

THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ♦ Chantilly ♦ Great Falls ♦ Herndon ♦ McLean ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Oakton
Reston ♦ Vienna ♦ Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station ♦ Lorton ♦ Clifton

Happy Snow Week

PAGE 10-12

First Black
Woman
Elected to
Fairfax City
Council

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What Virginia
Owes Fairfax

PAGE 4

Go Easy on
the Salt

PAGE 8

Felix, 5, tastes the
first flakes of 2025.

OPINION, PAGE 9 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 16 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18

PHOTO BY ABBY SPRINGMANN

JANUARY 8-21, 2025

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

OVER \$117 Million Bought and Sold in 2024



1154 Holly Briar Ln, Great Falls \$1,650,000



935 Welham Green Rd, Great Falls \$1,470,000



10005 Robindale Ct, Great Falls \$2,315,000



411 Springvale Rd, Great Falls \$1,450,000



10030 Windy Hollow Rd, Great Falls \$2,675,000



11529 Buttonwood Ct, Reston \$676,000



1054 Bellview Pl, McLean \$2,350,000



6924 Hector Rd, McLean \$3,285,000



11212 W Montpelier Rd, Great Falls \$2,260,000



11234 South Shore Rd, Reston \$1,450,000



2211 Halcyon Ln, Vienna \$1,700,000



11577 Greenwich Point Rd, Reston \$2,000,000



10614 Calvalcade St, Great Falls \$1,000,000



347 Springvale Rd, Great Falls \$2,900,000



709 Ellsworth Ave, Great Falls \$975,000



816 Constellation Dr, Great Falls \$1,350,000



11304 Seneca Cir, Great Falls \$2,550,000



11602 Rolling Meadow Dr, Great Falls \$1,820,500



754 Ellsworth Ave, Great Falls \$2,225,000



11103 Glade Dr, Reston \$1,775,000



902 Falls Bridge Ln, Great Falls \$1,505,000



502 Old Saybrook Way, Great Falls \$1,665,000



9903 Hessick Ct, Great Falls \$2,260,000



11136 Rich Meadow Dr, Great Falls \$1,650,000



321 Springvale Rd, Great Falls \$1,425,000



925 Leigh Mill Rd, Great Falls \$1,700,000



10302 Elizabeth St, Great Falls \$1,405,124



10402 Van Patten Ln, Great Falls \$2,600,000



9427 Brian Jac Ln, Great Falls \$1,670,000



398 Patowmack Ct, Great Falls \$1,500,000

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'This is a Historic Moment in the City of Fairfax'

Stacey Hardy-Chandler: First Black Woman on City Council.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

In November, Stacey Hardy-Chandler became the first Black woman ever elected to the Fairfax City Council. And prior to her official swearing in on Dec. 20, that fact was honored during a special ceremony in Council chambers.

"This is a historic moment in the City of Fairfax," said Mayor Catherine Read. "Virginia as a commonwealth has existed for over 400 years, women have had the vote for 104. And African Americans have had even less opportunity – not just at the ballot box, but to represent an elected office in their community."

She then acknowledged the presence of audience members Linneall Naylor, Connie Smith, Jenee Lindner, and Rondia Prescott. More than 100 enslaved and freed African Americans are buried in Fairfax City's Jermantown Cemetery, and these women are part of the Jermantown Cemetery Preservation Society.

In addition, all of them except Smith wrote the book, "Black Communities of Fairfax: A History," along with Etta Willson and Rita Colbert. "These women invested a lot in telling the story of the Black community [here] and the significance of everything it did from the beginning for this community," said Read.

"In 1968, the first African American was elected to City Council; his name was Henry A Minor," she continued. "But until three days ago, no one probably could have told you that, until Anthony Amos – who is also a [newly] elected African American on our City Council – asked, 'Who was that man? I cannot even find his name.'"

After learning Minor's name from former City Councilmember Janice Miller, Read had Fairfax's Historic Resources department research him. He only served part of his term before moving just outside the City limits, and a newspaper headline from his 1968 victory stated, "First Negro Elected in Fairfax City."

"It took 56 years – from 1968 to 2024 – to see two African Americans (Hardy-Chandler and Amos) in our City elected to our dais to represent this community," said Read. "That's why I wanted to create an opportunity where we can have a conversation about what this means to us as a community. I went to the wreath laying at the Jermantown Cemetery [on Dec. 14] where there's a lot of talk about the ancestors. Historical markers have now been put up there, talking about the people who lived and worked, contributed and passed away, and are at rest here in our City."

"And to me, Anthony and Stacey are a manifestation of what the ancestors envisioned could happen in our City. We are seeing and living it; it's so significant, and I wanted us to have a space to talk about that."

So before Hardy-Chandler was sworn in, others spoke about the impact of Black



Melissa Shinaberry (on left) swears in Stacey Hardy-Chandler.



Stacey Hardy-Chandler (center) receives the book, "Black Communities of Fairfax: A History." Flanking her are (from left) Connie Smith, Jenee Lindner, Linneall Naylor and Rondia Prescott.

residents on Fairfax City. The first was the Rev. Jeffery Johnson Sr., pastor of the City's Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

"We are embracing this monumental movement of history in the City of Fairfax," he said. "It was some 69 years ago that a seamstress named Rosa Parks sat on a bus in Montgomery, Ala. And when she was asked to move from the white section, her reply was merely, 'No.' We are happy now that Fairfax City voters went to the polls – and when it came to two African American citizens being added to the Council – their reply was, 'Yes.'"

"The miracle of America is to be merely included. The goal of African Americans has always been not to dominate, but to participate. They believe we're in a country that believes all men and all women are created equal. So we're very happy to be here on this December morning to not only remember Rosa Parks, but to remember the hope that we have in Democracy in the United States."

Johnson said Mount Calvary Baptist Church was established in May 1870. "Individuals who'd been recently emancipated started raising funds to build a sanctuary where they could worship God," he said. "Next year, we'll celebrate 155 years as a Christian organization. We thank the mayor and the City of Fairfax for including us in various celebrations, activities and programs to help the City. We look forward to continuing that tradition; and again, thank you for including us in this momentous occasion."

Next, Naylor talked about Minor, saying he "came from free people of color." She also noted that he's related by DNA to her, Prescott and Smith. "His wife is buried at Jermantown Cemetery," said Naylor. "We know he's here with us [today] in spirit, and we're a representation of his goodness and his striving to make Fairfax City a better place for all people to live in." She then presented a copy of "Black Communities of Fairfax: A History" to Hardy-Chandler.



Stacey Hardy-Chandler

Also speaking was Ronell Chatmon, a staff member of U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11th), whose district includes Fairfax City and who was unable to attend the ceremony. First, though, Read stressed that both she and Connolly supported Hardy-Chandler's campaign. "I'm the one who asked her to run for City Council because I believed she had the qualities, commitment, temperament, desire and passion to serve her community in that way," said Read. "But I'd like Ronell to say a few words about what he believes [her election] means to our community and to Connolly."

Chatmon said Connolly came from local government – first as the Providence District supervisor and later as chair of Fairfax County's Board of Supervisors. And, explained Chatmon, "That foundation – using tax dollars and allocating them to help with resources throughout the county, and in partnership with Fairfax City – has made this such a great place to live for so many people."

