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Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 12, 2024



The City of Alexandria Pipes and Drums takes to the streets of Old Town Dec. 7 to lead the 53rd annual Scottish Walk Parade.

Plaid Tidings Scottish Walk celebrates 53 years.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The sound of bagpipes filled the streets of Old Town as the annual Scottish Walk Parade

celebrated its 53rd anniversary Dec. 7 to kick off the holiday season across the city.

“This is always the best day of the year in Alexandria,” said Mayor Justin Wilson, who served as parade Grand Marshal. “From

morning until night we have non-stop events, the type of events that make this a great community.”

The parade and related Scottish Walk Weekend events benefit the Campagna Center, which has been

SEE SCOTTISH WALK, PAGE 15



Cub Scout Pack 135 Naomi L. Brooks Elementary School.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Campagna Center CEO Tammy Mann.



Grand Marshal Mayor Justin Wilson.



A Pipes and Drums color guard along the parade route.



Alexandria City High School Army JROTC



School board member Tim Beaty with Sheriff Sean Casey.

live who you are

OPEN SUN 12/15, 1-3



Braddock Heights
2313 Valley Drive

\$2,649,000 – 6-bedroom, 5.5- bathroom home offers high-end finishes, spacious living areas, a screened porch, private yard, prime location near shops & dining, and easy commute to DC.
Jen Walker Team : 703.675.1566
JenWalker.com

OPEN SAT 12/14, 2-4



Belle Haven
6100 Vernon Terrace

\$1,995,000.00 | This beautifully renovated 2-bedroom, 2.5-bathroom home features custom finishes, a flat lot, and seamless indoor-outdoor entertaining spaces. Move-in ready!
Janet Catterson Price : 703.622.5984
JanetPriceHomes.com



Ballantrae
1424 Kingston Avenue

\$1,250,000 | Elegant, updated, 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom home with sunlit living areas, entertainer's kitchen, and lush backyard. Enjoy suburban living near Old Town Alexandria!
Ash McGowan : 202.779.6263
ash.mcgowan@corcoranmce.com

LAND – 25.81 ACRES



Pohick Run
Old Colchester Road

\$1,250,000 – Wooded parcel with rolling hills along Washington Rochambeau Route. 2 tracts: lower (11.8326 ac) is resource protected, upper (13.9801 ac) is focal point for development.
Heidi Burkhardt : 703.217.6009
RealtorHeidiB.com

OPEN SAT 12/14, 2-4



Hollin Hall Village
1900 Jamestown Road

\$1,249,000 | 5-bedroom, 3-bathroom home rebuilt in 2019. Main-level ensuite bedroom & office. 9' ceilings with exposed wood beams. Gourmet kitchen & fully-fenced backyard.
Heidi Burkhardt : 703.217.6009
Janet Catterson Price : 703.622.5984

OPEN 12/14 & 12/15, 1-3



Old Town
409 South Royal Street

\$999,000 | 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom, all-brick townhome with a meticulously maintained interior and a walk-out lower level that enhances your living space and connects you to the outdoors.
Kristen Jones : 703.952.0441
KristenJones.com

OPEN 12/14 & 12/15, 2-4



Wellington Heights
1228 Morningside Lane

\$829,000 – 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom, renovated 1-level home features: gas FP, screened porch, wrap around back patio, large driveway w/ carport, fully fenced backyard, & accessory villa!
Heidi Burkhardt : 703.217.6009
Mary Kern : 703.994.5246

OPEN SUN 12/15, 1-4



Cameron Homes
3906 Vermont Avenue

\$475,000 | Light filled 3-bedroom, 1.5- bathroom duplex on a deep lot with expansion potential and partially finished walkout basement. Fresh paint, new roof, gas furnace, air conditioning.
Betsy Twigg : 703.967.4391
BetsyTwigg.com



Stonegate
4681 Lawton Way #203

\$495,000 | 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom, spacious 2nd-floor unit with refinished hardwoods, open floor plan, new appliances, community amenities, and reserved parking space
Susan Tull O'Reilly : 703.509.7222
SusanTullOReilly.com

OPEN 12/14 & 12/15, 12-2



Southlake at Montclair
15723 Viewpoint Circle

\$460,000 | This stunning 3-level townhome in Southlake at Montclair offers vibrant community living and prime convenience, perfectly blending privacy and accessibility near Dumfries Road.
Jillian Hogan Homes : 703.951.7655
JillianHoganHomes.com



Logan Circle
1111 11th Street NW #104

\$399,900 | Spacious 1-bedroom, 1-bathroom 1st-floor unit features a bright and open floor plan in a prime DC location. Easy access to 3 metro stations, restaurants, cafes, and more!
Wendy Santantonio : 703.625.8802
WendySantantonio.com



Watergate at Landmark
203 Yoakum Parkway #806

\$380,000 | Discover this newly renovated 2-bedroom, 1.5-bath condo in Alexandria, offering modern living and a prime location near Duke Street, I-395, Van Dorn, and Edsall Road.
Jillian Hogan Homes : 703.951.7655
JillianHoganHomes.com

