

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 5, 2024

Oliver Keckler's Farm Stand, Here All Winter



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

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Outdoor temperatures have dropped, the growing season has waned and many farmers market vendors have closed up shop for the year. But all winter long, Oliver Keckler will be selling produce at his Saturday morning farm stand at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 8009 Fort Hunt Road.

"In 2023, I only missed one day

because the potatoes would have frozen on the table," he said recently. "I've been there in snowstorms, sleet storms and everything. We're farmers."

He has the most products between May and Thanksgiving, but throughout the winter he will have acorn, spaghetti, honeynut, butternut and delicata squash; turnips; potatoes; sweet potatoes and beets. His greenhouses will yield fresh greens, including lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard, kale and bok choy all winter. "I grow them in

the ground, in actual dirt like in the field," he explains, "with a cover, the greenhouse, on top. It heats up and it's like they're growing in South Carolina."

Multiple Products

Keckler drives 109 miles from Orchard Country Produce, the 50-acre farm he manages with his father, Gregg, in Gardners, Pennsylvania. They raise about 25 acres of vegetables, 10 acres of peaches and nectarines and one acre of

SEE OLIVER KECKLER, PAGE 8



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Oliver Keckler will sell produce at his Saturday farm stand all winter.

Joining Forces

McEneaney becomes Corcoran affiliate.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

For more than 40 years, the name McEneaney has been synonymous with premier real estate services throughout the region. First established in Al-

Virginia, Washington D.C., and Maryland with agents known for providing elite customer service.

Under the leadership of Maureen McEneaney Dunn, the firm first founded by her father has now become an affiliate of the Corcoran Group, a leading residential real estate brand for 50 years.

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

— Corcoran McEneaney managing broker Michael Day

exandria in 1980 by retired Navy Captain John McEneaney, the firm grew to encompass Northern

estate brand for 50 years. Through its New York City, Hamptons, and South Florida brokerages, along with its rapidly growing affiliate network, the firm has over 100 offices and more than 4,500 independent salespersons in key



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

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

urban, suburban, and resort markets worldwide.

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

Day, executive vice president and managing broker of the Alexandria office. "Corcoran was recognized as the most ethical real estate company in New York for 13 years in a

row and that aligns perfectly with the priorities that McEneaney has had for 40 plus years."

With more than 420 agents and SEE MCEANEANY, PAGE 9



To the Scottish, it's dachaigh. To us, it's home.

We are now the official affiliate of The Corcoran Group. The same real estate firm trusted locally, now with the power of Corcoran. Corcoran McEneaney has your home in Alexandria.

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Forget the Who Roast Beef, Think Chinese for Christmas Night Dinner

By MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

For Chinese food carry-out restaurants, the number of orders expected varies each night but for Christmas night, there is an uptick for some reason. Are people exhausted from a month of rushing around, parties and feasts? Have guests overstayed their welcome? The family dog chewed a few of the wrapped gifts so last-minute shopping was essential? Could be all of these and more, so a call to the local carry out is not out of the question.

"I'm busy every day, even Christmas day," said the owner of China One in Mount Vernon. Chin's Kitchen in the Huntington area is open too and gets a lot of Christmas business.

At Peking Chef in Burke they get double the number calls as a normal night. "Really busy," the chef said, who recommends ordering early, he said.

The Chinese restaurant rush began on the east side of Manhattan when Chinese and other immigrants lived side by side, and since often these immigrants didn't celebrate Christmas, the night was a lot like all the other nights. The Chinese food also appealed to Jewish families not celebrating Christmas, so out of convenience, the tradition grew.

Flash forward to the 1980s and in the "The Christmas Story," movie, the family goes to eat Chinese after the neighbor's dog ate their



Chinese food is popular on Christmas night.

turkey. Eating Chinese on Christmas night got an additional bump after that.

Musician Brandon Walker has a song called "Chinese Food on Christmas," which is his food of choice since he is Jewish, a point he makes in the song. Walker lives in Annapolis and wrote the song after a college professor challenged him to write the next Christmas hit. "Chinese Food on Christmas," went viral, earning him international press, an exhibit in the Jewish Museum of Maryland, and even a few marriage proposals, his website said.

Rabbi Raps talked about a similar history on a video clip but has a message too for the Jewish people eating Chinese on Christmas night.

Sure, have the Chinese food but be careful to adhere to Kosher rules. "No pork on your fork," he said.

Jeremy & The Harlequins have a music video called, "A Chinese Restaurant on Christmas," that's set (spoiler alert) in a Chinese restaurant. "Here I am spending it with General Tso," says one line.

Not every place is open though. Over at Family Fortune in the Mount Vernon Shopping Center, they are closed that night for the holiday. "It's family time," said the host.

Most Chinese restaurants and carry outs are open Christmas.



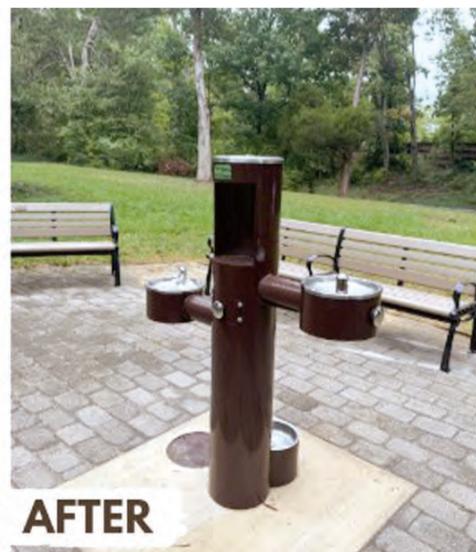
Deck the halls with boughs of Chinese food.