Directly addressing Hardy-Chandler, he said, "On behalf of Congressman Connolly, 'Congratulations.' I know you're going to do great things [in this City], and we're going to work, these next four years, to get funds from the federal government to the state and to local governments for local projects, as much as we can."

Read agreed that working collaboratively with Fairfax's state and federal representatives has benefited the City. She then recognized Fairfax resident Amini Bonane who – along with Amos and Hardy-Chandler – also vied for Council in 2024. "It was significant to have three African Americans running for City Council," said Read. "That has never happened in our City before. Representation matters. People want to believe they can see themselves in the people who sit up there and make good government on behalf of our City."

Next, City Clerk Melissa Shinaberry officially administered the oath of office to Hardy-Chandler, who then spoke to everyone there. "When I started this journey, the phrase that immediately came to mind for my slogan was 'Forward Together,'" she said. "I'm a forward-oriented person, but my



SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY DELEGATION TO THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY PUBLIC HEARING CHANNEL 16
 Fairfax County Delegation to the Virginia General Assembly at the start of the public hearing

County General Assembly Delegation Pre-Session Public Hearing

Surprising statements by County spokespersons?

BY MERCIA HOBSON
 THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Delegation to the General Assembly offered Fairfax County residents and county leaders the opportunity on Saturday, Jan. 4, to share issues of importance and positional statements ahead of the upcoming 2025 session. Nearly all of the delegation's legislators attended the hearing from its 9 a.m. start, with others arriving as it got started.

During the in-person and live-streamed public hearing held in the Board Auditorium at the Fairfax County Government Center, many of the approximately 70 speakers testifying to the delegation presented persuasive stances backed by data. Written testimony could also be submitted via email to LegislativeTeam@fairfaxcounty.gov.

The delegation first heard from spokespersons of the county's two governing bodies, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the School Board. Supervisor James Walkinshaw spoke on behalf of the Board of Supervisors, and Melanie Meren spoke on behalf of the School Board.

Among startling facts in the testimony, Walkinshaw said the Commonwealth of Virginia shortchanges the county the "equivalent of \$3,100 per student," which creates "a funding hole."

Meren said the funding shortfall "equates to potentially a whopping \$1,300 on the average real estate tax bill for Fairfax County homeowners per the Board of Supervisors."

Walkinshaw said a key concern is the Commonwealth's funding of core services based on the governor's proposed budget amendments and the potential impacts on Fairfax County. He emphasized three issues: the need for substantial down payments on education funding, public transit needs including state assistance funding WMATA, and the importance of retaining local authority for effective

government.

Walkinshaw emphasized that the problem with education funding is "as always" that the Commonwealth underfunds public education K-12, with "Virginia spending \$1,900 less per student than the national average."

The current standards of quality dramatically underestimate the actual costs of public education, as evidenced by the Standards of Quality formula providing \$6.6 billion less than local school boards spent in FY 21. "The formula systematically underestimates division costs and still uses Great Recession-era cost reduction measures," Walkinshaw said.

Walkinshaw reported that since 2009, the formula has not adequately accounted for "higher-needs students, and the methodology undercounts students in poverty." The formula does not adequately account for local labor costs and high costs of living areas." He criticized the governor's budget amendments, which "do not address any of the JLARC recommendations."

Walkinshaw said that during the upcoming 2025 session, by working with the delegation, other stakeholders, localities, and the Commonwealth's school divisions, "we can ensure the final budget makes a substantial down payment on funding for education."

"If the recommendations were fully implemented, it would yield nearly \$569 million per year for Fairfax County Public Schools, the equivalent to \$3,100 per student. ... That \$569 million state education funding hole is equivalent to more than 10 percent of Fairfax County's entire operating budget (for) schools and county services."

Fairfax County Public Schools reports it serves a population of nearly 183,000 prekindergarten through grade 12 students.

SEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, PAGE 13



Del. Karen Keys-Gamara, 7th



Del. Laura Jane Cohen, 15th



Del. Dan Helmer, 10th



Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim 37th



Sen. David W. Marsden 35th



House Majority Leader, Del. Charniele L. Herring 4th



Del. Holly M. Seibold 12th



Del. David L. Bulova 11th



Sen. Jennifer Boysko 38th



Del. Paul E. Krizek 16th



Del. Richard C. (Rip) Sullivan Jr., 6th



Sen. Scott Surovell, 34th



Del. Karrie K. Delaney



Sen. Stella G. Peckarsky 36th



Sen. Jennifer Carroll Foy 33rd



Del. Vivian E. Watts, 14th



Supervisor James Walkinshaw



Melanie Meren, Fairfax County School Board



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Koinonia Foundation Celebrates The New Year in a New Space



Koinonia Foundation's former space was about 1100 square feet, and the new location is 4200 square feet.

Area nonprofit finds space in a historic church.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Volunteers broke out their carpentry skills this holiday season, framing out a space near the Olivet Episcopal Church for the new home of the Koinonia Foundation. The new space is bigger so they can expand their operations, take on new programs and work with new populations in the Franconia area.

"We have needed a larger space for a long time," said Judy Davis, Director of Koinonia.

The Koinonia Foundation is a nonprofit organization that operates a food pantry and provides financial aid to people in need, but they were limited in the small space behind Franconia United Methodist Church where they had been for the last 50 years. The new location at 6107 Franconia Road is in the historic Mount Olivet Chapel at the corner of Franconia Road and Beulah Street.

When the pandemic came a couple of years ago, Olivet combined religious services with a few other churches, expecting to return to normal after the pandemic, but this did not happen so the whole church space is open for Koinonia to use. Their current space behind the United Methodist church was 1100 square feet and the new location is 4200 square feet.

The bigger space will enable clients to use private interview rooms

when needed and on the donation side, a spacious clothing closet. The food pantry will be expanded to offer additional fresh and refrigerated food products, Davis added, plus a new commercially sized kitchen will allow Koinonia to prepare healthier food options. The organization enlisted a bunch of volunteers to help build walls, lay carpet and put up shelving. The Rose Hill Civic Association has contributed money to Koinonia through the years and will consider making an extra donation this year.

One thing that is holding them up is the permitting process with Fairfax County, which Davis describes as "a little bit of a struggle."

Over at the Franconia District office, Supervisor Rodney Lusk supports Koinonia's mission. The new location is a few doors from Lusk's current office. "With more space, Koinonia will not only be better equipped to store larger quanti-

ties of donations but also provide a higher level of service to members of this community," Lusk said. Koinonia has reached out to Lusk's office for help with the county permitting process but has not seen any progress in the procedure.

During the holiday season this year, the Koinonia Foundation worked with the Alexandria Children's Theater and their production of "Holiday Time Travelers," to raise money, food and toy donations in November. The Kingstowne Residential Owners Corporation worked with Koinonia for their "Winter Wonderland," fundraising event.

Another thing the holiday season brought on was an influx of volunteers. Some of their volunteers came from Inova Hospital and offices on Walker Lane.

Koinonia is always welcoming donations, go to <http://www.koinoniacares.org/> for more information.