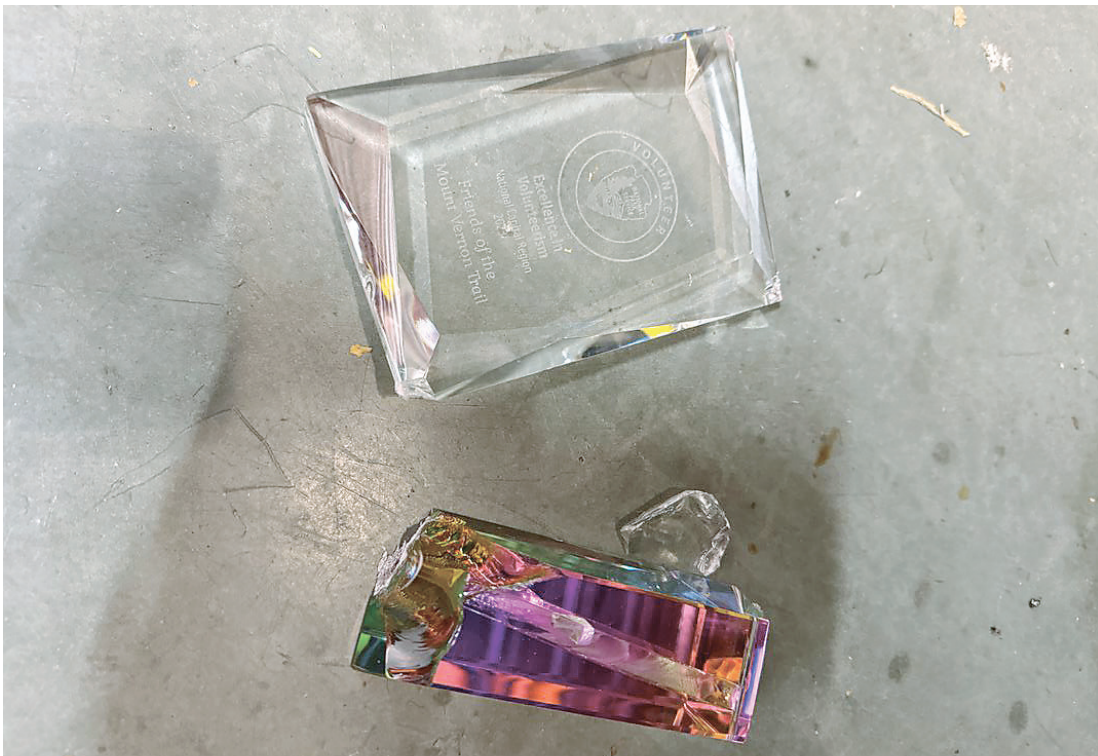
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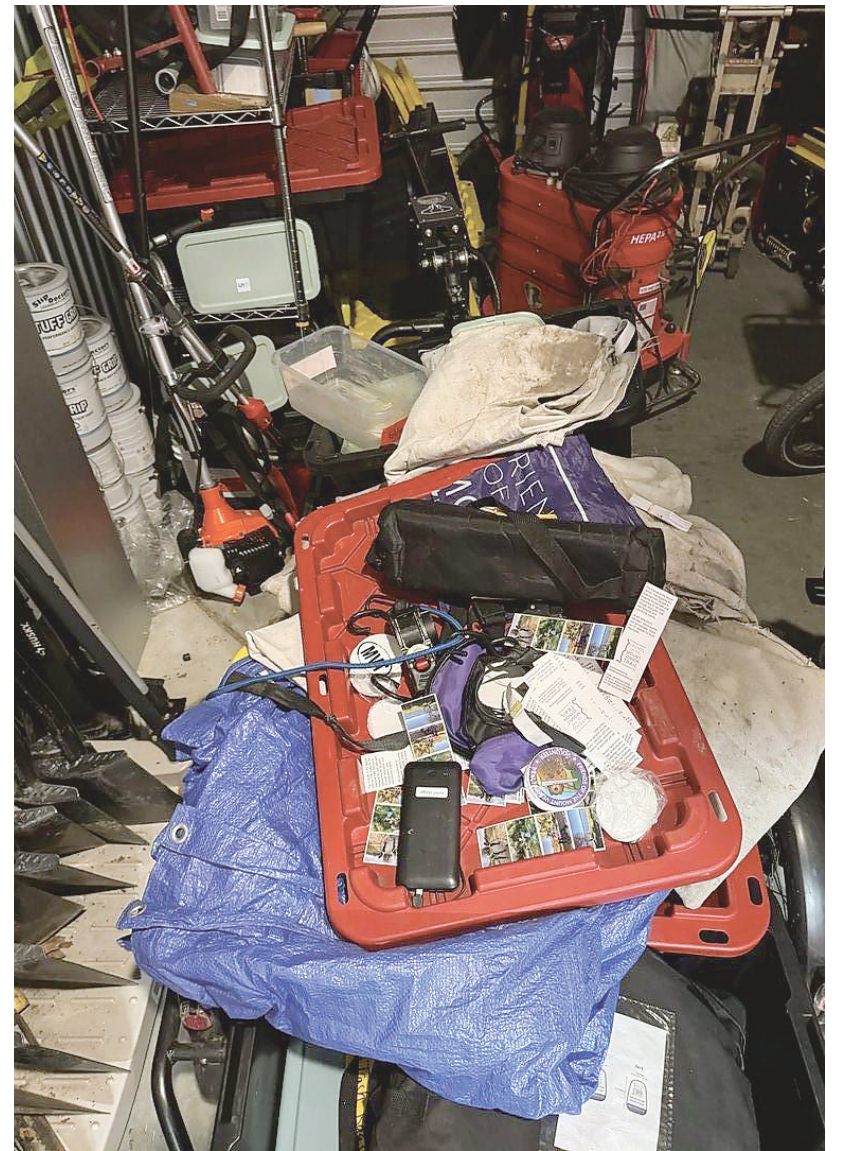
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ACM ATLANTIC COAST
MORTGAGE



Award plaque vandalized.



Storage facility ransacked.

Tools Stolen from Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail

Storage facility burglarized in November, fundraising began shortly after.

By MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Throughout the years, the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail has been keeping the trail in pristine condition, with tools, know-how and more than a little elbow grease to shave off the root bumps, fix the cracks and paint the hazard stripes so the cyclists can enjoy one of the best bike trails in the area. That all came to a screeching halt in November when someone broke into their storage area near the trail and stole close to \$3000 in equipment including a generator, batteries, leaf blower, gloves, folding saws, drills and pressure sprayer.

Twenty other storage sites in the same Arlington location were broken into as well. In

the process, the thieves shattered their National Park Service award, a crystal plaque the group won for their efforts

The storage area for the Friends group is in Arlington said Judd Isbell, the president. They reported it to the police but they don't have high hopes that the equipment will be recovered. The claim process is time consuming and since they are a volunteer group, their amount of time to put into it is limited.

"We are thankful for the incredible support we've received from the community that has helped us not dwell on the bad things that happen in life and refocus on continuing to do the good things that build a safer trail and restore its environment for future generations," Isbell said. The biggest setback was the loss of the generator which will delay finishing bump removal work, the Friends say.