Mount Vernon Trail Gets New Fountains Thanks to Grant



BEFORE



AFTER

The new fountains add a lot to the scenery and function at the pit stops along the Mount Vernon Trail.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Friends of Mount Vernon Trail, other local groups, provide matching funds to help make it happen.

By MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

New water fountains are coming to the Mount Vernon Trail thanks to a \$475,000 grant from the National Park Foundation. The new fountains will have water bottle fillers and remain operational year-round. The Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail were able to offer \$40,000 in

matching funds to strengthen the grant proposal thanks to the investment of many donors.

The grant funds and the contribution from the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail are expected to fund seven new water fountains, said Friends president Judd Isbell. Mount Vernon Trail water fountains that will be replaced are at the rest areas at Mount Vernon Estate, Fort Hunt, Belle Haven Park, Jones Point Park and Theodore Roosevelt Island. The other two fountains will be placed at Theodore Roosevelt Island restroom and at the Great Falls Visitor Center, Isbell said.

To make it happen, other local groups helped too. The Friends of Dyke Marsh, obtained a letter of support from 14 local organizations for the water fountain replacement grant and ALX Dog Walk, provided support towards the grant's matching funds.

MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE ♦ DECEMBER 5-11, 2024 ♦ 3



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Nativity Lutheran Church in Alexandria hosted a Thanksgiving Food collection and packing of the collected items packing more than 100 bags of food and collecting \$25 gift cards for United Community.

Nativity Lutheran Hosts Thanksgiving Collection for United Community

Nativity's Christmas Singalong is Dec. 14, 6:30-9pm, collecting gift cards for Christmas.

As the Thanksgiving season approaches, and the season when we as a nation tend to give back, Nativity Lutheran Church, a growing church in Mount Vernon neighborhood of Alexandria, was looking for a good way that we as a small, growing community of people could best give back to our local neighbors who are food and housing insecure. We decided to partner with United Community's Thanksgiving food drive.

Between providing a list for ease of shopping, and the ability to donate gift cards, United Community made it very easy for our small church to participate well above the level we thought possible. We do not have volunteer capacity, training or expertise for things like screening families and delivering the food bags. United Community provided the bags for us to stuff with Thanksgiving goodies, and even came to pick up the bags. United Community was able to focus on who would receive the meals, and we as a church were able to pitch in, go shopping, organize the meals, and feel good about giving back out of what we have been so freely given.

"Our family became a part of this church because they are

about giving back, and not about filling their own pockets," says Rita Klein, one of our church members. One of our children at the church, turning 7, asked his friends to bring cans of food for the food bags to his birthday party in lieu of receiving gifts.

"As we learn to give back as a community of faith, I am finding that we as a church are becoming people who are showing the love of Jesus in practical ways. We are becoming people whose hearts are open and loving, instead of being people who cultivate division," says Pastor Drew Parrish of Nativity.

If you have read this far, you are probably wondering how we did with the food drive. We collected food for 105 families, and 70 gift cards for United Community to give the families for turkeys, hams, or perishables. Pastor Drew invites the community to join in the Christmas spirit. "If you want to help us give back for Christmas, please come to Nativity's Christmas Singalong, Dec. 14, 6:30-9pm. We are singing carols, decorating cookies, and collecting \$25 gift cards to Target and Walmart (suggested donation) to benefit United Community's Christmas Drive to give kids and youth Christmas shopping opportunities."



53rd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade



PHOTO BY MATT CHENET FOR VISIT ALEXANDRIA

Bagpipers at the Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk.

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

Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Old Town Alexandria

Source: Visit Alexandria

Alexandria was founded in 1749 by Scottish merchants and was named after Scotsman John Alexander who owned the land that became Alexandria. Today, the city continues celebrating its heritage with the iconic Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade on Saturday, December

7, 2024. Dozens of Scottish clans dressed in colorful tartans parade through the streets of Old Town, joined by pipe and drum bands, as well as terriers and hounds, community groups and more.

View the mile-long parade route and road closure info.

The Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade started as a community event more than 50 years ago to highlight the city's Scottish heritage and support the mission of the Campagna Center, then

known as the Community Y. The Campagna Center partnered with St. Andrew's Society Washington, DC, Old Presbyterian Meeting House and the City of Alexandria to produce the parade and associated events led by Junior and Sup-

porting Friends of the Campagna Center.

In 2022, to preserve the historic signature event that is a source of civic pride and a key economic driver for the city's small business and hospitality communities, Visit

Alexandria took on the role of lead parade producer in partnership with the Campagna Center and the City of Alexandria.

Parade will occur rain or shine. Text "ALXEVENTS" to 888777 to receive event updates.

24th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights

Dec. 7, 2024

Holiday Boat Parade of Lights starts at 5:30 p.m.

Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m. Old Town Alexandria Waterfront

Source: Visit Alexandria

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

The parade is produced by Visit Alexandria in collaboration with the City of Alexandria, City Cruises - Alexandria and the Old Domin-

ion Boat Club. Amazon is proud to sponsor the Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights and partner on such a beloved community event.

Parade will occur rain or shine. Text "ALXEVENTS" to 888777 to receive event updates.

The Boat Parade includes annual festivities at Waterfront Park along with the return of Canal Center festivities to the Old Town North waterfront.

Make a day of it—or a weekend! The Boat Parade is part of Alexandria's Biggest Holiday Weekend and is the same day as the 53rd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade which starts at 11 a.m. Arrive early to enjoy both parades and enjoy local restaurants and shopping.

2 to 8 p.m.: Hands-on activities and food and beverage options at

Waterfront Park (1 King Street) (Activities end at 5:30 p.m.)