Koinonia volunteers assess the situation in the new space.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

Koinonia Foundation's plan gets hashed out before heading over to their new building.

Historic Olivet Episcopal Church Witnesses Beulah's Past

The current Olivet Chapel is the fourth Chapel built by the Episcopalians in Franconia. Two that were built on part of the Bush Hill estate in the 1850s were dismantled by Union troops during the Civil War for shelter and firewood and a third was built on what is now Bush Hill Drive near Westchester Street after the war but failed to survive financially. This church goes by a variety of names such as Mount Olivet, Olivet Chapel or Olivet Episcopal Church, depending on where it is listed.

The church was built on land purchased for \$5 from William W. Boyce and his wife, Mary Ellen,

just before Boyce died in 1890. The Boyces had lived at nearby Ashland, an area that dates back to 1820. Boyce was a member of the United States House of Representatives from South Carolina before the Civil War, then resigned to represent his home state in the Confederate Congress in 1861, although he had opposed secession.

After the war, the Boyces moved to Fairfax County where he practiced law and this location was picked for its proximity to the United States Supreme Court.

This church history was researched by Carl Sell Jr., a local historian who lives on Beulah Street.



It didn't take long to get the project going.

NEWS

Detectives Investigate Fatal Crash in Springfield

Detectives from Fairfax County Police Crash Reconstruction Unit are investigating a single-vehicle fatal crash that left a man dead in Springfield.

On Jan. 3 at 8:06 p.m., officers responded to a single-vehicle crash on the Franconia Springfield Parkway prior to Bonniemill Lane in Springfield.

Preliminarily, detectives determined that the driver of a 2016 Ford Van, Keun Hoon Lee, 89, of Alexandria was traveling east-bound on Franconia Springfield Parkway

when his vehicle left the roadway, flipped over, and came to rest on an embankment. Lee was declared deceased at the scene.

The speed remains under investigation, and alcohol is not believed to be a factor. Detectives continue to investigate the circumstances of the crash.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.

Rideshare Driver Charged With Sexual Assault

Fairfax County police have charged a rideshare driver with the alleged sexual assault of a passenger in Fair Lakes. He is Sayed Cheshty, 47, of Fairfax. The incident reportedly happened this summer, but the suspect wasn't arrested until recently.

On Aug. 10, at 11:47 p.m., officers responded to the 12000 block of Strong Court in Fair Lakes for a sexual-assault report. According to police, the alleged victim re-

ported that she was sexually assaulted by a driver while inside a rideshare vehicle. She was able to flee and call the police, but her alleged attacker fled the area before police arrived.

However, detectives from the Major Crimes Bureau later identified Cheshty as the suspect. And on Nov. 15, he was arrested and charged with object sexual penetration. He has a March 4, 2025, court date.

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The National Park Service sprayed the GW Memorial Parkway on Sunday, January 5, preparing for the anticipated snowstorm.

Trucks at Fort Hunt and Shenandoah Roads are ready to plow snow.

When Snow and Ice Come, Be Salt Smart

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

This week's snowstorm not only brought a winter wonderland and slippery conditions, it also brought salt. Many homeowners and building, parking lot and highway managers apply salt to prevent ice from forming on pavement.

Winter salt is either rock salt (sodium chloride) or ice melt (a blend of sodium chloride, magnesium chloride and other salt) and bags were jumping off store shelves over the weekend.

Salt Levels Rising

"Chloride concentrations in the Potomac River have risen substantially in recent decades," says the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, stressing that the river is a drinking water source for about 6.89 million people. Average winter concentrations have jumped almost ten-fold, the commission contends. Salt flowing off impervious surfaces is a major contributing factor. Over the past 30 years, salt has increased 104 percent in the Potomac River, reports the WSSC, the water utility for Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

"Salt levels in the Potomac River and Occoquan Reservoir ... have risen noticeably over the past decades, with average concentrations more than doubling," reports the Northern Virginia Regional Commission. The reservoir is also a drinking water source for two million Northern Virginians.

"Deicing salt applied to areas such as roads, sidewalks and driveways is a major source of chloride in developed areas surrounding the upper Accotink Creek," a 2021 study by Wetland Studies and Solutions found, noting that "tracked concentrations spike in the winter months." Other Northern Virginia streams likely have similar conditions, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality officials maintained at that time.

Safer Driving, but Some Harms

Highway managers apply salt to enhance driving safety. Salt can reduce vehicle crashes by 88 to 95 percent, reports the Northern Virginia Regional Commission. While modern mobility may require de-icing pavements, salt has some downsides.



A steady stream of customers were buying salt at the U.S. 1 Home Depot on Saturday.

Information

Tips, www.fairfaxwater.org/winter-salt and <https://www.novaregion.org/1399/Northern-Virginia-Salt-Management-Strategy>
Snow Plow Map, <https://plows.vdot.virginia.gov/public/map>
Salt Webinars, Jan. 27 to 31, <https://wintersaltweek.org/>
Fairfax County Guide to Snow, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/snow/>

Salts do not biodegrade and can be washed into storm drains, streams, rivers and oceans.

Water treatment technologies typically cannot remove salt. Elevated salt in drinking water can create some health risks, especially for people on low-sodium diets.

Because salt is corrosive, it can deteriorate plumbing and highway infrastructure like bridges. Salt accelerates metal corrosion in vehicles.

Animals attracted to road salt can create hazards. Birds can mistake road salt crystals for seeds or grit. There are approximately one million vehicle-animal crashes on roads each year, reports the American Automobile Association (AAA), killing 200 people and costing up to \$8 billion.

Excessive salt can also degrade soil and terrestrial and aquatic plants and animals. Salty sprays from vehicles, spreaders, the wind and runoff can kill trees and shrubs.

Managing Icy Conditions

Several organizations have some "salt



Correct use of salt or ice-melt, with a few granules spread out.



INTERSTATE COMMISSION ON THE POTOMAC RIVER BASIN

Incorrect use of salt or ice-melt

smart" tips. Here are some from Fairfax Water:

- ❖ Shovel early and often. Remove snow before it turns to ice.
- ❖ Use salt only after clearing snow and never to "burn off" snow. Spread it evenly.
- ❖ Clear and salt only in areas needed for safety.
- ❖ Use less. More salt does not mean more melting. A 12-ounce coffee mug of salt should be enough for a 20-foot driveway or about 10 sidewalk squares.
- ❖ If temperatures drop below 15 degrees, do not use salt. It will not work. Try sand or native bird seed.
- ❖ After the ice melts, sweep remaining salt into safe storage.
- ❖ Channel downspout water to drain onto ground areas rather than impervious walks and driveways where it will run off.

Managing Roads

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is responsible for 14,238 miles of Northern Virginia roads and begins plowing when two inches of snow have fallen, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck told constituents in his Jan. 3 newsletter.

When problematic weather is predicted, VDOT pre-treats some roads with a salt and water mix called brine, "to help prevent a bond from forming between the pavement and icy precipitation, making it helpful for crews to make roads passable," says VDOT's website.

VDOT's snow removal priorities are as follows: first interstate highways and limited-access roadways; then, primary roads and major secondary roads; low-volume secondary roads.

New Approach for 2025 for the Connection

Twice a month publication schedule with more digital delivery.