Although the Friends group suffered a loss and it dampened their enthusiasm briefly, they bounced back this last weekend to take part in the Scottish Walk in Old Town, and removed vines along the trail. "It took four events, 80 volunteer hours and 100 thirty gallon bags to remove the invasive kudzu vines that were obstructing sight lines on this high crash bridge,"



The Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail take part in Alexandria's Scottish Walk.

Concert: The Mount Vernon Varsity Singers

Special holiday performance by The Mount Vernon Varsity Singers at Sherwood Regional Library. Concert will include full choir pieces, as well as solos and small ensemble pieces.

Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024, 4 p.m. - 5 p.m.; Sherwood Meeting Room; Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Ln, Alexandria, VA 22306

they wrote on social media.

"Help restore our faith in humanity by signing up to volunteer or making a donation. All donations will be matched up to \$11,200 until Dec. 31," they wrote.

They got a couple of positive responses on social media. "Just contributed! Thank you for all you do to keep the trail beautiful and

safe!" said Daniel Lagana.

"My son and I are volunteering for a couple of events! We can help Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail while he also earns community service hours!" said Cheri Snyder.

The following are the links to volunteer: <https://buff.ly/34TeOeP> or donate: <https://buff.ly/3kzUYxF>

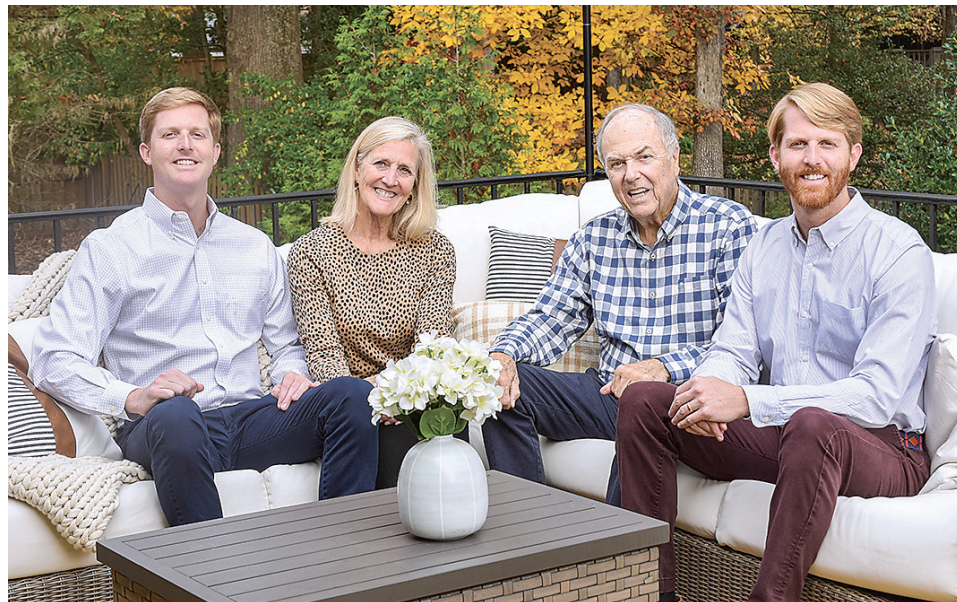
Chris White Family Real Estate Group Hits Major Milestone

75 Homes Sold in 2024 and \$1 Billion in Career Sales

The Chris White Family Real Estate Group has solidified its reputation as a leader in the real estate market with a record-breaking year in 2024. The family group consists of Chris, Peggy, Mark, and Michael White. They are known for their dedication to clients, intensive involvement in the community, and innovative approach to the housing market, celebrating the sale of 75 homes this year, bringing their career total to over \$1 billion in home sales.

This impressive milestone is a testament to the team's unwavering commitment to excellence, personalized service, and in-depth knowledge of the local market. Over the years, the group has built a reputation for helping families find their dream homes and assisting sellers in achieving top dollar for their properties.

"Our success is rooted in the trust our clients place in us," said Chris White, founder and principal of the group. "Real estate is more than just transactions; it's about relationships, community, and helping people achieve their goals. Reaching \$1 billion in



Chris, Peggy, Mark, and Michael White of the Chris White Family Real Estate Group.

career sales is not just a reflection of our hard work, but of the trust and loyalty we've earned from our clients."

One of the key factors behind the group's success is their willingness to go above and beyond for their sellers, including offering improvements to homes before putting them on the market — at no upfront cost to the sellers. This unique service ensures that homes are market-ready and positioned to sell at top dollar.

"Many homeowners worry about the immediate funds needed for making necessary repairs or upgrades before putting their property on the market," explained White. "We take that burden off their shoulders by covering those costs upfront, allowing sellers to focus on the big picture while we handle the details."

These improvements can include cosmetic upgrades, such as fresh paint and flooring as well as exterior improvements like land-

scaping to enhance curb appeal. The costs are recouped at closing, ensuring a seamless process for clients and helping homes stand out in a competitive market.

The group's achievements in 2024 come during a year of market fluctuations, with rising interest rates and shifting buyer demands presenting unique challenges. Despite these potential obstacles, the Chris White Family Real Estate Group leveraged their innovative strategies — including pre-sale improvements and cutting-edge marketing — to connect with buyers and sellers effectively.

Looking forward, the Chris White Family Real Estate Group has no plans of slowing down. They aim to expand their reach, embrace emerging technologies, and continue fostering community connections.

"Our vision for the future is clear," said White. "We want to keep growing, but our core values of integrity, service, and community will always remain the same."

As the group celebrates this year's accomplishments, their focus remains on helping families and individuals navigate one of the most significant decisions of their lives. With over \$1 billion in career home sales, an unwavering dedication to client satisfaction, and commitment to the Mount Vernon/Fort Hunt community, the Chris White Family Real Estate Group has undoubtedly cemented its place as a powerhouse in the real estate industry.

Love on the Docks

Holiday Boat Parade lights up the waterfront.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The pressure was on as more than 60 boats vied for prizes in 10 categories at the 24th Annual Holiday Boat Parade of Lights held Dec. 7 along the Alexandria waterfront.

