination period, all submissions will be reviewed by county staff, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. Community meetings will also be held to gather initial feedback. Community involvement is key at all stages of the SSPA process and helps ensure the county remains an attractive, safe and sustainable place to call home for generations to come.

To get involved and submit a nomination for the 2025 Countywide SSPA cycle, visit the program webpage for more details and community resources. To receive email updates about SSPA, subscribe to the Comprehensive Plan Announcements email service under the "Land Use & Development" heading.

## Experience The Dialysis Difference

Introducing our On-Site Hemodialysis Unit, in partnership with Nova Dialysis, providing advanced care and personalized services to meet all your dialysis needs.



**WOODBINE**  
Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center

Learn more about our on-campus Hemodialysis Program, call us today!

703.836.8838 • WoodbineRehab.com  
2729 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302

**Clinical Capabilities:**

- IV Antibiotics
- Vent & Trach Dialysis
- Short-Term Dialysis Management

**Comprehensive Services Include:**

- Consultative Visits by On-Staff Nephrologists
- On-Site Cardiology & Pulmonary Rounding
- Health Coaching & Dietary Education
- Routine Medical Management of Co-Morbidities
- CKD Monthly Support Group led by community CKD experts
- Dialysis Wing
- Dedicated Transport Aides
- Full Case Management Services
- 24/7 Guest Service





**Find us on Facebook and become a fan!**  
[www.Facebook.com/connectionnewspapers](http://www.Facebook.com/connectionnewspapers)



**THE CONNECTION**  
Newspapers & Online  
The Connection to Your Community  
[www.connectionnewspapers.com](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com)



**FREE MONTH OF RENT!\***

**400 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET  
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314**

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



# ELANCÉ

AT ALEXANDRIA  
by cogir

**OFFERING INDEPENDENT LIVING AND ASSISTED LIVING**

**CALL US TO SCHEDULE A TOUR!**

# (571) 579-3837

**ELANCEALEXANDRIA.COM**



# Wreaths Across America



Representatives of the U.S. military service organizations stand with members of the Civil Air Patrol in preparation for the start of Wreaths Across America Dec. 14 at Alexandria National Cemetery.

## Thousands turn out to honor Alexandria's veterans.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

**M**ore than 1,000 volunteers braved below freezing temperatures to participate in Wreaths Across America, placing 4,229 Veterans Remembrance Wreaths in honor of local veterans Dec. 14 at Alexandria National Cemetery.

"The annual Wreaths Across America event at Alexandria National Cemetery was a huge success," said VFW Post 609 Commander Gerald Krueger. "Over 1,000 Alexandria area patriotic citizens joined military veterans from several VSOs, along with Scouts, cadets, church groups, and more, in placing wreaths on all 4,229 veterans' gravestones."

National Wreaths Across America Day took place at over 4,225 cemeteries across the country with over three million veterans honored this year.

"Every year we attempt to populate all tombstones in the Alexandria Cemetery with donated/contributed Veterans Remembrance Wreaths," said Krueger, lead organizer of the event. "We came pretty close, with over 95 percent donated wreaths this year."

VFW Post 609 hosted the public for the annual Wreaths Across America event at the historic Alexandria National Cemetery for its

16th year. The Alexandria tradition first began in December of 2009.

Collaborator Veteran Service Organizations included the American Legion Posts 24 and 1775, and the Association of the US Navy Kenyon Anderson local chapter.

"The mission of Wreaths Across America is to Remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach the next generation the value of freedom," Krueger said.

The event began with a traditional military ceremony honoring all the Veterans of the Military Services. Eight specially identified Veterans Service Wreaths were positioned in front of the historic 1890s Cemetery gates; and then a uniformed service member, either on active duty or retired, was escorted by uniformed Challenger Squadron I, Civil Air Patrol Cadets as they marched inbound to present their wreaths at the Cemetery American Flag Pole. There the special wreaths were hung on the railing behind the flag pole.

Then, the over 4,000 balsam wreaths were handed out two-to-a-visitor for respectful placement of the wreaths on veterans' graves.

Once again, Saint Rita Catholic School's American Heritage Girls was the largest contributor to wreaths, "as they are every year," Krueger said.

Other groups who raised significant numbers of WAA wreaths



Volunteers spread out across the Alexandria National Cemetery to place more than 4,000 wreaths honoring veterans as part of Wreaths Across America Dec. 14.



New Jersey visitor Rita Caruso places a wreath at a headstone as part of Wreaths Across America Dec. 14 at Alexandria National Cemetery.



Members of Saint Rita's Catholic School's American Heritage Girls participate in Wreaths Across America Dec. 14 at Alexandria National Cemetery.

include: VFW Post 609; American Legion Post 24; Military Officers Association of America; Old Town Village and Christ Church; Sons of the American Legion Squadron 176, Springfield; George Washington Chapter of Sons of the American Revolution; three chapters of Daughters of the American Revolution - Dr. Elisha Dick Chapter, Mount Vernon Chapter, and the John Alexander Chapter.

This year's wreaths will be re-

moved and recycled on Saturday, Jan. 2, 2025, beginning at 8 a.m. Volunteers are welcome.

Fundraising for next year's Wreaths Across America has begun with the Wreaths Across America organization in Columbia Falls, Maine, again announcing they will match one-for-one additional wreath for pledges made through registered Sponsorship Groups. The offer runs through Jan. 17, 2025. The link to donate through

VFW Post 609-Alexandria is [www.wreathscrossamerica.org/VA0930P](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/VA0930P)

"We are inspired by the support of the community, including Saint Rita's American Heritage Girls, who have been the top organization for getting pledges for us for the last 5-6 years," Krueger said. "The Wreaths Across America veterans remembrance wreaths is a way for a community to honor those who have served."





PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Recipients of the 2024 DRBA Star Awards pose for a group photo Dec. 16 at Lena's Restaurant. Pictured are Larry and Christine Ponzi, Tim and Elissa Laderach, Leslie Staples and Lisa Neurohr.

# Starstruck

## DRBA presents annual Star Awards.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The Del Ray Business Association recognized individuals who have gone above and beyond in service to the Del Ray community at the organization's annual Star Awards Dec. 16 at Lena's Restaurant.

This year's honorees include: Outstanding Small Business owner, Larry and Christine Ponzi, owners of St. Elmo's Coffee Pub

and Piece Out; Outstanding City/Government Service, Mayor Justin Wilson; and Outstanding Citizens, Tim and Elissa Laderach, Lisa Neurohr, and Leslie Staples.

The DRBA also celebrated a successful year, ending with the 9th Annual Candy Cane Bar Crawl, which raised \$9,267 for Cook for Vets, a local nonprofit that provides food security for veterans and their households through the distribution of healthy meals and groceries.

"When I moved to Virginia, the first place I went to was Del Ray," said Cook for Vets founder L.J. Raspler.