Happy New Year. For the snow lovers among us, it's been a wonderful week, if you could take the time off and enjoy the snow. Some find it a bit of a rude awakening, cold weather combined with snow that just kept coming. Plus we all know people who have moved here from snowier states who can't help but express their dismay at the local willingness to close schools and stay home to be safe and make way for the plows to do their jobs.

To begin 2025, the Connection Newspapers, along with the Mount Vernon Gazette and Alexandria Gazette Packet, are planning to publish on a new schedule, twice a month, first and third weeks of the month in most months. We hope to use this potentially cost saving measure to provide more opportunities for digital delivery in the weeks between, bringing news alerts

and items of interest via email, website and social media. Sign up for a digital subscription at <https://www.connection-newspapers.com/subscribe/>

Not only will you get the link to our digital editions when the print editions come out twice a month, you will also get notice of top stories in between.

Check our Instagram and Facebook stories now. Every day we highlight upcoming events, nonprofits working to make life better for people in need, news, animal rescues, traffic and road work alerts and more.

On Instagram, go to <https://www.instagram.com/connectionnewspapers> and follow us. Click on our logo to see what we're highlighting in Instagram Stories each day.

For Facebook, go to <https://www.facebook.com/ConnectionNewspapers/>

Yes, it is true that we continue to struggle to bring in enough revenue to keep doing what we're doing. In addition to forever reducing costs, we are also looking for contributions and sponsors to help bridge the gap. The Connection, Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon

Gazette need your help to keep going.

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 generosity for your community newspapers.

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 (We do not have nonprofit status yet.)

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

You can always support us by advertising, call Debbie Funk at debfunc@connectionnewspapers.com

Bright New Beginnings for 2025

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT

WOW, 2025! Here we are again at the start of a new year, full of possibility, changes, new connections and so much more. I am inspired, energized and so very thankful for all of you and to our vibrant community.

In 2024, we made incredible progress on many new initiatives and projects. We launched the illegal truck parking reporter tool, expanded our communications with you and created new opportunities in early childhood education and mental health. We welcomed new businesses, introduced the CEO (Council for Economic Opportunities) business roundtable and the CORE (Connecting Opportunities and Resources for Entrepreneurs) initiatives, celebrated the groundbreaking of the final phase of the OMVHS redevelopment project and opened a new concessions and restrooms building in partnership with Woodlawn Little League. Take a look at the infographic for some additional data we collected from the year.

Looking ahead, 2025 will be filled with more progress, excitement and getting stuff done in the MVD (Mount Vernon District)! This year, we'll celebrate the opening of the newly renovated Mount Vernon Rec Center, begin site planning for the new Mount Vernon Governmental Center and launch a brand-new forum for smaller

Mount Vernon businesses. We'll also advance the Lorton Visioning 2040 Plan Amendments, work on increasing Housing for All and break ground on the new Gunston Fire Station and I-95 Complex 5MW solar field. We'll also kick off new events, like our Nation's 250th anniversary celebrations with our Potomac Banks partners and a fun MVD Summer Palooza here at the Mount Vernon Governmental Center.

Alongside these initiatives, we must all strongly advocate for increased state funding for our schools. Our budget challenges this year are driven by continuing needs to keep our highly rated schools funded. Schools are seeing increased needs that are not being met by the state, as was recently highlighted in a state study identifying that we should receive at least \$600M more from Virginia. This funding could reduce property owners' average tax bill by \$1,300 annually. Please reach out and talk to the governor, lieutenant governor and your state representatives about this critical need. Click here for contact information for our representatives (<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/state-representatives-mount-vernon-district>).

There is much more to tell you about our 2024 accomplishments



and 2025 focus and investments, so keep your eyes peeled for our annual mailer – Supervisor Dan Storck's Advisor – coming to your mailbox later this month.

I wish each and every one of you a happy, healthy and prosperous new year filled with hope, kindness, learning and compassion for yourself and for others.

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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FIRST SNOW

Happy Snow Days

No school Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday; almost everything canceled.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**
THE CONNECTION

Winter Storm Blair produced snowflakes and snow-covered expanses for some of Northern Virginia's youngest, Frozen movie-era children who have been waiting years for the magic of gliding down a hill or tasting a snowflake. The area's first significant snowstorm in three years arrived in the region Monday morning, followed by a second round later that evening continuing into Tuesday.

Residents of Northern Virginia heard and felt the impact of Blair, howling winds, and heavy snow accumulations of 6-9 inches reported across the region by the National Weather Service.

The storm closed schools and federal offices on Monday and shut down runways at Reagan National Airport on Monday evening. With the snow continuing overnight, schools canceled classes again for Tuesday. Federal government offices also closed Tuesday.



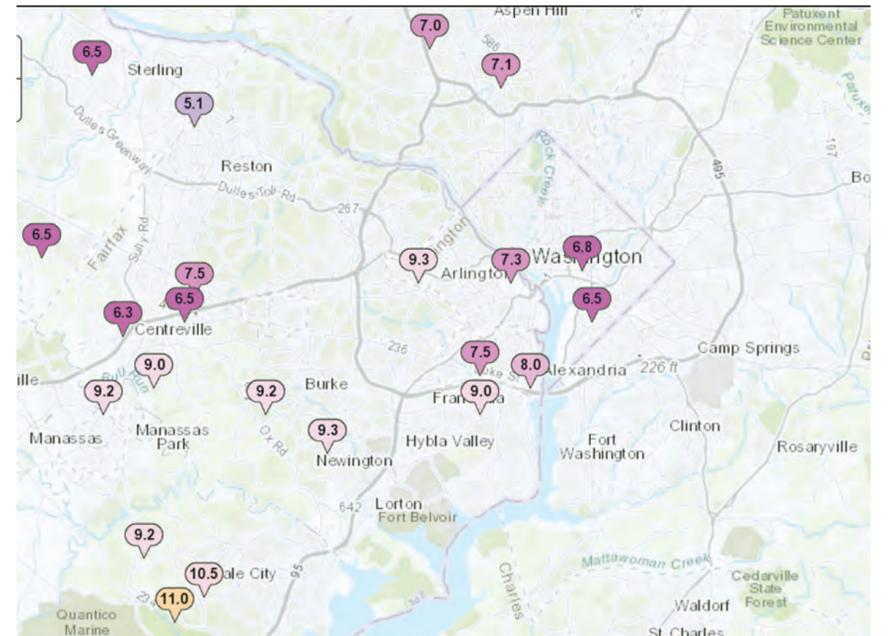
PHOTO BY PETER FALCONE

Great Falls- The view out an upper-level room from a home on Georgetown Pike.



PHOTO FACEBOOK TOWN OF VIENNA

The Town of Vienna- Staff at public works clear the road.



SCREENSHOT NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

National Weather Service's Preliminary Snowfall and Icing Map: storm total snowfall

Sledding Slopes of Fairfax County

According to the National Weather Service, the snow is expected to stay for a while with temperatures forecast to remain below freezing and more snow likely on Friday evening.