Thousands turned out for the mile-long parade sponsored by Amazon, that was led by Alexandria's Fireboat 201, Fireboat 2 from Washington D.C.'s Fire Department and Lady Josephine.

Best in Show was awarded to American Girl, who presented "Country Christmas" decked out as a red pickup truck carrying freshly cut Christmas trees. Best Powerboat went to Hold My Pier for "Grease Lightning" with Moovin'

taking Best Sailboat honors with "Wishing Upon a Star."

Best Movie/TV Theme was awarded to Boondoggle for "Feelings of Christmas." Most Holiday Cheer went to Consuelo with "Reindeer Rave," and Aquaholic taking Thinking Outside the Christmas Box honors with "Santa's Floating UFO."

Other winners included: Most Spirited Crew — All In, "Panda Palooza"; Best Theme — Magical Knots, "Dominick the Italian Christmas Donkey"; Hardest Soul — Aquazam, "Capsized"; and Best Try — Knot Before Noon, "Under the Sea."

The parade was produced by Visit Alexandria in collaboration with the City of Alexandria and the Old Dominion Boat Club.



Best in Show — American Girl "Country Christmas"

PHOTO BY EVAN MICHIO/VISIT ALEXANDRIA



Thinking Outside the Christmas Box — Aquaholic "Santa's Floating UFO"

PHOTO BY EVAN MICHIO/VISIT ALEXANDRIA

NEWS

Most Fatal Roads for Pedestrians

NoVa Families for Safe Streets releases inaugural study of VDOT data on pedestrian, bike crashes in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax.

The most dangerous road corridors for pedestrians in Northern Virginia are Richmond Highway South, Route 29 (formerly known as, Lee Highway) and Duke Street, according to VDOT data analyzed by Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets.

NoVA FSS, the leading pedestrian safety advocacy organization in Northern Virginia with affiliated Families for Safe Streets chapters in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax (collectively NoVA FSS) has released its inaugural study on VDOT's pedestrian and bike crash data for Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax County.

Each NoVA FSS chapter's report of the TRENDS data brings awareness to the long-standing and increasing risks of street safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vulnerable road users in the communities of Northern Virginia.

❖ Underserved community residents who frequently walk or bike to destinations are more likely to suffer a crash due to unsafe road infrastructure.

❖ 82% of pedestrian fatalities in Northern Virginia happened at night, dawn and dusk

❖ As of YTD Dec 4, 2024, the total pedestrian and bike fatalities in Northern Virginia are double the number of fatalities for all of 2023.

❖ From 2021 to July 2024, Fairfax has more than double the total number of pedestrian and bike crashes than Arlington and Alexandria combined.

❖ However, on a 100,000 per capita basis, Arlington has twice as many casualties as Fairfax County; Alexandria has about 70% more than Fairfax County.

Each pedestrian fatality and serious injury is preventable. Our local and state elected leaders along with transportation and enforcement officials need to demonstrate a greater level of commitment and urgency in implementing comprehensive and effective solutions.

Making greater investment today will save lives tomorrow.

Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets' goal is to bring communities together to create streets that are safe for people of all ages, abilities, and modes of travel by sharing impact stories to increase public awareness and understanding, educating people driving, walking and biking on safe behavior, educating public policymakers, and advocating for measures to make our streets safer. NoVA FSS has chapters in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax counties. For information email: contact@novafss.org or call: 703 946-8401

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.volunteerallexandria.org/ALIVE>

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

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 donaledge@aol.com.

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Elf Betty and Santa watch, as children Rafael, 1, and Sofia, 3, enjoy the wonders of Christmas, with parents Nicholas and Paola (not pictured) Ballasey of Lorton



Connector elves Renda Dailey, Hanna Darr and Nicole Dailey assist families outside the Santa bus, one of three holiday buses decorated for the Winter Fest event

Winter Fest, Connector Style

At the new Springfield Commuter Parking Garage, the facility's first event was underway. Holiday-theme wrapped buses, decorated inside and out, provide convenient service for Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus while in town to connect with area children.

Those not discussing promoting their place on the nice list or sharing information on their favorite toys, entertained themselves with a variety of crafts, artistry, and puzzles. Food trucks and holiday music kept energy levels high for all.

— SUSAN LAUME



Mrs Claus has her own decorated bus where she greeted children like, Cole, 2 1/2, and Taylor, 6, Hoopengardner of Fairfax



Mrs Claus takes a moment to hear the holiday wishes of Supervisor Rodney Lusk



Junior Mondschein, of Centreville, displays some early engineering skills, with mom Megan



Geo Aslanuyah Brady, 7 months, is wide-eyed taking in his first holiday events with dad, Erhan Uyah



Kids enjoy crafting some holiday decorations at Connector's Winter Fest



Bruce Lu with 5-year-old Bastian, of Lorton, came dressed with holiday spirit



Crisis worker for HopeLine.

Managing the Holiday Blues

BY JOSEPH GETCH

Holidays bring joy as families come together to celebrate and the year ahead promises new opportunities and fresh starts. For some, the holidays aren't as rosy and can be overwhelming. Holidays can cause stress and depression and a sense of isolation with the pressure of planning an event, financial burden, family conflicts and grief associated with loss of loved ones.

In fact, nearly 90% of U.S. adults have concerns at the holiday season, according to a poll last year by the American Psychological Association. The same survey found that 41% of U.S. adults stress levels increase during the holidays compared to other times of the year and 43% said holiday stress interferes with enjoying the season.

Stress is a reality for all of us, but it is even more exacerbated for those with mental illness. We see this frequently at HopeLink Behavioral Health, a nonprofit serving those with mental illness and facing life crises. During the holidays, the Crisis Call Center receives more calls, chats and texts about increased anxiety and overwhelming life stress.