2 to 8 p.m.: Holiday Festival at Torpedo Factory Art Center (105 N Union St)

2 to 8 p.m.: Canal Center Holiday Art Mart on the Old Town North waterfront (11 Canal Center Plaza)

3:30 p.m.: Santa arrives by fireboat as part of the Holiday Festival at Torpedo Factory Art Center (Alexandria Marina)

5:30 p.m.: Parade begins at the Alexandria City Marina and cruises southward (0 Cameron St.)

Parade start time varies by location: ~5:30 p.m. at City Marina, but earlier to north and later to south

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Note: Viewing locations north of Founders Park may see boats in staging process rather than single-file parade line.



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



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OPINION

Public Safety Data and You

BY DAN STORCK
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

Like many of us, the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) continues to use new technology to improve and enhance its operations, support its officers and protect all of us. A few years ago, the department launched a new Open Data Portal to proactively provide valuable crime statistics to those who live and work in our community as well as members of the media. However, as this was organized by police station district, not by magisterial district, it only told part of the story. With this in mind, I have been asking FCPD leadership to provide public access to crime data and information for many years. I am pleased to share that after much work with the County GIS teams and data analysts, last month, the department unveiled new filters for the data portal that provide statistics specifically for the Mount Vernon District, as well as the other magisterial districts.

The open portal is easy to use and understand. Go to: <https://www.fcpcod.org/>. This is your gateway to understanding police activity in Fairfax County. Here you'll find a wealth of



information and insights into law enforcement activities in Fairfax County. The platform offers transparent access to various datasets, including incident statistics and demographic analyses. You can explore trends, patterns and community safety metrics to better understand FCPD's efforts in ensuring public safety and fostering trust within the community.

Once on the site, you can choose from four dashboards which are updated every five minutes. The statistics in the dashboards show year-to-date information with a comparison to

the previous year. You can look at information for the entire County, police station or magisterial district. To see Mount Vernon District data, choose Mount Vernon in the "Select by Magisterial District" dropdown menu near the top. You can also sort by year and type of crime.

One of the best examples of FCPD using technology to improve our public safety is the License Plate Reader (LPR) technology. In only two years of implementation, LPRs have significantly enhanced investigative efforts and solved hundreds of complex cases, including malicious woundings, attempted rapes, burglaries and other offenses, as well as recover 43 firearms and locate 30 critical missing people.

Other examples of new technology include our body-worn camera program and speed cameras in school and construction zones.

Fairfax County continues to be the safest jurisdiction of our size, and that is largely due to our proactive department using the deployment of new technology and advancements to keep us all safe. However, we all know it is our officers in blue who make all the difference and we appreciate all they do for us everyday.

Be Part of the Children's and Teens' Edition

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

and from individuals.

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

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

Submission Directions

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

2. Identify each submission as follows:

...

Artwork example

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

Writing example

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

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

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER DECEMBER 21, 2023



Mount Vernon Gazette

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A Connection Newspaper



Submit a Letter to the Editor

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

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

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

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Giving Season and Your Community Newspaper

Giving Tuesday is almost done, but it is giving season, and The Connection, Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and Potomac Almanac need your help to keep going.

One of the important functions of our weekly newspapers is to highlight the many organizations in the community that work to benefit those in need, people experiencing homelessness and families experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

You can see lists on our website of organizations with missions for the public good in many contexts. Helping hungry people. Providing health care. Working for the environment. Protecting animal welfare. Providing access to the arts. And more. These organizations and nonprofits are all addressing critical needs.

For our list for Fairfax County, click here. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/where-to-give-locally/>

For our list for Arlington, click here. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/arlington-nonprof-its-need-your-help/>

For our list for Alexandria and Mount Vernon, click here. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/where-to-give-locally-in-alexandria-and-mount-vernon/>

These lists have been developed over years and are updated regularly. If you see something we've missed or a listing that needs corrections, contact Mary Kimm, kimm.mary@gmail.com, with Give Locally in the subject line.

We also regularly write stories that feature the important work

of these organizations and stories that show the need. For example <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/apr/10/in-tents-not-by-choice-but-lack-of-choices/>

On a lighter side, calendar editor Steve Hibbard has been expanding our calendars for entertainment and civic events. Right now, the calendars are chock full of holiday events. Here are two examples for the coming weeks, Fairfax County and Arlington.

<https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/fairfax-county-calendar/>

<https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2024/dec/03/arlington-calendar/>

Newspaper advertising is lagging, leaving our revenue very short. Without getting more help ourselves, we won't be able to continue to showcase the community. Without help we won't be able to continue publishing.

We hope to research nonprofit status in coming months. We hope to invest in a more robust online presence, possibly saving some print costs. We hope to expand our coverage and reach. But right now we need help just to continue to do what we are doing. Please extend a portion of your Giving Tuesday generosity for your community newspapers.

You can donate to our GoFundMe campaign. <https://gofund.me/82995c2d>

You can mail a check made out to Local Media Connection or Alexandria Gazette Packet or Connection Newspapers or Mount Vernon Gazette, and mail it to 1606 King Street, Alexandria, Va. 22314

Feel free to contact us with questions.

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Oliver Keckler's Farm Stand, Here All Winter

FROM PAGE 1
strawberries. Thanks to his 250 laying hens, he sells fresh eggs year-round.

He brings apples from Hollaughbaugh Brothers, in nearby Biglerville, Pennsylvania, and some beef products from another farm. Keckler's hogs, up to 40 in some years, eat the excess produce and end up on dinner plates as pork chops, bacon, breakfast and grilling sausages and smoked kielbasa.

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

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

Faithful Customers

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

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

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



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH
Keckler's turnips and Brussel sprouts are robust and popular.