VisitFairfax.com offers the following list of the seven best sledding spots in Fairfax County:

- ❖ Westgate Park, located in McLean and adjacent to Westgate Elementary School
- ❖ "Mount Reston," as locals affectionately know it, is behind the Unitarian Church on Wiehle Avenue
- ❖ Chosen by the Fairfax County Park Authority as one of the best places in Fairfax County to go sledding, the Mason District Park in Annandale
- ❖ Meadowood Stables at 10406 Gunston Rd., Lorton
- ❖ Cardinal Forest Park is a tucked-away Springfield gem at 6121 Roxbury Avenue
- ❖ Jefferson Manor Park, a county-run park at 2909 Farmington Drive, Alexandria
- ❖ Lake Fairfax Park, 400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston

No sled? Perhaps improvise with inner-tubes and foam flats for the pool, a smooth mat for an office chair, a baby pool, an air mattress, an outdoor vinyl chair or lounge cushion, or even a large piece of cardboard with the front bent up. However, be cautious with whatever you use. Always check for rocks, water, and trees. Consider wearing a bike helmet and ski goggles. So get the slow cooker out, drop in dinner, fill a thermos with hot cocoa and hit the slopes of Fairfax County with friends and family.



PHOTO BY PRADIP DHAKAL

Town of Herndon-The Dhakal family: Aavya, 3, Aaryav, 6, Grandmother Manju, Aayan, 8, and Dad Pradip "They do enjoy playing with the snow. It is so much fun for them and us to play with them," says Pradip.



FAIRFAX COUNTY GOVERNMENT @FAIRFAXCOUNTY

Fairfax County- Happy snow days Monday and Tuesday for Fairfax County Public School students



PHOTO BY ABBY SPRINGMANN

Town of Herndon- Felix, 5, and the first flakes of 2025



PHOTO BY ABBY SPRINGMANN

Town of Herndon- Shoveling is a family affair. Brothers Felix, 5, and Teddy, 2, team up to help Dad (Matt Springmann) to clear their walkway in Herndon.

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PHOTO BY JOANNA ORMESHER

Clifton- Mother Nature's New Year's gown is designed with snow-laden branches embroidered onto a brilliant blue sky.



FAIRFAX COUNTY GOVERNMENT @FAIRFAXCOUNTY

Reston- Reston Town Center

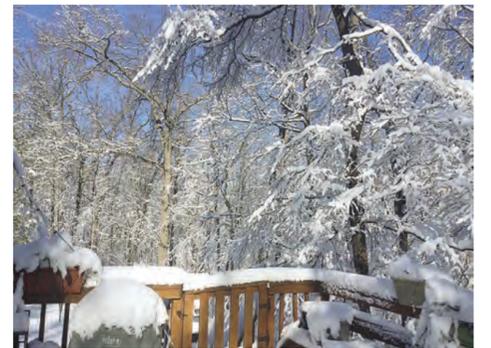


PHOTO BY JOANNA ORMESHER

Clifton- Boost your mood. Open the gate and go for a walk in the snowy woods.

We All Take a Snow Day

Much cancelled as the area experiences significant snowfall.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Snow plows and snow blowers were out in force this week, though most people are relying on manual labor and snow shovels, as the area recovered from the first significant snowfall.

Birds flock to easier meals at friendly houses providing feeders.

Holiday decorations take on a special air of the arctic north, providing a more picturesque setting than they evoked before Mother Nature added to the display.

Excited shouts and laughter provides direction to each neighborhood's best sledding hill. The happy noise is a reminder that snow is more than an inconvenience.



Birds, including this male Downy woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*), go to area feeders for seeds and suet as heavy snow makes food harder to find.



Abundant snowfall brings out birds not typically seen in the area via this penguin snow sculpture.



Perhaps we all felt up to our necks in snow.



Snow plows and snow blowers augment snow removal chores for some.



The ups and downs of sledding in Springfield.



Children find the best sledding hills like this one in Springfield sometimes like miniature ski slopes with long runs.

PHOTOS BY
SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

County General Assembly Delegation Pre-Session Public Hearing

FROM PAGE 4

Second, Walkinshaw focused on “growing public transit needs in the Commonwealth and the region, including reviewing possible cost savings and efficiencies.” Walkinshaw thanked the delegation for their efforts in providing additional funding for WMATA last year and asked for their “continued support in retaining those funds this year.”

In closing, Walkinshaw stressed “retaining and expanding local authority for Fairfax County, particularly in areas of land use and taxation.” Local governments must have the tools to make critical decisions in their communities.

Melanie Meren spoke on behalf of the Fairfax County School Board. She thanked the delegation for their continued support of the Virginia Literacy Act and for granting them local authority for local tax on prepared food tax

policy solutions and local control of funds. “Far more desired than a casino in Fairfax County,” Meren said.

She echoed Walkinshaw’s statements addressing the state’s underfunding of schools. She noted

that the state’s “JLARC’s report on K-12 funding identifies the investments critical to meet the state’s constitutional requirement and which would ease Fairfax County’s tax bills, where we spend 117 percent more. So that’s \$1.18 billion

because ... we don’t want to be just average. ... So we are spending additional money in Fairfax to be above average.”

“This amount equates to potentially a whopping \$1,300 on the average real estate tax bill for Fair-

fax County homeowners per the Board of Supervisors,” Meren said.

Meren noted a second need, “Funding is needed for pedestrian safety on public roadways (and) for commuting to and from our schools.”

From Despair to Hope: Conquering Peripheral Neuropathy with AcuPoint Wellness Clinic

“It’s as though I’m stepping from razor blade to razor blade.”
“It feels like my feet are under attack by fire ants.”
“Like I’m walking on wet paint with rolled up socks.”

“Chinese medicine proves itself where Western medicine fails.”

And you’re in this kind of pain all the time. “It’s relentless, keeping you up at night and preventing you from doing even the most mundane tasks. Things that I used to take for granted, like wearing shoes and going grocery shopping. Two of my three children were getting married last year, and I wasn’t even sure I was going to be able to attend their weddings,” shares Rose W.

Acupuncture has been treating complicated, chronic conditions like neuropathy for thousands of years,” shares Dr. McFarland. “I start with a foundation based on this time-tested science. I then tailor treatments based on a number of factors, including the severity of your neuropathy, how long you’ve had it, whether or not there are any underlying factors, things of that nature. It’s because of these personalized treatments that we’re seeing such incredible results.”

Rose was diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy in 2015, a degenerative condition affecting almost 5% of people over the age of 55. “My doctor sat me down and said, ‘Rose, I’m so sorry to tell you this, but you have peripheral neuropathy. I’m going to prescribe you Gabapentin to manage the discomfort but overall, neuropathy is untreatable.’ My first thought was, ‘we can cure cancer but you can’t stop my feet from hurting?’ It felt like a cruel joke.”

Four months after treatment, Rose is back at work and thriving. “Being back at work isn’t even the most exciting part,” exclaims Rose. “Not only was I able to attend my sons’ weddings, but I could walk down the aisle! It was the most magical moment and I have Dr. McFarland to thank for it. To think, I might’ve missed that.” Rose held back tears.

While neuropathy can be caused by a number of things, including diabetes and chemotherapy, over 23% of neuropathy cases are classified as idiopathic. In layman’s terms, the cause is unknown. This was the case with Rose.