"The giving, honest, and genuine people I have met in Del Ray have blown my mind."  
[www.visitdelray.com](http://www.visitdelray.com)



Cook for Vets founder L.J. Raspler, right, accepts a donation from the Del Ray Business Association president Lauren Fisher at the DRBA Star Awards Dec. 16 at Lena's Restaurant.

[www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM](http://www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM)



## Public Notice

### Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov).*

**Same Company, Same Employees,  
Same Great Value - Now Celebrating 20 Years!**

## TWO POOR TEACHERS

### Kitchen and Bathroom Remodeling



- Electrical (ELE)
- Gas Fitting (GFC)
- Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVA)
- Plumbing (PLB)
- Residential Building (RBC)

Fully Insured & Class A Licensed  
Since 1999



**10% down**  
nothing until the job  
is complete for the  
past 17 years

**Free Estimates 703-999-2929**

Check if your contractor is licensed at the state level  
<http://www.DPOR.virginia.gov>

**Visit our website: [www.twopoorteachers.com](http://www.twopoorteachers.com)**



# CHILDREN'S & TEENS GAZETTE 2024

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 participated 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.

This edition is full of gems, but only a small percentage of the gems we received. We will print more in our next edition in January.

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.

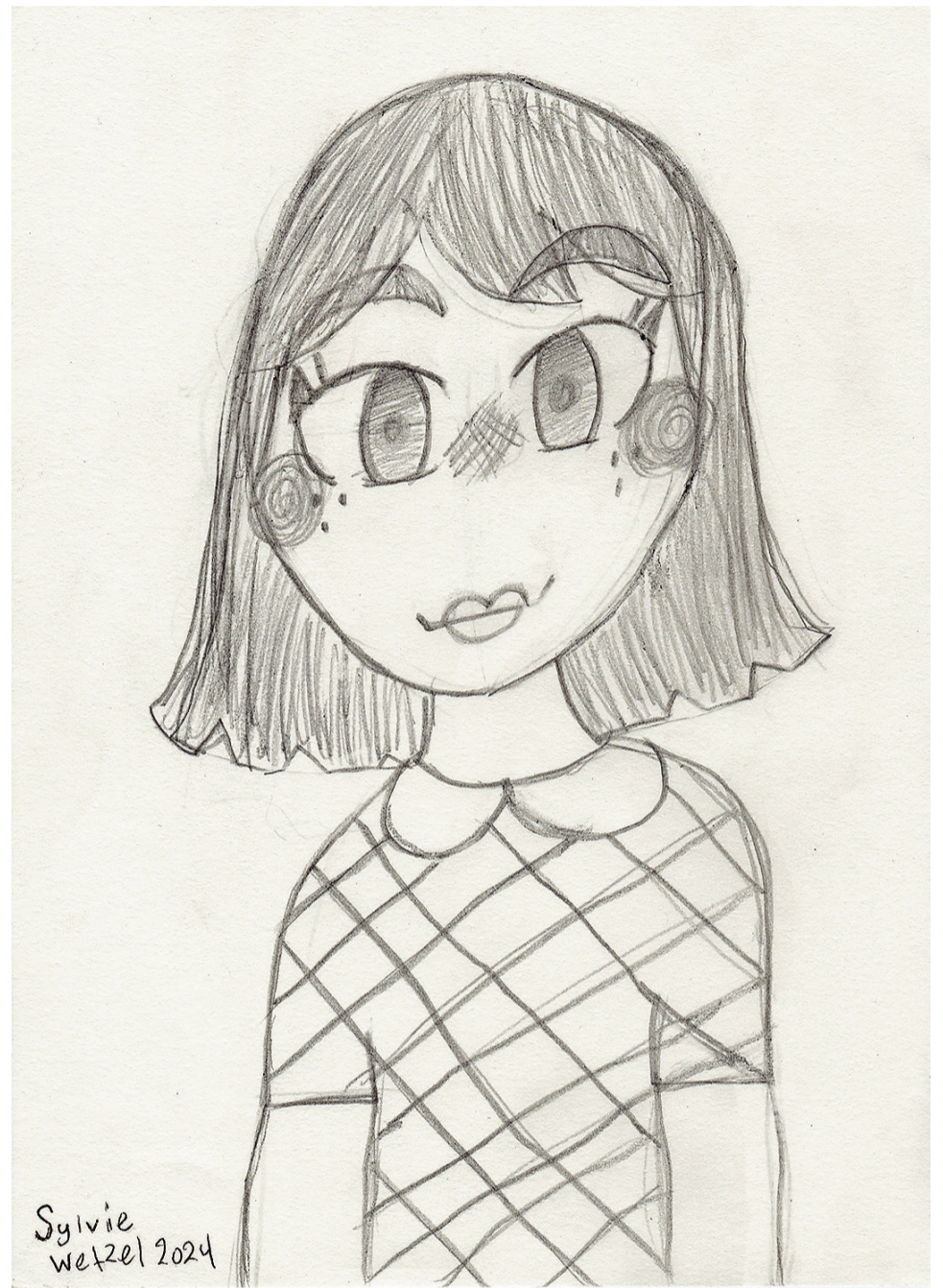
Now the Gazette will be on a break until

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](mailto:debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com) or [sales@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:sales@connectionnewspapers.com). For content, contact me [mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com).



Jedison Savellano 6, Grade Kindergarten, Fall Tree with Cardinals, collage  
Waynewood Elementary, Alexandria VA, Janet Laisch art teacher, ES



Sylvie Wetzel, 11, Grade 6, Alexandria, Portrait, Drawing,  
St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 3

or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email [DAAS@alexandriava.gov](mailto:DAAS@alexandriava.gov).

FACE Center Support Groups provide parents with a space to share their daily parenting frustrations and triumphs while offering new strategies for helping parents to cope, build positive parent-child relationships and best support their children's learning.

- ❖ Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.

- ❖ Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, 614 Four Mile Road. Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free.

Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or [krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us) for more.  
Divorce Workshop for Women. Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King St. The workshops are designed to provide education on the legal, financial, family and personal issues of divorce in a logical, yet compassionate way. The workshop fee is \$25. Visit [www.novasecondsaturday.com](http://www.novasecondsaturday.com) for more.

### ONGOING

Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program. The City of Alexandria has reinstated its sewer Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program for homeowners in designated areas that historically experience basement back-ups or flooding. The program reimburses homeowners for up to 50 percent of the

cost of installing a BFP device by a licensed plumbing contractor, up to a maximum of \$2,000. The current program period is through Dec. 31, 2019. Alexandria homeowners should call the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services at 703-746-4014 or visit [www.alexandriava.gov/tes](http://www.alexandriava.gov/tes).