The Rewards

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

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

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

His family is all in. He and his wife, Elisabeth, have two boys and two girls, from age one month to seven. Living on a farm and dealing with many people are "a good life for the children," he believes. "They think we are giving away stuff," he jokes. With his new double-cab truck that holds six, the whole family can go to the summer markets. "Last



summer on Saturdays, we were all there," he said. Keckler's father sells at a Columbia, Maryland, market and Fairfax City during the growing season.

"We can't wait until it is strawberry season again," wrote Lepple. No doubt others eagerly also await

his raspberries, peaches, sweet corn, tomatoes, eggplants, zucchinis and more.

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

More information: www.orchardcountryproduce.com



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH
Oliver Keckler usually has at least five squash varieties for sale.



PHOTO BY ELISABETH KECKLER
Back at the farm, Remington, Isabelle, and Cassidee Keckler holding piglets.



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH
Oliver Keckler will resume his Thursday Belle View Boulevard stand in May 2025.

McEneaney Becomes Corcoran Affiliate

FROM PAGE 1
40 support staff across 13 offices, Corcoran McEneaney becomes the first affiliate operating in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

"Corcoran is the number one firm in Manhattan and we are the number one firm in the city of Alexandria so it was a strategic alliance," said principal and COO Peter Pejacevich. "Corcoran was seeking a trusted and respected partner in our market, and the timing couldn't be more perfect."

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

"Through establishing a presence in a major city like Washington, D.C., as well as the marketplaces just outside this global hub, we are making a pivotal step in expanding our company's physical footprint and strategic network," Liebman said in a press release. "I am confident this partner-

ship will flourish, ... the McEneaney team's commitment to excellent service resonates with our brand's premium offerings."

The addition of Corcoran McEneaney increases the total agents who carry the Corcoran name by nearly 10 percent, and increases its physical office count by close to 10 percent. In terms of both agents and offices, Corcoran McEneaney will become the network's second largest affiliate, following Corcoran Icon Properties in Northern California.

Formerly known as a collective of McEneaney Associates and Middleburg Real Estate/Atoka Properties, Corcoran McEneaney will continue to offer both residential and commercial sales and leasing, individual and corporate relocation services, and rental property management.

Dunn, who has been part of the company since its inception, will serve as president of Corcoran McEneaney.

"The authentic culture and dedication to excellence with the Corcoran brand has

always aligned seamlessly with the core values of McEneaney," Dunn said. "We are energized by the immense growth potential this partnership brings, reinforcing our commitment to delivering the exceptional service that has defined our company for 45 years."

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

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

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralixandria.org/ALIVE>

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

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

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

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

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

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria's preteens 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 and www.spaceofhisown.org. For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov or phone at 703-746-4687.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

NATIVE HERITAGE

PHOTOS BY LUIS APONTE



Raven Brightwater Custalow and Christopher Lee Custalow from the Eastern Woodland Revitalization.



Christopher Lee Custalow talks with library patrons.

Celebrating Heritage: Fairfax County Public Library's Annual Native American Celebration

BY LUIS APONTE

During the weekend of Nov. 23-24, the Fairfax County Public Library hosted its third annual Native American Heritage Celebration. Spearheaded by Information Services Librarian Luis Aponte, the event has grown over the years, expanding from a single library branch to four: Centreville Regional, Pohick Regional, Reston Regional, and Oakton libraries. This year's celebration featured an authentic cultural presentation and dance demonstration by the Eastern Woodland Revitalization, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and revitalizing the traditional knowledge and practices of Eastern Woodland tribal communities.

Representatives from the Mattaponi Tribe — Raven Brightwater Custalow and Christopher Lee Custalow — shared their ancient history, traditional dances and crafts with the community. This immersive cultural event captivated attendees, providing a unique opportunity to learn about and appreciate Native American heritage.

"At Eastern Woodland Revitalization, our passion is derived from the spirit of our ancestors who guide our mission of promoting cultural awareness and understanding while preserving and celebrating the rich history and traditions of our tribal communities," said Raven.

The Mattaponi Tribe, based in King William County, Virginia, represents one of the oldest continuously inhabited tribal reservations in the United States, established in 1658. Raven, who was born and raised on this historic land, and Chris, who is Cherokee, shared stories passed down through generations. These included the tribe's role in the Powhatan Confederacy, which once ruled Tsenacommacah, meaning "a dense-



Representatives from the Mattaponi Tribe, Raven Brightwater Custalow and Christopher Lee Custalow, making a presentation for Native American Heritage Month.

ly populated area," encompassing most of what is now Tidewater Virginia. Chris explained how the Powhatan greeted European settlers and how the arrival of colonists shaped the Mattaponi people's history, resilience and ongoing efforts to preserve their culture.

A highlight of the event was a series of videos demonstrating different styles of Native American music, such as the Mi'gmaq Honor Song. This drum-based song was written by an elder to help bring a tribal community engulfed in civil war back together. The expression and power of music to bring people together is a universal practice among tribal nations and a lovely expression of goodwill and unity, creating bonds that transcend language and background.

The Fairfax County Public Library's commitment to lifelong learning has shined through this event, which combined cultural education with community engagement.

These programs are part of a broader mission to promote inclusiveness and provide opportunities for all community members to expand their knowledge and appreciation of diverse cultures.

Another highlight was a demonstration of dances featured at powwows, a popular celebration and gathering of Native American communities that includes dancing, singing, food and crafts. For example, Chris explained that men's and women's Fancy Dancing are the athletes of their world, featuring fast-paced, athletic movements and colorful costumes covered in feathers.

"I thought it was great," said attendee Peter Hogan. "I was impressed by the acrobatics. I also learned about the official tribes in Virginia — I didn't know about that."