If you’ve recently been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy, regardless of its cause, it’s time to call Dr. McFarland and the staff at AcuPoint. Call 703-459-9544 to schedule your very own comprehensive consultation, and visit AcuPointClinic.com to take advantage of their new patient offer, a \$40 consult (normally \$240).

“Basically every question I had was met with an ‘I don’t know.’ It was depressing to say the least.” Eventually, Rose was forced to quit her job because the numbness had started to set in and prevented her from driving. Fortunately for Rose, she read an article about integrative treatments for neuropathy.

“I was so relieved. After so many doctors told me there was no hope, here were scientists saying that acupuncture and Asian medicine could actually help.”

Dr. Teresa McFarland, founder of AcuPoint Wellness Clinic, says that cases like Rose’s are incredibly common. “Almost all of my neuropathy patients have been told at one point or another that there is no hope. I like to think I specialize in offering hope.” To quote the *New York Times*,



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Stacey Hardy-Chandler: First Black Woman on City Council

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

FROM PAGE 3

husband taught me that sometimes, when you're on an unfamiliar path, it's important to periodically stop, turn and look backward.

"So that's why I think the comments about our history and about Mr. Minor are important. He didn't know me, but I feel he was a trailblazer for the path I'm currently on." Hardy-Chandler also acknowledged everyone in her life who'd nudged her forward, sending her on the trajectory that would "someday land me here in this place, with you, at this time, for this reason."

She noted, as well, that Johnson's church was one of the first places she saw when she came to Fairfax because her sorority held its meetings there. "So many people impacted my path to get here, including the mayor," said Hardy-Chandler. "On May 12, 2024, at 8:35 in the morning, I got a text from her [asking me to run for Council]."

She said there was a time when receiving a communication from a mayor would have been "unimaginable" to her. So, said Hardy-Chandler, "That, in itself, is a little miracle in my life. I see this as a new way of serving. I've talked to neighbors who've been in Fairfax for decades, if not generations – and they've chosen to stay here as their home." She said she'd recently met a new resident, too, who came to this City so she can contribute to it. With these attitudes, asked Hardy-Chandler, "How could I not be excited about looking forward?"

"I'm excited about joining this Council with four other new members, one returning member and our mayor," she continued. "And I'm hoping we can serve as a microcosm of the kind of City we want to be with respect, collaboration and collegiality – and a dynamic that'll ripple out to our City."

"And finally, I'm excited about, hopefully, the legacy I'll pass on. I'm focused on the work that Fairfax City residents elected me to do. I also want people to see themselves reflected in our Council and on our commissions. And I have a responsibility to make places at those tables for them to come and be active participants in our City. So thank you for this responsibility; I look forward to learning a lot, listening a lot and leading along with my colleagues. Let's move Fairfax forward together."

Later, after the ceremony, Hardy-Chandler described herself as a new Councilmember as "excited, honored and ready to serve." But as a person, she said, "I think about my mother who passed away 20 years ago. I'm the youngest of six, and she'd be just amazed that I have this opportunity. But she's the one who prepared me for this because of all that she invested in me."

"It's not an individual effort. She and many others – family members, work supervisors, teachers, etc. – directed me toward this moment, even if they didn't know what this moment would be. I had people around me who didn't tell me what I wanted to hear, but what I needed to hear. And I learned that what's possible is way bigger than anyone can plan for."



From left are Stacey Hardy-Chandler and Catherine Read under the City seal.



Stacey Hardy-Chandler and husband Mark Chandler.



From left are Councilmembers Billy Bates and Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Mayor Catherine Read and Councilmember Rachel McQuillen.



Rev. Jeffery Johnson Sr.



Ronell Chatmon

Fairfax County Residents Differ on Hot Topic Priorities

Bringing to light little known legislative needs.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Connection lightly edited comments for space and clarity.

SCREENSHOTS



Connor Cummings, voting right lost under guardianship: “I am proud to be autistic. I want to make you aware of an important individual right that people with disabilities should not lose due to a family member or appointed person having guardianship over us. That is a right to vote. I love to vote. I read all about the candidates. Voting allows us to have a voice, no matter how we speak.”



Michelle Jefferson of the Community Action Advisory Board, funding for food security: “We call on the General Assembly to allocate sufficient resources to combat food insecurity and support initiatives that ensure no Virginian goes hungry. Investing in these areas is not just a moral imperative but also an economic one; minimally, \$3.19 billion. Stable housing, quality child care, and food security are foundational to the well-being and productivity of our neighbors.”



Sally Horn, on behalf of National Security Leaders for Fairfax, security risks associated with a casino in Tysons: Horn

highlighted the concentration of sensitive national security organizations and defense contractors in the area. “Gambling addiction is a serious problem that afflicts elements of the national security population to a greater degree than it does the general population... While it can be treated, some 80 to 90 percent of problem gamblers do not seek help, including many in sensitive positions who fear that they will lose their security clearances and their jobs if their addiction comes to light. ... A Tyson’s casino would be a very fertile ground for adversaries to seek out vulnerable intelligence, defense and military personnel to compromise and recruit.”



Jennifer Falcone, legislative priorities of the Great Falls Citizens Association: Priorities include maintaining local authority, supporting adequate funding and resources to oversee and regulate behavioral/mental health facilities and group homes; expanded revenue sharing for localities, supporting additional authority for localities to preserve the tree canopy and require rigorous environmental standards for data centers. “We support an expanded revenue sharing and aid to localities to bolster first responder recruitment, retention, and training, and we support legislation to authorize and expand the use of technology to include speed and vehicle noise enforcement in the Commonwealth.”



David Broder, executive director of the SEIU Virginia State Council, homecare workers: need collective bargaining: Broder outlined the priorities for the 2025 session, including expanding collective bargaining to all public sector workers. “Over 80,000 Virginians have actively organized to win local collective

bargaining ordinances. Over 50,000 have already successfully negotiated their first contract right here in Fairfax County. Over 27,000 educators have negotiated a contract to improve jobs and education for all kids and families, ... You can continue this momentum and create more good union jobs that pay Virginians enough to take care of our families and contribute to our amazing communities. ... Expand collective bargaining to the public sector, including home care workers.”



Dr. Sarah Langley of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, intersection of gender equity and racial disparity: Langley discussed gender equity and racial disparities. She urged the Fairfax General Assembly legislators to consider how they could address these injustices and create equitable workplaces for all. “Advocacy must be intersectional; policies that address gender equity cannot ignore racial disparities or vice versa. Workplace diversity programs must ensure that representation goes beyond tokenism to meaningfully include Black women and other marginalized groups in leadership positions. Moreover, it is essential to establish mentorship programs, enforce equitable pay policies and create safe spaces for employees to voice their concerns... As policy makers, you hold the power to legislate systemic change, and I call on you to champion legislation and initiatives that reflect these principles.”



Ken Sandler, “decades of experience and PhD in environmental policy,” unrestrained data center growth, huge electrical usage: “Virginia’s path to clean energy is in peril by the proliferation of data centers fueled by AI and crypto, and

we will almost certainly miss our clean energy targets unless you take action soon.” Sandler highlighted the exponential growth in energy use and its effect on power demand. “With their massive energy use driving total power demand so dramatically that while demand growth would have been only about 15 percent by 2040 without data centers, without the explosion, with unconstrained growth, it’s forecast to be 183 percent, over 10 times more.”