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

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

Senior and Job Programs. 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Queen of Apostles Church, 4650 Taney

Avenue, Alexandria. St. Martin de Porres Center offers senior and job placement programming Monday through Friday at the parish. Email Kathryn Toohey, [ktoohy@ccda.net](mailto:ktoohy@ccda.net).

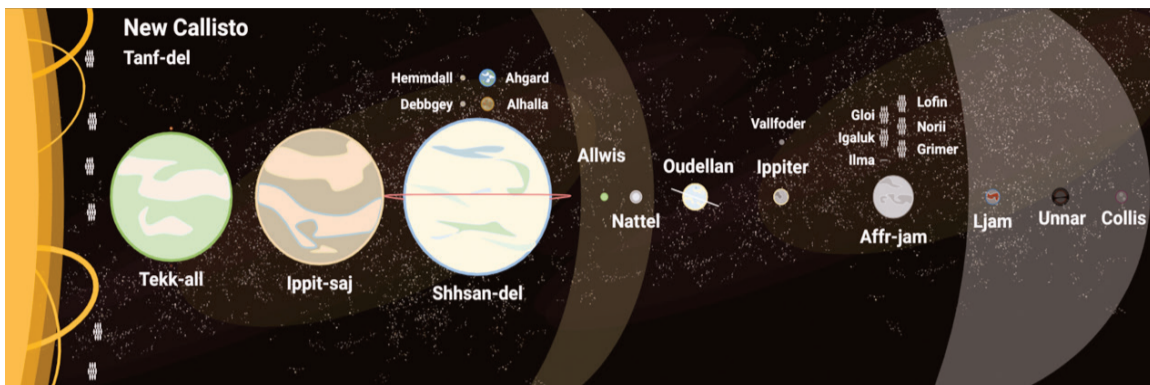
Be Heard at the City's Monthly Public Hearings. A schedule of the meetings can be found at [www.alexandriava.gov](http://www.alexandriava.gov). Voice opinions, speak about something on the docket or just speak about something you are concerned about. Sign up in advance to speak through the city's website. Anyone is welcome at any of the public hearings.

Public Space Recycling. Alexandria has placed more than 80 bright blue recycling containers next to public trash cans in the commercial districts along Mount Vernon

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 20



# CHILDREN'S & TEENS GAZETTE 2024



Peter Scoma, sophomore IB STEM student, Thomas Edison HS. He enjoys playing the trumpet, soccer, outer space, science fiction and architecture.

## Merenug Tius Period: 9862 AT-Present

This is a segment from Peter's Sci-Fi story taking place in the real life star system of Gliese 230/V1357 Orionis, known in a multi-author setting as 'New Callisto.' It is a small part of the Orion's Arm Universe Project, a scenario set thousands of years in the future where civilization spans the stars.

If you would like to know more about New Callisto or the setting you can visit [www.orionsarm.com](http://www.orionsarm.com), an online community writing project.

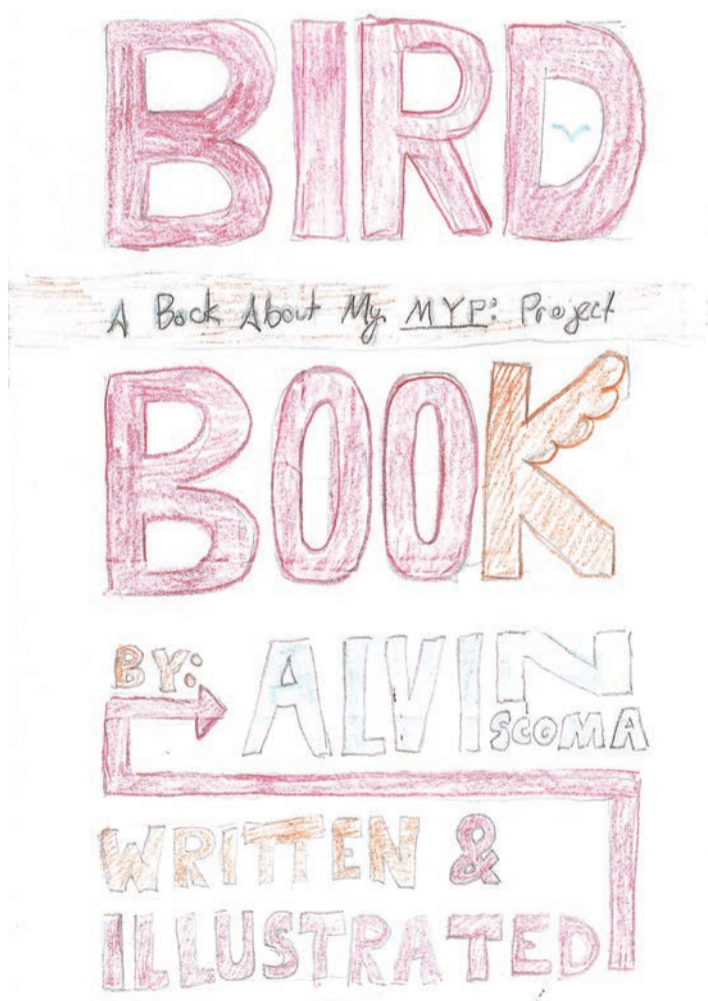
### Merenug Tius Period: 9862 AT-Present

Long after the booms of creativity and the stagnation that followed, the Current Era has proven that the star system's society can change. Merenug Tius means "The pondering of allegiances and souls" in the local language, referencing the precarious state of New Callisto's future.

It started when the Hyades Version Tree broke off from Metasoft, leaving EG-Golden Energy isolated from the greater Version Tree intellect. Since then eir alignment has shifted closer to the Silicon Generation, seemingly breaking the balance between the three transapients, with AllShield being noticeably less corporeal. This has caused their dominion over the thoughts of the population to diminish significantly.

New memetics can now be introduced, like ideas in the Ayysis Range telling citizens of the Commission that they are willfully stagnating into irrelevance by their over-indulgentness, and submission to tyrannical transapients, instead they should make New Callisto relevant again by various means. Though new ideas are not just coming from the Ayysis Range, the "T" Family Foundation, and Keter (through Cerean Keterism), being the chief among the outsiders who have taken interest in the situation.

Alvin Scoma, age 15, resident West Gate community, IB STEM  
[www.ConnectionNewspapers.com](http://www.ConnectionNewspapers.com)



student, Thomas Edison HS.

He enjoys performing in theater, art, cello, soccer, and the study of animals.

"My Bird Book is a collection of data that I collected from birds in my backyard."

I used no outside sources; just my eyes. I recorded data and traits from the three birds that I was researching: Osprey, Blue Jay, and Mourning Dove. I found out about the diet, flock size, and unique trait for each bird. I then drew the birds and compiled the data into my Bird Book."