Events like these not only foster cultural appreciation and educational enrichment, but also strengthen connections between neighbors. By preserving and promoting cul-



Corn Husk Doll Craft

tural heritage, libraries play a vital role in ensuring that the richness of shared history is passed down to future generations.

To learn more about the Eastern Woodland Revitalization, visit www.easternwoodlandrevitalization.org. For more information about Fairfax County Public Library programs and services, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library.

About the author:

Luis Aponte is an information services librarian at Centreville Regional Library, a branch of Fairfax County Public Library.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

NEWS

IRS Warns of Holiday Scams

Protect sensitive personal information.

On Cyber Monday, the Internal Revenue Service and its Security Summit partners warned taxpayers to approach their holiday shopping with extra caution because scammers are also shopping – for their next victim’s personal information.

The ninth annual National Tax Security Awareness Week features tips for taxpayers and tax professionals to avoid scams and protect their sensitive data. The Security Summit initiative is a joint effort between the IRS, states and tax professionals to protect taxpayers and the tax system against identity theft.

“The holiday shopping season and the fast-approaching tax season create a tempting target for identity thieves and scam artists,” said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. “Taxpayers should use extra caution this holiday season to protect their valuable personal and financial information, whether shopping online or clicking on links in email and other messages.”

Scams and rip-offs being seen by the IRS and the Security Summit partners include sophisticated phishing emails and related attacks. Taxpayers can be duped into unwittingly handing over their confidential tax and financial information. Would-be victims could also get tricked into disclosing their addresses, which can lead to tax-related identity theft and fraud.

A common example right now involves false messages made to look like they’re coming from de-

livery services. Victims receive a text or email purporting to be from a company or business saying a delivery can’t

be made along with a link to click to reschedule or provide more information. But in reality, the link represents a form of phishing that attempts to steal personal information or download malware. It’s a very prevalent scam expected to intensify during the holidays.

Another common scam expected to intensify soon will involve emails pretending to be from the IRS or others in the tax industry.

During the busiest time of the year for online shopping, taxpayers can remember some important steps to protect themselves and their information from data thieves:

- ❖ Shop at online sites with web addresses that begin with the letters “https:” the “s” stands for secure communications. Also look for a padlock icon in the browser window.
- ❖ Don’t shop on unsecured public Wi-Fi in places like a mall or restaurant.
- ❖ Ensure security software is updated on computers, tablets and mobile phones.
- ❖ Help protect family members who may not be technologically savvy, a wide range that goes from young children to older adults.
- ❖ Make sure anti-virus software for computers has a feature to stop malware.
- ❖ Use strong, unique passwords for online accounts.
- ❖ Use multi-factor authentication whenever possible.

Taxpayers should be wary of a variety of email scams. Throughout the year, taxpayers should be aware of different types of email

OPINION

Specialty Plates for a Good Cause

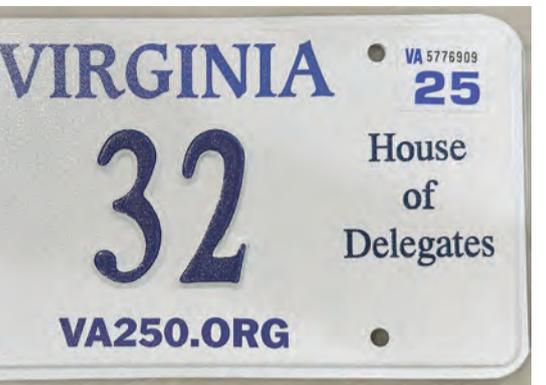
BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

One of the first things you notice while driving the roads of the Commonwealth is the number of cars sporting specialty (or vanity) license plates with varying designs and fun slogans. In fact, Virginia leads the nation in the number of registered personalized license plates, with one in six cars in Virginia having one!

The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offers over 250 plate designs from which drivers can choose. More than just a fun way to express your interests, promote a cause, share school pride, or honor military service, a number of the available designs are revenue-sharing plates, from which DMV dedicates a portion of its registration fees to a designated cause.

Visit here for a current list of the revenue-sharing license plates and the charity or program it supports: https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/documents/revenue_plates.pdf. If you choose to purchase one of these plates, a portion of your registration fee may even be tax deductible.

Just last week, I received my new House of Delegates Member plate with my seniority ranking “32” using the new VA250 design, which benefits the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission, on which I serve as a Commissioner. Earlier this year in my July 4th article, I detailed the mission of VA250. First established by my bill HB



1424 in 2020, VA250 exists to commemorate the upcoming 250th anniversary of American independence, or the semiquincentennial, and educate Virginians, especially our students, about Virginia’s pivotal role in our nation’s birth. I plan to put this plate on my Honda EV.

For my family’s other vehicle, we selected the beautiful Protect Pollinators plate, which supports the Pollinator Habitat Program administered by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

As we embrace the upcoming season of giving, consider choosing your next license plate to make a difference in an important cause!

phishing scams that identity thieves and scam artists commonly use. These include:

- ❖ Phishing/Smishing – Phishing emails or SMS/texts (known as “smishing”) attempt to trick a recipient into clicking a suspicious

link, filling out information or downloading a malware file. Often phishing attempts are sent to multiple email addresses at a business or agency, increasing odds that someone will fall for the trick.

- ❖ Spear phishing – These types

of scams single out individuals, can be specialized and make the email seem more legitimate. Scammers can pose as a potential client for a tax professional, luring the practitioner into sharing sensitive information.