Experiencing "holiday blues" may pass with the season, but it's important to recognize signs of depression, including:

- ❖ Persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood
- ❖ Sleeping too much or too little, middle-of-the night or early morning waking
- ❖ Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased appetite and weight gain
- ❖ Irritability or restlessness



Joe Getch

- ❖ Difficulty thinking, concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- ❖ Thoughts of death or suicide
- ❖ Feeling inappropriate guilt, hopelessness, or worthlessness

If depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges make the holidays unbearable, then finding help is important. Talk to your family physician or a mental health professional. Another option is calling or texting 988 — the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, which is confidential and free of charge. If you call, text, or chat (<https://chat.988lifeline.org>), you will speak with a trained, empathetic professional who will:

- ❖ Listen and provide emotional support
- ❖ Assess for safety and risk of suicide
- ❖ Identify problem-solving skills
- ❖ Connect you to Mobile Crisis resources, if available
- ❖ Connect you live to other behavioral health resources
- ❖ Consult on how to support a loved one in crisis
- ❖ Schedule a follow-up call within 24 hours to see how you are doing

The holidays will come ... and go. Allowing yourself to grieve, setting realistic goals for the holidays, and taking time each day to care for and celebrate yourself are important ways to make the holidays less stressful. Also know that there are resources that can help.

Joseph Getch is CEO of HopeLink Behavioral Health, a mental health nonprofit serving Northern Virginia and beyond.



ICE!

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 SNOWBALL BUILD & BLAST | MERRY SNOOPY CHRISTMAS SCAVENGER HUNT
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SO MUCH CHRISTMAS

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For Family Outings, Try Some Northern Virginia Sites

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

When holiday guests descend and hosts need a break, you might suggest they try some Northern Virginia, off-the-beaten path spots that might be less crowded than the traditional Washington-area landmarks.

Antique “Pharmaceuticals”

You cannot buy leeches today, (except possibly as an artificial lure on Amazon) but at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum in Alexandria you’ll learn that these blood-sucking worms were stored in jars of water for blood-letting. When the apothecary operated here from 1805 to 1933, “pharmacists” ground down things like seeds and leaves with a mortar and pestle to make around 100 medicinal and beauty products, before prescriptions or governmental regulations. They also concocted beauty products like “toilet soap” and “flesh vanishing creams” to cover blemishes.

Local Archaeology

Budding archaeologists can glean clues to the past at Alexandria’s Archeology Museum by screening dirt for minute bones and shells. Exhibits explain that archaeologists since 2015 have excavated four ship hulls, part of the city’s maritime heritage. Archaeologists have analyzed backyard trash and privies to understand how our ancestors lived.

The Slave Trade

Alexandria’s Freedom House Museum is part of a former complex where Isaac Franklin and John Armfield ran one of the largest slave trading companies in the country in the 19th century, sending enslaved men, women and children to the Deep South. Exhibits tell the personal stories of trafficked people and the struggle

for equality.

Civil War Defenses

Fort Ward, built in 1861 in Alexandria, was a 35-acre installation viewed then as a model of military design and one of the best-preserved of the “ring of forts” around Washington, known as the Defenses of Washington. The fort once had up to 3,000 soldiers and 36-gun emplacements.

Still standing are around 90 percent of the fort’s earthwork walls and an 1865 gate. There’s an officer’s hut replica and a museum displaying over 2,000 artillery objects, maps and drawings associated with the Civil War.

On Dec. 14, from 12 to 4 p.m., re-enactors will celebrate Christmas in a Union encampment, Civil War-style, including a costumed Santa in patriotic garb.

Fort Marcy, a National Park Service property in McLean, was built to protect Leesburg Pike and Chain Bridge, a key river crossing. It had a perimeter of 338 feet and 18 guns, a 10-inch mortar and two 24-pounder Coehorn mortars. Today’s visitors can see earthwork walls, entrenchments and magazine dugouts.

Suffragists’ Success

In Lorton’s Occoquan Regional Park stands the only suffragist memorial in the country to honor women who fought for the Constitutional right to vote from 1848 to

1920, the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial. Suffragists, called “the Silent Sentinels,” picketed on the White House sidewalk, here represented by replica White House gates. The plaza spotlights three key leaders with life-size statues:

Alice Paul, Mary Church Terrell and Carrie Chapman Catt. Nineteen stations chronicle the 72-year campaign that culminated in ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

SEE FOR FAMILY, PAGE 9



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

The circa 1811 mill at Colvin Run links history to your kitchen with fresh ground grits, flours, cornmeal and buckwheat.



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Mill staff feeds corn kernels into the grain hopper to be ground into cornmeal.



PHOTO BY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Water from Colvin Run flows down the mill race to turn the waterwheel that powers the gears of the mill which operate three sets of grinding stones, grain elevators and sifting machinery.



OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

Soldier reenactors singing carols at Fort Ward in Alexandria.



OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

On Dec. 14, from 12 to 4 p.m., reenactors at Fort Ward will celebrate Christmas in a Union encampment, Civil War-style, including a costumed Santa in patriotic garb.



A sign displayed in the Gum Springs Historical Society Museum.



Ronald Chase, Executive Director, in front of the Gum Springs Historical Society Museum.



The Laurel Grove School Museum between Franconia and Springfield.

For Family Outings, Try Some Northern Virginia Sites

FROM PAGE 8

National Airport's Plantation and Museum

Rarely noticed among Reagan National Airport's 860-acre infrastructure stands a triangular brick wall protruding from a grassy knoll next to garage A, the remains of an 18th and 19th-century plantation, called Abingdon. The wall was probably a kitchen or dependency that had a two-sided hearth.

Also remaining is the foundation of a Georgian-style, two-story house built by the Alexanders, former owners. The house had a central hallway with a parlor on each side.

In the corridor connecting Terminals A and B is the airport's exhibit hall, which displays a model of the original terminal and memorabilia from the airport's original dining room.

African-American School

Two miles west of the Beltway on Beulah Street sits an unassuming white building, the 1884 Laurel Grove School Museum, the only surviving one-room school built for African Americans in Northern Virginia.

Items like blackboards, wooden and wrought iron desks, a wood stove and oil lamps are 1920s typical classroom furnishings.