Helping you Transition from  
**Hospital to Home**

Subacute Rehab • Long Term Care • Memory Care  
Respite Care • Pulmonary Care • Urgent SNF™

900 Virginia Avenue, Alexandria, VA, 22302  
(703) 684-9100 | [alexandriahc.com](http://alexandriahc.com)

## Reach your audience in 2024

Turn to the Connection Newspapers digital and print advertising options to reach customers in your community!

- EMAIL BLASTS
- DIGITAL BILLBOARDS
- FRONT PAGE SHOUTOUT
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- SPONSORED CONTENT



For Advertising: Call 703.778.9431 or  
Email [sales@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:sales@connectionnewspapers.com)









[www.connectionnewspapers.com/advertising](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/advertising)



# CHILDREN'S & TEENS GAZETTE 2024



Kindergarten- Learning My Body Shapes Drawing- Delaynie Mason- Fort Hunt Elementary



Kindergarten- Learning My Body Shapes Drawing- Ruby Coslov- Fort Hunt Elementary



1st Grade- Family Fun Painting- Ifrah Awel- Fort Hunt Elementary



1st Grade- Family Fun Painting- Leo Baber- Fort Hunt Elementary



## Fort Hunt Elementary

ANDREW GREEN, ART TEACHER

1st Grade- Family Gram Drawing- Paul Merwin Fort Hunt Elementary

1st Grade- Family Fun Painting- Nora Parker-Agrawal- Fort Hunt Elementary



1st Grade- Family Gram Drawing- Carmen Guerra Fort Hunt Elementary



1st Grade- Family Gram Drawing- Miles Sprague- Fort Hunt Elementary



1st Grade- Family Gram Drawing- Zoey Barrette- Fort Hunt Elementary



# CHILDREN'S & TEENS GAZETTE 2024

## Fort Hunt Elementary

ANDREW GREEN, ART TEACHER



2nd Grade- Duck Architecture Drawing- Eleanor Kinzer- Fort Hunt Elementary



2nd Grade- Local Landscapes Painting- Matias Wilhelm- Fort Hunt Elementary



2nd Grade- Local Landscapes Painting- Rosie Perlik- Fort Hunt Elementary



2nd Grade- Duck Architecture Drawing- Liza Ferguson- Fort Hunt Elementary



2nd Grade- Local Landscapes Painting- Elizabeth Williams- Fort Hunt Elementary



2nd Grade- Duck Architecture Drawing- Anne-Marie Coombs- Fort Hunt Elementary



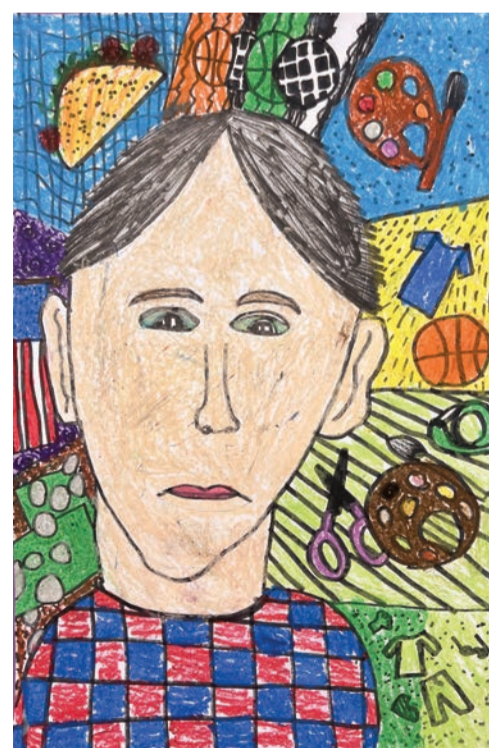
3rd Grade- Dream Landscape Painting- Dakota Rodriguez- Fort Hunt Elementary



3rd Grade- Cultural Identity Self-Portrait Drawing- Clarke Copeland- Fort Hunt Elementary



3rd Grade- Cultural Identity Self-Portrait Drawing- Dylan Fortner- Fort Hunt Elementary



3rd Grade- Cultural Identity Self-Portrait Drawing- Ford Wormell- Fort Hunt Elementary



3rd Grade- Cultural Identity Self-Portrait Drawing- Rose Molihan- Fort Hunt Elementary



# CHILDREN'S & TEENS GAZETTE 2024

## Fort Hunt Elementary

ANDREW GREEN, ART TEACHER



4th Grade- Artists Predict the Future! Drawing- Keia Pedregon- Fort Hunt Elementary



4th Grade- Artists Predict the Future! Drawing- Liv Lipovsky- Fort Hunt Elementary



4th Grade- Time Traveler Painting- Acxa Ventura- Fort Hunt Elementary



4th Grade- Time Traveler Painting- Olivia Ong- Fort Hunt Elementary



4th Grade- Time Traveler Painting- Trenton Giancaterino- Fort Hunt Elementary



4th Grade- Time Traveler Painting- Luke Bierschenk- Fort Hunt Elementary



5th Grade- Drawing- Olivia Horowitz- Fort Hunt Elementary



5th Grade- Seascape Painting- Amelia May- Fort Hunt Elementary



5th Grade- Seascape Painting- Zoe McMillion- Fort Hunt Elementary



5th Grade- Seascape Painting- Quinn Daniel- Fort Hunt Elementary



5th Grade- Seascape Painting- Cecilia Parilla- Fort Hunt Elementary



5th Grade- Seascape Painting- Kai Lepore- Fort Hunt Elementary



# CHILDREN'S & TEENS GAZETTE 2024

## Fort Hunt Elementary

ANDREW GREEN, ART TEACHER



6th Grade- Dream House Painting- Elizabeth Funes Sanches- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Dream House Painting- Mckenna Lawless- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Dream House Painting- Shayla Paguada Paz- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Abstract Self-Portrait Drawing- Noah Moller- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Abstract Self-Portrait Drawing- Lilia Wing- Fort Hunt Elementary

6th Grade- Abstract Self-Portrait Drawing- Stuart Cox- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Abstract Self-Portrait Drawing- Gigi Lakatos Alcantara- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Abstract Self-Portrait Drawing- Jack Bierschenk- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Dream House Painting- Lilia Wing Sigalov- Fort Hunt Elementary



6th Grade- Abstract Self-Portrait Drawing- Molly Johnson- Fort Hunt Elementary



# 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



Lucas Zang, Grade 4



Luca Vallozzi, Grade 6





Sen. Scott Surovell (D-34), Senate Majority Leader



Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares



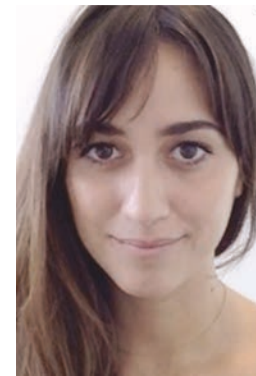
Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield)



Chairman Jeff McKay



PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY  
Karol Escalante, director of Immigrant Community Affairs, Fairfax County



LINKEDIN.COM  
ACLU of Virginia Senior Immigrants' Rights Attorney Sophia Gregg



MERCIA HOBSON/  
THE CONNECTION (FILE PHOTO)  
Diane E. Burkley Alejandro, ACLU People Power

# What Could Mass Deportation Plans Mean Here?

## Local officials emphasize welcoming policies.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Local, county and state elected officials, organizations, faith-based clergy and others across the United States, including those regionally in Virginia, are bracing for a possible surge in deportations of undocumented immigrants. Could it begin as early as Inauguration Day 2025, Jan. 20, when the incoming president will assume office?