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ENTERTAINMENT

ANNUAL OLD TOWN HOLIDAY OUTDOOR DECORATING CONTEST

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

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

ENDING DEC. 8

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

THROUGH DEC. 21

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

ENDING DEC. 10

Pope-Leighey House Tours. 12-1 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. By 1941, the year Pope-Leighey House was completed, Frank Lloyd Wright had studied

Japan for almost a half-century. He had become a serious collector of woodblock prints--even writing a book on the subject--and had won acclaim for his design of the Tokyo Imperial Hotel, one of the few buildings to survive the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. On this special tour, visitors will discover how the famous American architect incorporated his love of Japanese art, architecture, and philosophy into Usonian homes, and how this East Asian influence shines in Wright's Pope-Leighey House.

DEC. 6 - 8

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

FRIDAY/DEC. 6

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

DEC. 6-21

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

DEC. 6-22

29th Annual Holiday Market. At 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Del Ray Artisans 29th Annual Holiday Market offers unique handmade fine arts and crafts from local artists. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and much more! Plus 2025 wall calendars support Del Ray Artisans nonprofit. Free admission. Holiday Market is the first three weekends in December (Dec 6-8, Dec 13-15, Dec 20-22). Different artists each weekend! Open Fridays 6-9 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Details: DelRayArtisans.org/holiday-market-2024



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

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

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

SUNDAY/DEC. 8

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

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

SUNDAY/DEC. 8

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

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

At Joe Theismann's Restaurant. 8 a.m. Located at 1800A Diagonal Road, Alexandria. Dates: Saturday, Dec. 7, 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 8, 15, 22. This holiday season, create unforgettable memories with Breakfast with Santa in the enchanting Old Town Alexandria at Joe Theismann's Restaurant. Start with a festive family-style breakfast featuring delectable options like french toast, smoked salmon, and tater tots. Children will love the take-home treats and a magical moment meeting Santa Claus, complete with a keepsake photo. Adults can indulge in bottomless Prosecco bellinis or classic mimosas for \$15. Babies join for free, while kids are \$29.50 plus tax and adults are \$53 plus tax.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

At Mia's Italian Kitchen. 8 a.m. Located at 100 King Street, Alexandria. Dates are Saturday, Dec. 7, 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 8, 15, 22. At Mia's Italian Kitchen, children will enjoy take-home treats and a magical visit with Santa Claus, complete with a keepsake photo

that captures the Christmas spirit. Adults can enjoy bottomless classic mimosas and Prosecco bellinis for \$18. Babies join for free, while kids are \$34 plus tax and adults are \$57 plus tax.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

At Ada's on the River. 8 a.m. Located at 3 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Dates are: Saturday, Dec. 7, 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 8, 15, 22. Join Ada's on the River for a delicious family-style spread including breakfast pastries, pancakes, yogurt parfait, and tater tots. Children will receive take-home treats and a magical visit with Santa Claus, complete with a keepsake photo. Adults can indulge in bottomless Prosecco bellinis or classic mimosas for \$15. Babies join for free, while kids are \$29.50 plus tax and adults are \$53 plus tax.

THURSDAY/DEC. 12

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

THURSDAY/DEC. 12

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

DEC. 12 TO JAN. 12, 2025

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

DEC. 13-15

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

CAPITAL ART & CRAFT

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

ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 14

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

DEC. 14-15

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 21

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

TUESDAY/DEC. 24

Waterskiing Santa Show. 1 p.m. Begins at BARCA Pier, 2 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. For a sight you have to see to believe, head to the



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

waterfront between BARCA Pier and Founders Park to witness the Waterskiing Santa Show, featuring Santa and his friends gliding along the Potomac River. There is also a rumor the Grinch will try and steal the show at 12:45 p.m. before the show starts. Santa and his pals begin at BARCA Pier at 1 p.m. and ski north to Founders Park before circling back south and finishing at Ford's Landing.

CHRISTMAS EVE DINING, DEC. 24

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

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

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

The Majestic, 911 King Street, Alexandria.

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

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

On Christmas Eve, Mia's will be open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., offering two special dishes. Guests can enjoy Veal Chop Parmigiana, made with a pounded and breaded bone-in veal chop, spicy rigatoni pomodoro, melted mozzarella, and saba for

HOLIDAY EXTRA

NOW THRU DEC. 8

Annual Toy Drive. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton (Bldgs. 16, 2, and 11). Annual Toy Drive in partnership with OAR NOVA to bring joy to local families impacted by the criminal justice system.

WINTER WONDERLAND AT BURKE LAKE PARK

Climb aboard the Holiday Express for a train ride, spin on the Carolers Carousel, play Gingerbread Man Golf and savor s'mores by the fire. Meet Santa, sip hot chocolate and enjoy the season's warmth. Weekends: Dec. 7-8, Dec. 14-15, Dec. 21-22, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

DEC. 7 TO JAN. 12, 2025

Disney's The Hunchback of Notre Dame.

Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. The Hunchback of Notre Dame is based on the Victor Hugo novel with songs from the Disney animated feature. Set in 15th-century Paris, the musical tells the story of Quasimodo, the deformed bell-ringer who longs to be in the outside world. Held captive by his devious caretaker, the archdeacon Dom Claude Frolo, he escapes for the day, only to be treated cruelly by all but the beautiful Romani woman, Esmeralda. Quasimodo isn't the only one captivated by her free spirit, though — the handsome Captain Phoebus and Frolo are equally enthralled. As the three vie for her attention,

Frolo embarks on a mission to destroy the Roma — and it's up to Quasimodo to save them all.

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Living Nativity. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 6320 Hanover Ave., Springfield. Come meet Baby Jesus and pet Delila the Camel and

other animals. Bring family and friends to enjoy the greatest story of all times and live music and refreshments. This event is free. If possible, bring a toy to donate. Donations of new or lightly used toys will be distributed to local organizations that help families in

Springfield. All are welcome. Visit the website: <https://www.saintchristophers.net/>

SATURDAY/DEC. 7

Squirrel Nut Zippers Christmas Caravan. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Swing into the holiday season with platinum-selling jazz-rock band Squirrel Nut Zippers. Serving up a boisterous blend of Delta blues, big band, klezmer jazz, and calypso sound in its holiday program Christmas Caravan, Squirrel Nut Zippers is sure to get audiences dancing along.