Sandler argued that the proliferation of data centers threatens Virginia’s path to 100 percent renewable electricity, citing the JLARC report on data centers. He suggests setting strict energy efficiency standards and requiring strong clean energy sourcing plans. Sandler called on legislators to re-examine tax breaks for data center developers, set electricity rates for data centers that cover all infrastructure costs, and accelerate the development of wind, solar, and energy storage projects.



Nelson Aguilar, Eastern Atlantic State Regional Council Carpenters. Union jobs come with Tysons casino entertainment center: Aguilar urged support of the proposed “entertainment center” (casino at Tysons) and noted the developer’s commitment to hiring local unionized labor.



Kevin Hickerson, increase special education funding and distribute savings to school workers: “If we were to increase special education funding here in Fairfax County from the state, we could get more money into our coffers, and that would allow us to spread it amongst everybody, including our special education teachers, our instructional assistants, our bus drivers, our custodians and cafeteria workers who are living paycheck to paycheck. So if we can get school funding for special education, let’s do that.”



Pianist Junwen Liang performs on Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025 at the McLean Community Center.

THROUGH JAN. 12

10th Annual Glass International.

At Workhouse Arts Center, Vulcan Gallery, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Workhouse Arts Center is proud to present the 10th Annual Glass International, an exhibition highlighting the depth and breadth of contemporary functional and sculptural glass art. In celebration of Workhouse Arts' 10th year exhibiting glass from artists throughout the United States, in 2024, they opened eligibility to include artists working internationally.

NOW THRU JAN. 12

Pieces of Us by HKS181 Exhibit.

At Workhouse Arts Center, Muse Gallery, W-16, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center is delighted to showcase Pieces of Us by HKS181, a deeply thought-provoking exhibition that examines the essential elements of growth and life that shape our existence. Through a unique blend of symbolism and urban artistry, Pieces of Us examines how sight, scent, and vision can trigger memories and evoke profound emotional connections. The works draw inspiration from the natural world, comparing the process of birds building nests to our human tendency to collect and preserve memories, emotions, and experiences. The use of decaying wood symbolizes the passage of time, encouraging viewers to reflect on its significance, while the incorporation of birdhouses prompts introspection about what we gather to create spaces we feel connected enough to call home. Visit www.workhousearts.org.

THRU JAN. 12

Winter Lantern Festival. At Tysons Corner Center, 8025 Galleria Drive, McLean. Thursdays to Sundays, 5-9:30 p.m. The Winter Lantern Festival is a must-see display of electrifying lights made from more

than 1,000 handmade Chinese lanterns. Guests will enter and wander through a wonderland of light and color inspired by Chinese myths, legends, and zodiacs. Attractions will include a bounce house, sugar paintings, dino ride, interactive light swings, see-saws, tunnels, and many majestic creatures. Guests can also enjoy live entertainment by the Zigong Acrobatic Troupe, a new treat for this year, along with food, drinks and gifts.

DEC. 7 TO JAN. 12

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 Frollo, 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 Frollo are equally enthralled. As the three vie for her attention, Frollo embarks on a mission to destroy the Roma – and it's up to Quasimodo to save them all.

STARTING JAN. 8

Used Book Sale. Restock your library at the VMHC's annual used book sale from January 8th to 20th from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. Shop early for the best selection! All proceeds raised support VMHC Education initiatives.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 8

Foreign Language Film. 6:30 p.m. At The McLean Community Center,



Classical ballet and contemporary storytelling unite with "RISE" on Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025 at the McLean Community Center.

1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Chosen by Alden patrons, the movies are shown in the original language with English subtitles. Always free, always awesome. Programs subject to change.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 8

Hands-Only CPR. 6:30-7:30 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. McLean Volunteer Fire Department sponsored by MCA. Hands-only CPR is a simplified form of CPR that focuses on chest compressions without rescue breaths. It is recommended for use by people who witness an adult suddenly collapse in an out-of-hospital setting. Hands-only CPR increases the likelihood of surviving cardiac arrest by maintaining blood flow to vital organs.

THURSDAY/JAN. 9

Parenting Workshop: Exploring Boundaries in Parenting: Pros, Cons and Consequences. 7 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. A free discussion series for parents presented by the Safe Community Coalition in partnership with the McLean Community Center. Setting effective boundaries for children and teens helps create healthier family relationships. Discussion will explore setting reasonable expectations and boundaries for different developmental stages and provide tools and resources to help

with the challenges of parenting. Facilitators are Mimi Weisberg, LCSW, Heather Tedesco, Ph.D. and Jennifer Lager, Psy.D.

JAN. 10-11

45th International Saxophone Symposium. At GMU's Harris Theatre, Fairfax. Friday, January 10 at 12 p.m.; Saturday, January 11 at 9 a.m. Free and non-ticketed

FRIDAY/JAN. 10

U.S. Navy Concert Band. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Featuring soloists Makoto Hondo, ~Nois, and Musician First Class Harrison Clarke. Free and non-ticketed.

SATURDAY/JAN. 11

U.S. Navy Band Commodores. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. With special guest Will Vinson. Free and non-ticketed.

SATURDAY/JAN. 11

Clifton, VA Christmas Tree Burning. 7-9 p.m. At the Flood Plain Field, off Newman Road, Clifton. There's no greater way to end the Christmas season than to burn the Christmas trees with others. Gather with friends and family in Clifton, VA for the annual burning of the Christmas trees. In the event of rain or snow, they will gather the following Saturday.

SUNDAY/JAN. 12

Pianist Junwen Liang. 2 p.m. At

McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Originally from Nanning, China, Junwen Liang is already making his mark on the classical music scene. He has concertized at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia and has won many competitions all while pursuing his Performance Certificate at Peabody.

SUNDAY/JAN. 12

Chamber Music. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Featuring Junwen Liang, on piano. Originally from Nanning, China, Junwen Liang is already making his mark on the classical music scene. He has concertized at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, won more competitions that we can begin to list and all while he has been pursuing his Performance Certificate at Peabody.

FRIDAY/JAN. 17

Snowball Dance. 7-9:30 p.m. At the Old Firehouse, McLean. Old Firehouse 5th-6th Grader Parties are themed and decorated accordingly. Free catered food and beverages will be distributed to participants. Parties feature a DJ, open dance floor and a variety of activities. Preregistration is recommended.

SATURDAY/JAN. 18

"RISE." 7 p.m. At McLean Commu-

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JANUARY 23, 2025 6PM-8PM \$25

A Curated Design Event sponsored by AKG Design Studio will be held on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025 in Reston.

nity Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The worlds of classical ballet and contemporary storytelling unite at the 2025 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. It features a performance of "RISE" by Memphis-based Collage Dance Collective. The ballet is performed to the recorded audio of Dr. King's "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech—which was delivered in Memphis the day before his assassination in 1968. Tickets are \$25, \$20 for students and seniors and \$15 for MCC district residents.

Visit the website, aldentheatre.org.