On Sunday, Dec. 8, President-elect Trump said that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would be “starting with the criminals.”

Jeff McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, said on Dec. 12, “Our Board will respond to anything the Trump Administration does that threatens the safety of our residents. Per my Board Matter of Nov.19, the County is currently exploring all options to defend our most vulnerable residents from potentially harmful initiatives by the Trump Administration, including the promised mass deportations. As I wrote in the Board Matter, while immigration enforcement targeting the small number of dangerous criminals is sensible, indiscriminate and widespread enforcement will, in fact, harm public safety through a reduction in cooperation with local law enforcement. Our Board recently adopted our federal Legislative Program, with new language as a result of the Board Matter that specifically addresses some of the concerns I’ve heard from our community regarding mass, indiscriminate deportations.”

Also on Dec. 12, Trump indicated that he could try to use the military and local law enforcement to carry out deportations, saying, “I will go up to the maximum level of what the law allows.” With that, a flurry of responses began across Northern Virginia.

On Dec. 12, Sen. Scott Surovell (D-34), Virginia Senate Majority Leader and attorney, said that the “arrest and deportation of undocumented immigrants is a federal issue.”

Surovell added that “one in four people who live in Fairfax County was born in another country.” Fairfax County’s diversity is a

strength, he said. “Immigrants move to Fairfax County due to its welcoming nature and the economic opportunities that exist here.”

Calling a locality a “sanctuary” amounts to political name calling. “State and local law enforcement do not play a role in deportation proceedings, are already suffering from major post-pandemic personnel shortages and do not have the bandwidth or even the jurisdiction to enforce federal law,” Surovell said. “It is also my understanding that local law enforcement regularly notifies federal immigration authorities if undocumented persons commit violent crimes or serious felonies.”

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced that same day, Dec. 12, his “No Sanctuary Cities” budget proposal. It would require “local law enforcement, sheriffs and jail directors to fully comply with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainers and provide notification to ICE 48 hours prior to the release of an undocumented immigrant who commits a crime.

“Additionally, funding will be withheld from localities that purport to be ‘sanctuary’ cities or enact practices impeding cooperation with ICE.” [Source: Fact Sheet: Governor Glenn Youngkin Calls for No Sanctuary Cities]

“We must stop the cycle of violence and crime that is being enabled by some local governments,” Youngkin wrote. “Virginia is not a sanctuary state, and we must be clear that we will not allow localities to become ‘sanctuary cities.’ If local governments turn their backs on their citizens in order to pander to pro-illegal immigrant groups, we will cut off their funding.”

“The DCJS Director will be required to withhold 599 funding to those localities, and the Compensation Board will be required to withhold state funding to local and regional jails,” Youngkin’s proposal states.

The state legislature would have to approve Youngkin’s proposal.

Fairfax County, we are regularly reminded, is the safest jurisdiction of its size, notwithstanding (or perhaps in part because of) policies or the fact that one-in-four residents were born in another country.

Youngkin’s statement follows an earlier opinion issued by Virginia Attorney General



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON (FILE PHOTO 2018)

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer speaks with a Fairfax County resident.

Jason Miyares on Sept. 5, 2024, to the Sheriff of Bedford County, who asked whether a sheriff is “prohibited by law from cooperating with federal immigration authorities by notifying United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers, after receipt of an ICE-issued detainer related to an inmate into the sheriff’s custody, or the release of that inmate in order for ICE to attain custody of the inmate prior to or upon the release.”

Miyares writes, “It is my opinion that a sheriff is expressly authorized to cooperate with federal officials by providing them pre-release notification as requested by the detainer.”

Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) heralded Youngkin’s announcement. “I applaud Governor Glenn Youngkin for his efforts to protect our communities from repeat, violent offenders. ... I opposed the Trust Policy from the beginning primarily because of its impact on public safety.”

The trust policy is designed to protect “the safety and security of all immigrant

residents,” as noted on the Fairfax County website.

“The Board of Supervisors passed the Trust Policy in 2021 to codify Fairfax County’s commitment to the safety and security of all immigrant residents. The Trust Policy contains specific standards to ensure that employees do not voluntarily cooperate with enforcement of federal immigration laws.” [https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/immigrants-fairfax-county]

Fairfax County commits to protecting the rights of all residents regardless of their immigration or citizenship status, said Karol Escalante, director of Immigrant Community Affairs for Fairfax County. “I also guarantee that everyone has an equitable opportunity to participate in the county’s economic vitality. The trust policy ensures that immigrant residents can access county benefits and services knowing that the information they share will not be disclosed to Federal immigration officials,” said Escalante.

SEE MASS DEPORTATIONS, PAGE 16





Herndon Town Councilmember Doneilla Scherff asked if the town adheres to Fairfax County's Trust Policy.



Martha-Helene Stapleton- "This is our neighborhood; we don't want to live in fear."



Lorena Brady- "Do all that it takes to protect our families regardless of where we come from."



Roberto advocates for the New Virginia Majority.



William Camponi- "Is this just virtue signaling?... We have a lot of red lights; they are immigration red lights."



Brandon Anderson- "There needs to be a clear line, and we need to have the moral courage to defend ourselves and our community and say, if you break the law, we will cooperate with ICE and we will deport you."

# Fear, Emotion Play Out in Herndon

Town's immigrant residents plead for protection; others counter, 'You break the law, you are deported.'

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Immigrants and others spoke out about safety and deportation at the Town of Herndon's public hearing. On Tuesday, Dec. 10, the Town of Herndon held its final 2024 public hearing. Forty-seven percent of the town's population reportedly are immigrants; some are living there legally, and others are not. The town has a police department, but the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office manages the town's interim detention center and oversees its operations. Suspects are transferred to the Fairfax County Detention Center.

Town residents, some members of the New Virginia Majority, testified in Spanish with an English translation; others spoke in English, saying they were concerned about

the incoming federal administration's impact on their migrant community. They advocated against local support for federal immigration enforcement, reiterated the need for the town's police department to avoid collaborating with ICE and for the department to protect all migrant families, and called for the town's council, staff, and police department to reaffirm their commitment to the Fairfax County Trust Policy.