CAPITAL ART & CRAFT FESTIVAL/DEC 13-15

Join 300+ artists and vendors, and thousands of attendees at the Winter Capital Art and Craft Festival. Enjoy shopping for beautiful one-of-a-kind art,

\$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 Diagonall Road, Alexandria.

Indulge in a sumptuous Christmas Day Buffet, available from 11:30am to 9pm. The buffet features a Carving Station, a Salad Table, a Bread and Dessert Table, and a Hot Table. Priced at \$59

per person and \$19 for kids, this festive buffet promises a delectable spread to satisfy every palate with dishes like Praline-Sweet Potato Casserole, Spiral Ham, Brioche Stuffing and more.

The Majestic, 911 King Street, Alexandria.

On Christmas Day from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Majestic will offer a Christmas dinner for \$79 per person, featuring a four-course prix fixe menu with a variety of delicious options. Dishes include Butternut Squash Soup, Crab Croquettes, Roasted Turkey, Truffle Mash Potatoes, and more. The Majestic will also offer a Thanksgiving Bar Menu with an array of starters, main dishes, sides, and desserts. Children ages 12 and under can enjoy the Kids Menu, which includes three delicious courses.

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

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

Royal Restaurant, 730 North Saint Asaph Street, Alexandria.

Royal will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., offering its regular menu, along with a new breakfast, lunch, and dinner menu, plus two Christmas specials. Guests can choose

jewelry, clothing, furnishings, pottery, décor, and more. www.capitalartandcraftfestivals.com

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS

The National Museum of the Marine Corps is hosting a series of festive events to celebrate this year's holiday season.

From classic holiday films to creative crafts and Santa visits, there are activities for everyone to enjoy. Admission to the Museum and parking are free, and all events are open to the public.

Holiday Film Series

* "The Nightmare Before Christmas": Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.; December 8 at 1:30 p.m.

* "Mickey's Magical Christmas: Snowed in at the House of Mouse": Dec.14 at 11 a.m.; Dec. 17 at 1 p.m.; Dec. 22 at 1:30 p.m.

* "Dr. Seuss' The Grinch" (2018 version); Dec. 14 at 3:00 p.m.; Dec. 15 at 1:30 p.m.

Cookies, Cocoa, and Crafts

Families are invited to visit the Museum to create holiday memories on Saturday, Dec. 14, from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. Kids may enjoy free cookies, hot cocoa and holiday-themed picture frame crafts on the Museum's second floor.

Santa Claus Visits: Santa Claus is paying a special visit to the Museum in his traditional red outfit on Dec. 14 from 1-4 p.m. and in his special camo suit on Dec. 17 from 2:30-4:30 p.m. Families may take free photos with Santa and enjoy holiday-themed activities.

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>

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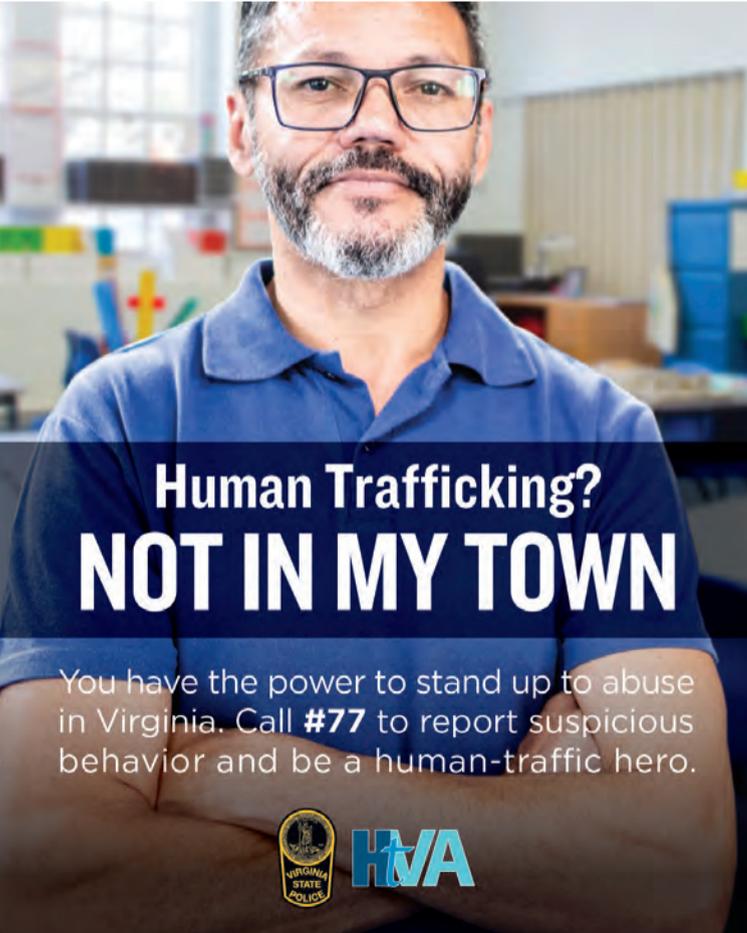
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BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 9

Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed.
To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, brianmorreale@gmail.com

SUPPORT GROUPS

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at suzjdoyle@gmail.com or 571-403-0673.

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

- ❖ Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.
 - ❖ Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, 614 Four Mile Road.
- Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free. Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us for more.

Divorce Workshop for Women. Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King St. The workshops are designed to provide education on the legal, financial, family and personal issues of divorce in a logical, yet compassionate way. The workshop fee is \$25. Visit www.novasecondsaturday.com for more.