African-American Museum

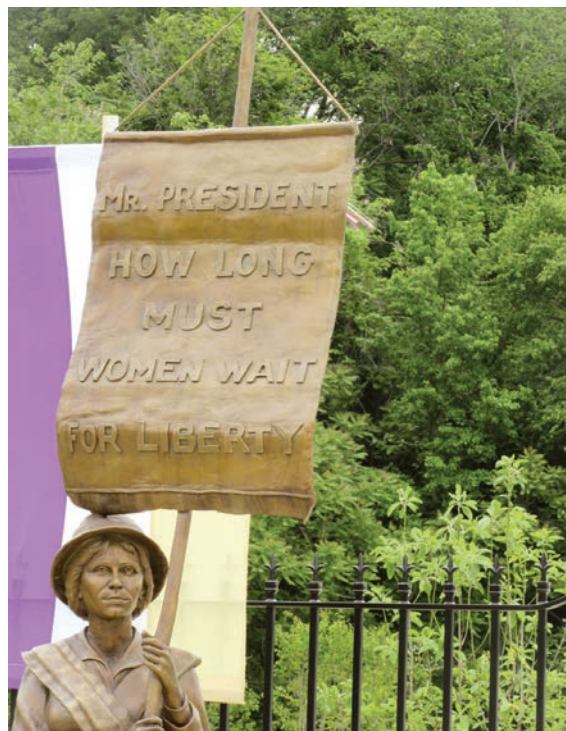
The Gum Springs Museum is a three-room collection relating the history of this free African-American community started by West Ford, a man enslaved by George Washington. Artifacts like figurines from a former barber shop on U.S. 1, photographs of locals and a 12-pound iron shot from the Civil War found on a nearby farm tell this historic community's history.

Grist Mills

Great Falls has a 19th-century, water-powered grist mill in the Colvin Run Mill Historic Site that still makes stone-ground grits, corn meal, flour and buckwheat on site. Docent-led tours explain that water emerges from Colvin Run and today flows through a tunnel beneath the road to eventually tumble over the water wheel. Santa will be there Dec. 14 and 15.

George Washington's Grist Mill, built in 1771, produced 5,000 to 8,000 pounds of flour and cornmeal a day and is still producing. Visitors can watch the water wheel make the top stone grind grain on the stable bottom stone and study the mechanics as the miller explains how to achieve the desired grain.

Both use the continuous milling process designed by inventor Oliver Evans.



The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

Firefighting of Old

Before building a firehouse in 1774, Alexandria required everyone to have a bucket and to form brigades to extinguish fires. Today, Alexandria's Friendship Firehouse Museum, representing 1871, recalls the Friendship Fire Company, featuring a hand-pumped, suction Rodgers engine with hoses, a step up from bucket brigades and got water from wells and wooden hydrants. There's also an 1830 hand-cranked pumper with a rotary engine, dubbed the "Coffee Grinder."

Visitors can also learn about firefighting of old at the Manassas Volunteer Fire Company Museum, a company started in 1892. The museum spotlights four antique firetrucks, including two gleaming Buffalo Triple Combination pumpers, a 1929 and a 1947, and a 1966 diesel-fueled Seagrave which still runs with a manual transmission. Without a roof, firefighters had a 360-degree view.

Other artifacts include a chicken-wire-type "stretcher" called a "Stokes basket" for evacuating people, a round-bottomed bucket and a round life net with a red bullseye onto which, ideally, a panicked person would land when jumping from a burning building.

Check the sites' websites for addresses, hours and events.



A Civil War cannon at Fort Marcy, one of Washington's "ring of forts."



The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial honors those who fought for women's right to vote.



Bottles displayed at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary. Some have their original contents.

HOLIDAYS



2733 Oakton Park Ct.,
VIENNA, VA

All lit up in Vienna.



10108 Marshall Pond Rd.,
BURKE, VA

This one is on a pipe stem in Burke.



5700 Claret Place,
CENTREVILLE, VA

In Centreville, there's lights on the roof in case the space shuttle passes by.

Visit Fairfax for History, Mild Weather, and Christmas Lights

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

No more driving aimlessly, there's a route laid out for the good stuff, see www.fxva.com

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Riding around in mid-December looking for houses with way too many lights, plastic Santas and north stars on the chimney is the thing to do for some, and scenes around Fairfax County promise not to disappoint this year.

And now you don't even have to ride around aimlessly, although that is all the fun for some. Visit Fairfax has done the legwork and posted their findings on social media for all to see.

In Alexandria, the tour starts on Collingwood Road where there is a home that was the winner of ABC's Great Christmas Light Fight in 2018 and TLC's Invasion of the Christmas Lights in 2009. Apparently in the last few years, it was not decorated because the owner took a spill hanging up lights, but now he has returned with his ladder and extension cords to do it up right.

Up the road in Springfield on Ontario Street, the inflatable characters have taken over, and the small yard is full of snowmen, Santas, Mickey Mouse, Grinch and more. Over in Burke, go to Marshall Pond Road for the Christmas Village, which requires a little walking they say. Here there are seven homes on a pipestem driveway that make up Santas Village.

Vienna has four stops for the light seekers, and these are on Lawyers Road, Beulah Road (not Beulah Street), Oakton Park Court and Drexel Street. They've even got a video in Vienna, and urge seekers to turn to 89.7 FM for a soundtrack too. It "offers a world of enchantment, with surprise guests, a winter wonderland setting, and a magical musical medley," their description says. Pretty high tech too.

There are highlight houses in Centreville, Lorton and Chantilly on the tour.

Visit Fairfax does have a few disclaimers, though. They "lovingly refer to these displays as 'tacky' in the most endearing sense of the word — truly these displays are pieces of art and are testaments to the owners' hard work and dedication in an otherwise very busy season! Also, as a reminder — these are private properties, so please respect the owners' homes and stay out of the light display and yard when visiting and do not block driveways," it says.

Overall, the lights are a positive, said Ali Morris. "It's a beautiful way for people to spread joy and love during the holiday season and we're very happy to help promote that type of holiday spirit," she said.