Martha Helene Stapleton, organizer of a prayer vigil and community meeting held after the Nov 18 abduction and rape, voiced concerns about public safety. "Immigrants are reluctant to report crimes... We are all impacted if crimes go unreported and criminals prey on vulnerable communities... We don't want to live in fear," she said.

Lorena Brady testified, "This town government must implement solutions and

policies that will prevent extremism. ... The resolution should ... make explicit opposition to mass deportations and targeting of law-abiding neighbors and families specifically, ... oppose legislation that would mandate local governments to enforce federal immigration laws ... oppose legislation for executive branch efforts that focus limited immigration enforcement resources on deporting law-abiding immigrants, rather than on the small number who have committed violent crimes."

Roberto (no last name provided) said. "Students should ... not be worried about whether ICE will visit their home or school and take their parents away ... We are here to hold the Town of Herndon to the guidelines of the Fairfax County Trust Policy... Do not allow family separation or suffering just because of our migrant status."

Brandon Anderson countered saying, "We're a nation of immigrants, and we're also a nation of laws... The perpetrator of the sexual assault had committed one misdemeanor and two felonies before he went on to assault a woman in our community. He should have been deported. He was not, and he hurt someone. This is not an academic exercise. There needs to be a clear line, and we need to have the moral courage to defend ourselves and our community and say, "If you break the law, we will cooperate with ICE, and we will deport you."

Councilmember Doniella Scherff requested a confirmation statement from the Town Attorney, Lesa Yeatts: "As a town, we are already abiding by the Trust Policy that the county has adopted and that they're building on and going forward. Is that accurate?"

"I believe that is accurate in practice," Yeatts said.

In a vote of 6-0, the Town Council approved Resolution 24-G-72, affirming the Town of Herndon's commitment to creating a safe and welcoming community for all.

# What Could Mass Deportation Plans Mean Here?

FROM PAGE 15

According to the FAIRFAX COUNTY DRAFT RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND PRINCIPLES FOR THE 119 CONGRESS DECEMBER 3, 2024:

- ❖ Oppose large-scale immigration enforcement actions that increase fear among all immigrants, leading to a reduction in trust and cooperation with localities, hindering law enforcement's ability to combat crime and keep the community safe, and diverting resources from focusing on the small number of undocumented immigrants who have committed violent crimes. Recognizing the criticality of this issue, the County has adopted the Public Trust and Confidentiality Policy, which increases cooperation and communication between immigrant populations and County agencies (including the Fairfax County Police Department)

Page 21-22: Immigration

- ❖ Oppose actions that would compromise the County's ability to deliver local government programs and services that benefit or protect the community as a whole.

- ❖ Oppose legislation that would mandate local governments to enforce federal immigration laws, especially in the area of law enforcement.

- ❖ Oppose legislation or Executive Branch efforts that focus limited immigration enforcement resources on deporting law-abiding immigrants rather than on the small number who have committed violent crimes.

The ACLU of Virginia responded to the Youngkin administration's statements of Dec. 12. ACLU of Virginia Senior Immigrants' Rights Attorney Sophia Gregg released the following statement: "The Youngkin administration's proposal to force Virginia police to do the federal government's job at Virginians' expense doesn't stand a chance in a state with such a long history of valuing immigrants. With more than 1 million immigrants living in the Commonwealth today – more than 75 percent living here for longer than a decade – it's clear that Gov. Youngkin's proposal is simple fearmongering divorced from the reality of who Virginians are today. "We look forward to working with lawmakers during this year's legislative

session to keep Virginia one of the safest and most economically prosperous states in the country, a welcoming place for immigrants, and a home for us all."

In response to Governor Youngkin's budget proposal banning "sanctuary cities" in Virginia, CASA released the following statement from Luis Aguilar, Virginia Director:

"CASA stands firmly against Governor Glenn Youngkin's harmful budget proposal, which seeks to penalize Virginia cities and counties for fostering trust between the Commonwealth of Virginia and its diverse communities. This plan is misguided, threatening public safety. Having TRUST policies in place means community members, no matter what they look like or what country they are from, can feel safe reporting crimes to police, taking their children to school, and getting treated at a hospital. ... By targeting localities like Richmond and Fairfax, which have chosen to prioritize trust and public safety by not proactively cooperating with ICE, Governor Youngkin's proposal puts lives at risk. How can we expect anyone, immigrant or otherwise, to reach out to law en-

forcement in times of need when they fear deportation or discrimination? Trust is the foundation of any safe community..."

CASA member Nerbir shares, "For many years in Virginia we have fought to pass laws in favor of our immigrant community, such as driver's licenses in the Commonwealth and the TRUST policy in Fairfax County. However, with this proposal to end those programs, I feel unsafe and afraid knowing that I may be at risk of deportation, and that my family may be separated."

Diane E. Burkley Alejandro, a member of the Fairfax Virginia People Power Group, said, "Americans clearly want to fix the immigration system. Does that mean they support Trump's plans to use the military to indiscriminately round up immigrants and put them in detention (concentration?) camps, conduct raids on schools, hospitals and churches, separate children from their parents and deport immigrants without the due process the Constitution provides them? We don't think Americans support these actions, but time will tell. What I will say is that these actions are immoral and illegal."



# Planners Eye Aging Section of Franconia

Residential and affordable housing dominate plans discussed.

PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

Change has been slow to come in Franconia but it's picked up speed lately, with the Franconia Triangle Study, which is focused on a triangle of land bordered by Franconia Road, Beulah Street and Grovedale Drive.

Currently there are gas stations, small houses, a church, and a government building that houses the Franconia District Supervisor's office and the district police station, and the Franconia Museum. Next summer, Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D-Franconia) is moving to a new government building that's under construction about two miles away. The current aging building is being eyed for 120 affordable apartments.

Other additions for the Franconia Triangle include 63 townhouses, 30 multi-family units and retail sites facing Franconia Road.

This was all laid out at a community meeting Tuesday, Dec. 10

at a community meeting in the John R. Lewis High School cafeteria, where residents gathered to hear the plan. It was also available via Zoom. Katrina Newton of the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development fielded questions from the audience along with Supervisor Lusk.

This meeting is following the initial consideration from April 11, 2023, when the Board of Supervisors authorized the consideration of a Plan amendment for Recommendation Area #3 of the S-9 Beulah Community Planning Sector, the county website said.

Currently, this triangle of land supports many community services that are needed in a well-rounded residential area. That includes restaurants, dry cleaning, veterinarian services, childcare, fire station and more. Some of these services will be included in the new configuration, but some will not and will require traveling outside this



immediate area.

According to Supervisor Lusk the area will need wider sidewalks along Franconia Road followed by intersection improvements at

Beulah Drive.