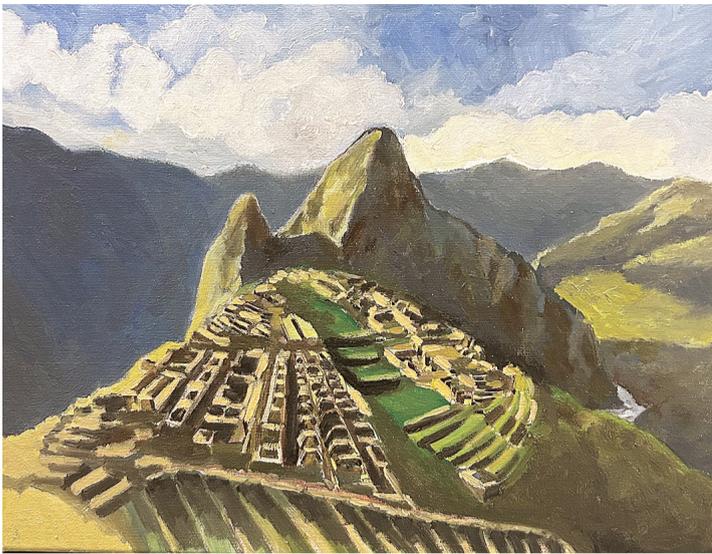
ONGOING

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.

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

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

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.



Machu Picchu, Peru, by Saul Cieza, from Chantilly, is a vibrant oil-on-canvas painting.



Odaybea Morrow of Oakton displays a gemstone necklace she created in her studio.

Local Artists at Capital Art and Craft Festival Winter 2024

Coming to Dulles Expo Center, Dec. 13-15

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Two Fairfax County artists are among the more than 300 juried artists, artisans and craftspersons of all media whose works are for sale at the Winter Capital Art and Craft Festival, produced by event management company SPARGO Inc. and returning to the Dulles Expo Center from Dec. 13-15.

Saul Cieza of Chantilly is a first-time exhibitor at the festival with his bold and vibrant oil-on-canvas paintings. Oakton-based jewelry designer Odaybea Morrow is a seasoned artist whose creative designs mix gemstones and precious metals in innovative settings. Her work gives a fresh viewpoint on the world of jewelry creation.

"There's no more special holiday gift than something made by an artist's hands," said Capital Art and Craft Show manager Judy Spargo. "That kind of gift is, literally, one of a kind."

Cieza's works reflect his love for nature and human achievements. Born in a country that treasures Machu Picchu, the 15th-century Inca city located in the Eastern Cordillera of southern Peru, Cieza's works are a testament to his passion. They do not concentrate on a single style but rather celebrate his diverse interests and inspirations. "I try to explore different perspectives to project the elements of the world around us," Cieza said. Shoppers can find Cieza at Booth 343.

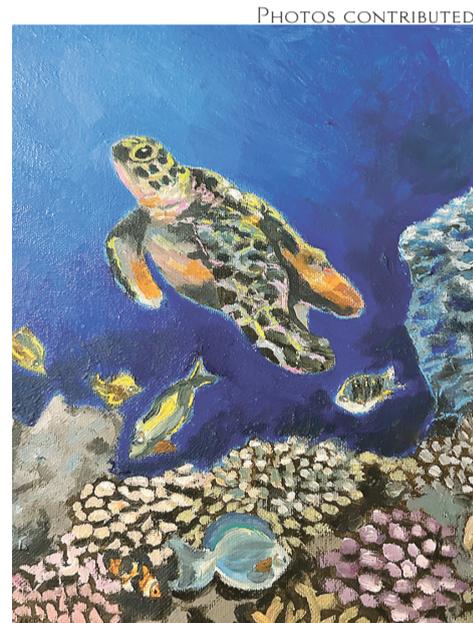
For Morrow, 2024 is her third year showcasing her jewelry at the Winter Capital Art and Craft Festival as a local artist. Morrow will present some of her newest designs at Booth 643. Morrow says making jewelry re-



The Winter Capital Art & Craft Festival, taking place at Dulles Expo Center, will include more than 300 juried artists and vendors, including Oakton's own Odaybea Morrow. Seated at her jeweler's workbench, she uses a loupe to check the precision and quality of her distinctive gemstone piece.

leases her creative energies, which are influenced by intrinsic designs found in nature and years of living in Africa, Central Asia, and Europe. She uses an array of techniques. "My work, which is made with precious metals and gemstones, is distinctive in its use of textures and rich colors. It is a process of ebb and flow with moments of utter frustration during the process and moments of absolute fulfillment when a piece, in its final stage, resonates with someone and brings them joy," says Morrow.

The Capital Art and Craft Festival offers diverse art and craft treasures, from paint-



Sea Turtle, oil on canvas by Saul Cieza, from Chantilly.

ings and prints to pottery and decor. Whether shoppers are fans of woodworking, glass art, clothing/textiles, photography, or mixed media, there's something for everyone at this event, even a tasty treat.

Take a break and enjoy a drink from a beverage artist, or stop by one of the specialty vendors showcasing foods, such as a sweet taste of Europe, at The Passionate Baker, which features pastries made from scratch. Then, before you leave, be sure to stop by one of the booths of natural, handcrafted, small-batch products, such as honey made from Virginia bees at Edgewood Apiaries & Farm, to take home with you.

The festival is open to the public, and parking is free and plentiful. Tickets are available now, and discounts are available for senior citizens; children under the age of 12 are admitted at no charge. Tickets are valid for all three days. Show hours at the South Hall are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$10 online and \$12.00 in person. Visit www.CACFart.com.

A New World Record



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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