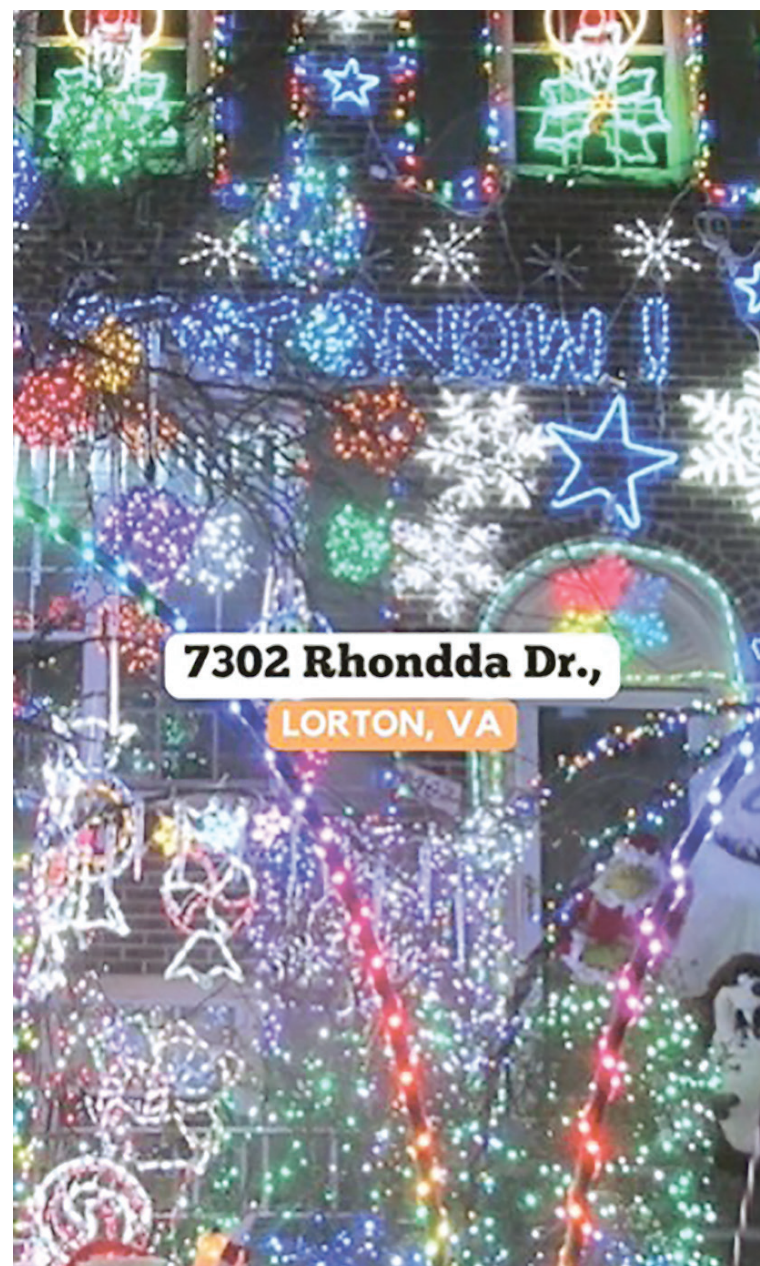
Hollywood Holiday

Hollywood had taken on going overboard on the Christmas lights on several occasions. Remember "Christmas with the Kranks"? Or even Ron Howard's "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." One resident of Whoville is armed with a Christmas lights gun, shooting the lights up on the rooftop. Sure beats falling off the ladder and getting a ride in the Christmas ambulance.

QC Design School has a list of no-no's for holiday decorating and "Overloading on Lights," is number two on their list. "Too many lights can be overwhelming and distracting. Not to mention it might just blow your electrical bill through the roof," QC said. Instead they recommend that "less is more," and the focus should be one or two small spots around the house.

But when you're driving around looking for the best Christmas light displays, you know that more is more. Just maybe not if you live next door.

<https://www.fxva.com/blog/post/where-to-find-the->



7302 Rhondda Dr.,
LORTON, VA

Décor in Lorton.

St. Christopher's Living Nativity



St. Christopher Episcopal Church's live nativity scene is a holiday staple in Springfield.

Over on Hanover Street, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church continued their annual tradition of hosting the Holy Family's nativity of Jesus on their lawn, surrounded by several friendly animals. The Leuthy's played the major family roles again this year, with three-year-old Nicholas filling in as infant Jesus. Organizers explained that the congregation's two infant members were out of town; though no one seemed to notice Nicholas might have aged out of the part.

Moses the camel was the mainstay of the animal contingent for the event. Moses fit in without a hitch and entertained with smiles for selfies. He also was filling in for another player this year, camel Delilah. Delilah was busy smiling at another park. Moses' smile and camera posing proved equally engaging. Who can't be melted by toothy camel grin?

— SUSAN LAUME

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE



Proud "mom" Jennifer Canton, of Bar C Ranch, smiles as she shows off her young camel, Moses.



Of all the nativity animals, the camel, receives the most attention from admirers.



Doug Gudakunst, Shepherd #8, identifies most with 20-year-old Dandelion, the Donkey, saying, "We can both be a little stubborn."



Congregation member Laura Kirk, invited friends Bella Bell and Lily Kennedy to see the spectacle and admired the sheep with their thick fleece

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MOUNT VERNON & SPRINGFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please be advised that a fireworks display will take place as part of a public evening event, Christmas Illuminations at George Washington's Mount Vernon on the following dates:

Friday, December 20 between 8:00 p.m. and 8:30pm (10 minutes)
Saturday, December 21 between 8:00 p.m. and 8:30pm (10 minutes)
Sunday, December 22 between 8:00 p.m. and 8:30pm (10 minutes)

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association thanks you for your tolerance and apologizes for any disruption. To receive Mount Vernon fireworks notifications via e-mail, write to Events@MountVernon.org

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT VERNON

ENTERTAINMENT



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

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.

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.

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.

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

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

At Joe Theismann's Restaurant. 8 a.m. Located at 1800A Diagonal Road, Alexandria. Dates: Saturday, Dec. 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 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.