The next step for this plan is with the Board of Supervisors where they will look at the plan language. There are many more steps after

that before it is implemented.

For more information, look under Plan Amendment SSPA 2023-IV-2S on the county planning website.

# Teenager Starts Business to Help Afghan Girls

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE GAZETTE

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.

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."



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

PHOTO BY DONNA PARRY



# 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.**

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

### What Is a Native Plant?

“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

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

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, na-

SEE BIRDS, BUGS, PAGE 19



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 18

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/>



## GIFT GUIDE

# Fairfax Gift Guide 2024: Quirky is the Theme

**Dog sweaters and crime scene toilet paper fall under quirky**

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

**F**or some gift givers this year, the quirrier the better so this gift guide is not just “gifts,” it’s quirky gifts.

Sure, out on the frozen tundra, teams of husky dogs are pulling sleighs all over the place with no fear. There’s ice, there’s snow, and these dogs have big coats of fur to deal with it. The family dog is used to snuggling up on the couch so when it’s time to go out, they might need a jacket to wear for those days when the temperatures are low. No fear, doggie jackets are available everywhere.

The velcro collar and torso strap make attaching the doggie jacket easy. At Petsmart in Springfield, across the street from the Springfield Town Center, they have a wide assortment of dog coats and sweaters, ranging from \$20 - \$85.

## Quirky Kid Stuff

At “Perpetual Kid,” they are proud of their quirkiness. “We make shopping for your weird friends and family easy,” they said. A set of “Neat and Novel Kitchen Sponges” (\$8.99) has sponges called “Moby Dish” or “The Sponge Also Rises,” for the English majors out there. Then there’s the Crime Scene toilet paper (\$8.99) that looks like that yellow tape the police use, or the “Office Possum” rubber animal (\$25.99) that mounts on the side of the wastepaper basket in the office - it is sure to get a few shrieks.

## 12 Days of Outdoors

At Nalls Produce in the Franconia District, they are doing a 12-days of Christmas gifts with earthy Nalls items on the list each day. Day six for instance was a special on fruit butters, day 10 was table-top trees and day 11 was their locally famous crop share program. Santa candles, an ice cream punch card and fresh eggnog each had an assigned day in the 12 days of Christmas.

Valerie Nalls is the mastermind behind their marketing program and she highlighted “an item a day for 12 days.”



Eggnog at Nalls is part of their 12 Days of Christmas gifts.



Valerie Nalls

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION



Artist Kate Marr at Monroe Street Studio

## Art Classes

If there’s no space under the tree, how about an art lesson? At the Monroe Street Studio in Herndon where the “fundamentals of visual art,” are the focus in their classes there is something for all ages, said owner Yana Farmer, who is also the art

teacher there. Throughout the year, there are classes and a summer camp that work around the Fairfax County School schedule.

In the past, there were students on the “Gold and Silver Key Scholastic Program.” that worked with officials at the Russian



Is it an office possum or rat? Either way, it will get some shrieks.

Embassy to display some art from Monroe Street students. Gift certificates of all amounts are available.

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 8

Avenue and King Street, as well as other public spaces, including parks, recreation fields, and other high-traffic pedestrian areas. Visit [alexandriava.gov/Recycling](http://alexandriava.gov/Recycling). Composting and Food Waste. Alexandria now has Resource Recovery Stations, located at the City’s Farmers’ Markets (Old Town, Del Ray) to collect food waste. More than 270 people have participated in the food waste program over the last several months. Participants drop off items weekly, over eight tons of waste

has been collected, to be composted to make a natural fertilizer. To learn more about composting visit [alexandriava.gov/YardWaste](http://alexandriava.gov/YardWaste). English as a Second Language Class. Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, 5005 Duke St. Tuesdays and Thursdays, all levels 10 a.m.-12 p.m., intermediate workshop 3-5 p.m. All classes free. Call the information desk, 703-746-1702.

The Talking Book Service at Alexandria Library will now operate Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Patrons may also reach the service at 703-746-1760.

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

Eligible low income households can now use their SNAP benefits to buy local foods at the Old Town Farmers’ Market. SNAP customers are able to use their electronic benefits transfer cards to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and other eligible food products at the market. The Old Town Farmer’s Market is located

at 301 King St., and is open on Saturdays, year round from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. Opera NOVA has begun collection of used musical instruments. Any instruments welcomed, regardless of type. Snare drums, clarinets, and violins are just some of the instruments that could bring joy to a home or school. Any recorders donated will be sent to an orphanage in Haiti in order to build a musical presence there. Opera NOVA has tax-exempt status. Contact Miriam Miller at 703-536-7557 or [mcdm1@verizon.net](mailto:mcdm1@verizon.net) to arrange for delivery.



# ENTERTAINMENT



The 30th Annual First Night Alexandria takes place on Dec. 31, 2024 throughout Old Town Alexandria.

## ASSISTANCE LEAGUE'S DECEMBER WISH LIST

December is coming to an end but there is still time to share the gift of a book with a low-income child. Assistance League's December Wish List has an extensive range of books for elementary students and there are still many popular titles to choose from. Assistance League partners with Title 1 elementary schools throughout Northern Virginia, helping students at these schools develop a love of reading and sense of pride in owning books of their own through its Build A Child's Library program. They encourage the community to support this wonderful program by making a selection from the December Wish List. Use this link: <https://tiny.alnv.org/7gs>. Visit: [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

## 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](mailto:RCarter@cbmove.com) or Nina Tisara, [Ninat@ninatisara.com](mailto:Ninat@ninatisara.com).

## 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](http://www.SoberRide.com).

## THROUGH DEC. 21

**"A Christmas Carol"**. At The Little Theatre of Alexandria. Wednesdays - Fridays at 8 p.m. / Saturdays & Sundays at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. Alexandria's favorite yuletide tradition continues - from the first "bah humbug" to the final "wassail," this timeless classic is sure to rekindle your holiday spirit. Join all your favorite Dickens characters - Tiny Tim and the Cratchit family; the Fezziwigs; the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come; and, of course, everyone's favorite curmudgeon, Ebenezer Scrooge - as they transport us to Victorian England and remind everyone of the meaning of Christmas.

## 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](http://DelRayArtisans.org/holiday-market-2024)

## BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

**At Joe Theismann's Restaurant.** 8 a.m. Located at 1800A Diagonal Road, Alexandria. Dates: Saturday, Dec. 21; Sunday, Dec. 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. 21; Sunday, Dec. 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. 21; Sunday, Dec. 22. Join Ada's on the River for a delicious family-style



A Gentle Unroot: A Latinx Perspective can be seen now through Jan. 12, 2025 at The Athenaeum in Alexandria.

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.