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

Located at 100 King Street, Alexandria. Dates are Saturday, Dec. 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 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. 14, 21; Sunday, Dec. 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 Marché de Noël Gift Market, a weekend chock-full of holiday happenings including the Old Town North Holiday Market & Farmers Market, Christmas Market & Holiday Craft Show at John Carlyle Square and more.

DEC 13-15

Capital Art & Craft Festival. 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



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

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

CHRISTMAS EVE DINING, **DEC. 24**

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

BARCA Pier & Wine Bar, 2 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. BARCA Pier is inviting guests to enjoy two festive specials in addition to their regular

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

The Majestic, 911 King Street, Alexandria. Open from 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., Majestic will offer two special additions to their regular menu on Christmas Eve. Guests can enjoy Pan Seared Duck Breast made with butternut squash purée, honey glazed parsnips, and orange sauce for \$35 or Oven Roasted Rockfish made with zucchini, eggplant, red peppers, onions, tomato-caper sauce, and herb oil for \$32.

Mia's Italian Kitchen, 100 King Street, Alexandria. On Christmas Eve, Mia's will be open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., offering two special dishes. Guests can enjoy Veal Chop Parmigiana, made with a pounded and breaded bone-in veal chop, spicy rigatoni pomodoro, melted mozzarella, and saba for \$39, or Lobster Ravioli, featuring Maine lobster, pecorino, lobster sauce, ricotta, and sherry cream sauce for \$29.

Vola's 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.



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

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 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://visitalexandria.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

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 and www.reverbnation.com/lessonzero.

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A Connection Newspaper



Scottish Walk Celebrates 53 Years

FROM PAGE 1
serving children and families in the city for 78 years.

Campagna Center CEO Tammy Mann, who announced that she will be stepping down next April, was emotional as she spoke about her 13 years at the center.

"I am just grateful to be here today," Mann said. "It's been a tremendous honor to be able to serve in a community that is as special as Alexandria, and of course the Campagna Center, the people and the work. It's hard to characterize what it has meant."

Colin Meehan, dressed as Buddy the Elf, attended the parade with his family from Philadelphia.

"We come down from Philadelphia every year for the parade," Meehan said. "This is our 18th year – it's a tradition and we love it."

Gary Langlands and Enne Cant, chair and vice chair of the Dundee-Alexandria Twinning Association, attended the parade from Dundee, Scotland.

"We are here to build relationships and understanding between the two cities," Langlands said. "We come just for the Scottish Walk and to meet people."

Added Alexandrian Jimmie McClellan, "We've established a link now between their schools, Alexandria City public schools and Saint Stephen's & Saint Agnes and they will be doing collaborative educational activities together."

Pipes and drums from the East coast joined Scottish clans, reenactment groups, Scottie dogs and classic cars.

Serving as the unofficial start of the holiday season, the Scottish Walk Weekend celebrates the Scottish heritage of Old Town Alexandria while benefiting Campagna Center programs that serve more than 2,000 children and families daily across the city.

Said Mann, "It's bittersweet but the Campagna Center is in a great place and I can't wait to see what it will accomplish in the years ahead."

www.campagnacenter.org

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT
GAZETTE PACKET



The Little Theatre of Alexandria.



A pipes and drums sabre squad.



Mitch Opalski and Cele Garrett with At Home Alexandria.



The Rotary Club of Alexandria.



Joe Collum of Burke & Herbert Bank.

Open "Saysawho?"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Everybody, it seems, but not me. My name is not Damian Clark - from Humana. Nor is my name Cham - from eHEALTH.COM. Nor is it any number/variety of spokespersons representing any number/variety of insuring entities: "Medicare Advantage Partners," "Reliance," "Aetna," "United Healthcare," (Humana, eHEALTH) attempting to get my Medicare Advantage/"Open Season"/"Annual Enrollment" period (Oct. 15 - Dec. 7) dollars. That joyous occasion which precedes Christmas every year and can potentially bring all of us "additional benefits and cost savings" will soon be over. Not to mention peace of mind that we're paying the least amount of dollars for the maximum amount of health insurance. Then, if the proper decisions have been made, we can live out our Medicare-covered years in relative insurance-coverage calm. And if the advertisements are any indication, as well as my own 20 years' experience selling insurance, there are plenty of dollars being misspent and families being unnecessarily burdened by higher-than-necessary premiums and below average coverage. But thankfully, for any of you regular readers who watch as much television as I do - and who have been besieged by the repeated attempts to grab our Medicare-related dollars - and sense, the "Season" is coming to an end. By the time this column publishes (Dec. 11, 2024) your televisions will be returning to their regular advertising and nary a Medicare ad will be seen or heard. Now if that's not a recipe for a merry Christmas than I don't know what is? Because I must admit, I've just about reached my limit. I'm not exactly Robert Di Niro shooting the television in "Taxi Driver," but I'm certainly swearing at it a lot.

In all sincerity, I feel sorry for all the seniors who don't have the insurance and/or finance background that I have. This Medicare insurance business is like a minefield. One wrong step and your finances for the year you incur the cost (or however long it takes to pay off your unexpected medical/hospital expenses) could blow up your bank account and sever any hopes one has for a manageable retirement, money wise. I've made all these calls - years ago for my parents. Daunting doesn't begin to explain my experience. If the language/jargon isn't confusing enough, and the arithmetic isn't overwhelming, the long waits over the phone may be the tipping point. I learned my lesson though. Before I would call, I would make sure I visited the bathroom and then got myself something to eat and drink as I waited. And maybe even sat in front of the television to occupy my time while did I wait. Because the last thing the recorded message advises over the phone is about that damn queue: your place in this hypothetical line of callers who called before you. If you decide to hang up, you lose your place in the queue. And if you thought waiting once was tedious, waiting twice as long or multiple times because you were ill-prepared/impatient for the ordeal is exponentially worse. Your patience can only endure so much. Very important, before you call one of these entities, clear your schedule. If you have another commitment, cancel it. Nothing is more important than resolving this Medicare insurance business. If you plan your wait, the process of waiting - or waiting for a call back, which takes just as long with no guarantee of a future contact (the system isn't perfect) can be tolerable. However, if you don't plan accordingly, you may suffer accordingly. Been there. Done that. Don't want to do it again.

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