## 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.

## 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 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.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 23



Call today and receive a  
**FREE SHOWER PACKAGE**  
**PLUS \$1600 OFF**



**SAFE STEP**  
WALK-IN TUB

**1-877-591-9950**

With purchase of a new Safe Step Walk-In Tub. Not applicable with any previous walk-in tub purchase. Offer available while supplies last. No cash value. Must present offer at time of purchase. CSLB 1082165 NSCB 0082999 0083445

**Be prepared before the next power outage.**



**It's not just a generator.  
It's a power move.™**

Receive a free 5-year warranty with qualifying purchase\* - valued at \$535.

**Call 844-947-1479 to schedule your free quote!**

\*Terms and Conditions apply.

**GENERAC**

**Human Trafficking?  
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT**

You have the power to stand up to abuse in Virginia. Call #77 to report suspicious behavior and be a human-traffic hero.



**CLASSIFIED**  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM  
TO ADVERTISE IN THIS PAPER, CALL BY MONDAY 11:00 AM 703-778-9411

**The Bath or Shower You've Always Wanted  
IN AS LITTLE AS A DAY**



**\$1000 OFF\***  
AND  
**No Payments & No Interest  
For 18 Months\*\***  
OFFER EXPIRES 12/31/24

**BCI BATH & SHOWER**

**CALL NOW (844) 945-1631**

\*Includes product and labor; bathtub, shower or walk-in tub and wall surround. This promotion cannot be combined with any other offer. Other restrictions may apply. This offer expires 12/31/24. Each dealership is independently owned and operated. \*\*Third party financing is available for those customers who qualify. See your dealer for details. ©2024 BCI Acrylic, Inc.

**1300 TABLES! BUY! SELL! TRADE! VPN**

**NATION'S GUN SHOW**  
**DECEMBER 27, 28 & 29**  
**DULLES EXPO**

4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly, VA 20151

**\$1.00 OFF ONE ADULT ADMISSION** **FRI: 1-8 | SAT: 9-5 | SUN: 10-5** **\$1.00 OFF ONE ADULT ADMISSION**

VA & Utah CCW Courses (571) 237-9138  
Start your New Year with a Bang!

www.TheNationsGunShow.com | www.ShowmastersGunShows.com

Sign up for  
**FREE DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION**  
to any or all of our 15 papers  
**WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM/SUBSCRIBE**



**Mount Vernon Gazette**

www.MountVernonGazette.com

Twitter @MtVernonGazette

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 [connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe](http://connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe)

---

**NEWS DEPARTMENT:**  
[gazette@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:gazette@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Mary Kimm**  
Editor and Publisher  
[mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Jeanne Theismann**  
[jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com)  
@TheismannMedia

**Mercia Hobson**  
Staff Reporter  
[mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Mike Salmon**  
Contributing Writer  
[msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Ken Moore, Glenda Booth**  
Contributing Writers

---

**ADVERTISING:**  
For advertising information  
[sales@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:sales@connectionnewspapers.com)  
703-778-9431

**Debbie Funk**  
Display Advertising/National Sales  
703-778-9444  
[debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com)

**David Griffin**  
Marketing Assistant  
703-778-9431  
[dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Classified & Employment Advertising**  
703-778-9431

---

**Publisher**  
Jerry Vernon  
703-549-0004  
[jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Editor & Publisher**  
Mary Kimm  
[mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com)  
@MaryKimm

**Art/Design:**  
Laurence Foong  
**Production Manager:**  
Geovani Flores

---

**CIRCULATION**  
**Circulation Manager:**  
Ann Oliver  
[circulation@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:circulation@connectionnewspapers.com)

---

A Connection Newspaper

**Virginia PRESS Association**  
Award Winning Newspaper



FROM PAGE 21

## CHRISTMAS EVE DINING, DEC. 24

**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 Docksides 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 Diagonal 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



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

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 Docksides Grill, 101 North Union Street, Old Town Alexandria.** Spend Christmas Day at Vola's Docksides 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://visitallexandria.com/events/30th-annual-first-night-alexandria>

**JAN. 3 TO FEB. 1, 2025**  
**"Visual Humor."** At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. A lighthearted art exhibit that explores how humor sparks the imagination. Opening Reception on Friday, January 3, 7-9 p.m. to meet curator Dr Erica Hughes and the artists. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at [DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

**FRIDAY/JAN. 3**  
**Lesson Zero.** 8:30-10:30 p.m. At The Evening Star Cafe, 2000 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Admission is free and parking is available. For more information see [www.youtube.com/lessonzero](http://www.youtube.com/lessonzero) and [www.reverbnation.com/lessonzero](http://www.reverbnation.com/lessonzero).

**THE BIRCHMERE**  
**At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria.** All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at [Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com). Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or [www.Birchmere.com](http://www.Birchmere.com).  
**DECEMBER**  
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 MOTOOWN 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

**JANUARY**  
Fri. 3: Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder \$55.00  
Sat. 4: Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder \$55.00 SOLD OUT!  
Fri. 10: The Martin Sexton Abbey Road Show \$45.00  
Sat. 11: Last Train Home \$35.00  
Thu. 16: Herman's Hermits starring Peter Noone \$59.50  
Fri. 17: EagleMania - The World's Greatest Eagles Tribute Band \$45.00  
Sat. 18: Kindred The Family Soul \$75.00  
Sun. 19: Kindred The Family Soul \$75.00  
Mon. 20: OMAR \$45.00  
Tue. 21: All You Need Is Love: Celebrate The Beatles in John Lennon's 85th Year! \$55.00  
Wed. 22: Langhorne Slim & Oliver Wood \$39.50  
Thu. 23: Chante Moore \$85.00  
Fri. 24: Chante Moore \$85.00 SOLD OUT!  
Sat. 25: Dar Williams with special guest Pat Byrne \$45.00  
Thu. 30: Jarrod Lawson \$45.00  
Fri. 31: Will Downing \$79.50  
Sat. Feb. 1: Will Downing \$79.50

## 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.*



www.MtVernonSpecialists.com



**CHRIS WHITE**  
FAMILY REAL ESTATE  
OF LONG & FOSTER



*75 Homes SOLD so far in 2024!*



4835 Stillwell Ave | \$795,000



9416 Old Mount Vernon Rd | \$1,350,000



3123 Little Creek Ln | \$785,000



3608 Center Dr | \$1,545,000



8230 W Boulevard Dr | \$1,210,000



3702 Carriage House Ct | \$1,250,000



9394 Mount Vernon Cir | \$1,645,000



5630 Old Mill Rd | \$1,255,000



4501 Dolphin Ln | \$1,370,000

**LONG & FOSTER**  
REAL ESTATE

703.283.9028

www.chrisandpeggywhite.com  
chris.white@longandfoster.com

Alexandria/Old Town Historic ~ 110 N. Royal St. 3rd Floor Alexandria, VA 22314

BEST OF  
**WASHINGTONIAN**  
TOP PRODUCING AGENT 2015 - 2024