SATURDAY/JAN. 18

Collage Dance Company: "RISE Project." 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Part of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. Dr. King's powerful "Mountaintop Speech," which was delivered the day before he died, is the backdrop for this full-length neoclassical ballet. As we commemorate nearly 60 years since his passing, the work is both a reflection of what we have

overcome and envisions where we go from here. Student dancers enrolled in MCC's dance program, led by Art in Motion, will have a guest role in this performance!

THURSDAY/JAN. 23

Curated Design Event. 6-8 p.m. At AKG Design Studio, 1801 Old Reston Ave., Suite 102, Reston. Start your year in style with AKG Design Studio! The event features enhanced closet designs, the latest trends in men's and women's fashion, and a gourmet appetizer

demo! It's all about the art of living well. AKG Design Studio will also hold a drawing for a free design consultation and closet audit during the event. Tickets are \$25, and proceeds benefit the charitable organization Second Story. Space is limited, so secure your spot today! RSVP at <https://akgdesignstudio.com/.../enthe-art-of-living-well.../>

THURSDAY/JAN. 23

Performing Arts Movie. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Learn a little about the performing arts

through these one-hour (or so) documentaries. Program subject to change.

JAN. 24-26

Jurassic Quest. At Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center, Chantilly. Hours: Friday, Jan 24: Noon-6 p.m.; Saturday, Jan 25: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; and Sunday, Jan 26: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Jurassic Quest provides unforgettable adventure, transporting families through 165 million years of the Triassic, Juras-

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 18



Improvison of Northern Virginia will take place on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025 at the McLean Community Center.

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- Charlotte Lane, NP
- Kristen Marie Green, PA
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- Mark Rugarber, NP
- Brittany Ann McPartland, PA

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 17

sic and Cretaceous periods to roam among true-to-life versions of the creatures that once ruled the Earth. Loved by millions, Jurassic Quest is filled with the most hands-on activities, educational and fun event for families of all ages.

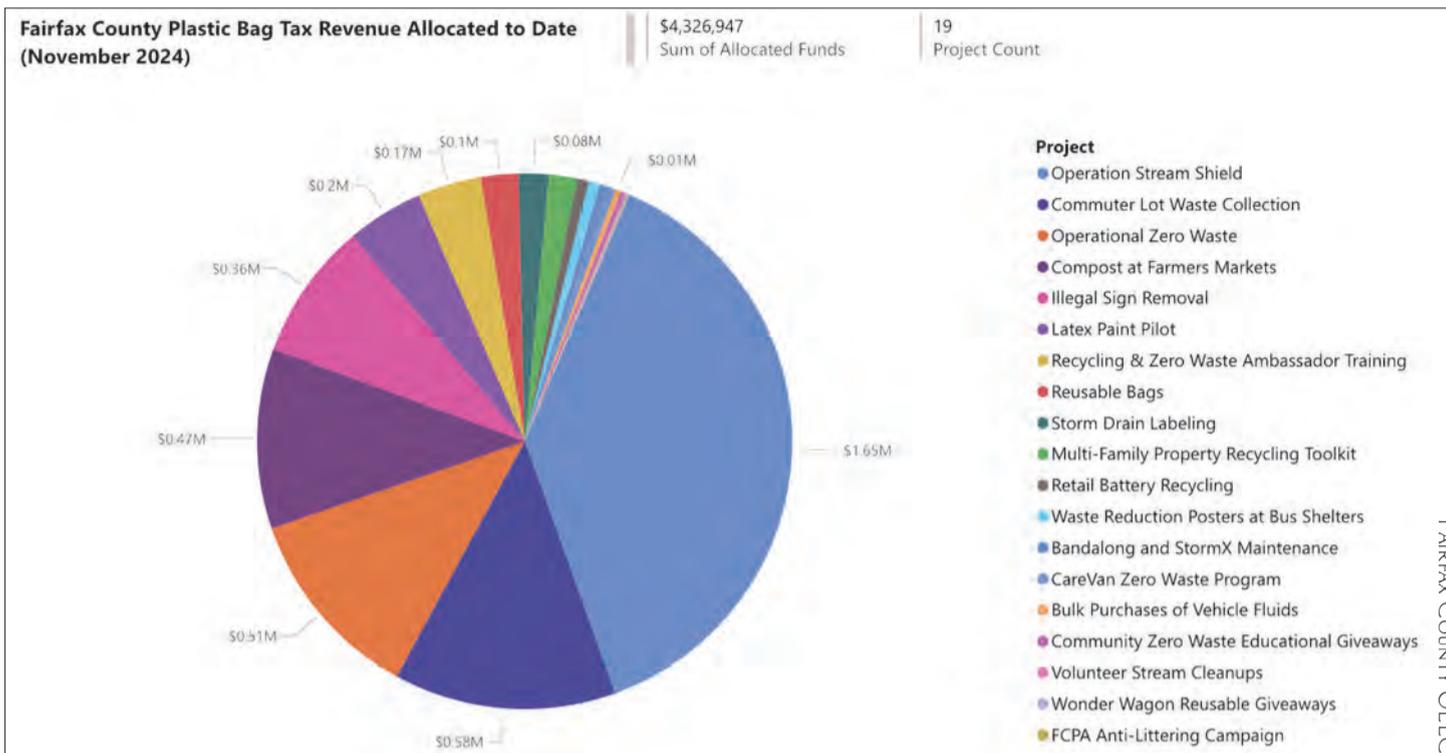
SATURDAY/JAN. 25
Improvicon of Northern Virginia 6. 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The best of the best improv groups in Northern Virginia (& DC, LOL) go head-to-head, toe-to-toe and joke-to-joke to see who walks away with the coveted Improvicon Trophy and a year's worth of bragging rights! It's like "Whose Line is it Anyway?" but with your screwball suggestions!

SATURDAY/JAN. 25
Silkroad Ensemble. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Returning for a third year as a Mason Artist-in-Residence, GRAMMY Award-winning music collective Silkroad Ensemble presents this showcase of all-star percussionists and musical storytelling through the exchange of rhythm, pulse, and melody from different musical traditions around the world including India, Africa, Japan, Cuba, Middle East, Europe and beyond. The program showcases virtuoso performances representing each artist's instruments, culture and artistry with their original compositions, alongside a performance of GRAMMY-winning bassist, Silkroad member, and composer Edward Perez's And The Walls Became The World All Around, inspired by the children's picture book "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak.

SUNDAY/JAN. 26
Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel: Dances for the Ears. 7 p.m. Enjoy the rhythmically captivating music of Bach, Chopin, Gershwin, and Spanish composers Enrique Granados and Manuel de Falla, in Jeffrey Siegel's next program of Keyboard Conversations.

SUNDAY/JAN. 26
Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Shawn and Susan Dilles will discuss their book The Jewish Community of Northern Virginia. They have been active members of the Northern Virginia Jewish community for almost 40 years.

JAN. 28-29
Auditions for The Alden's 2025 Youth Production "Stuart Little." 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. It's the 80th anniversary of E.B. White's beloved classic about a mouse born into an ordinary New York family. This one-hour version will see Stuart through adventures, life lessons and funny moments of a mild-mannered mouse trying to survive in a "real people's" world. For youth ages 10-16 who are residents of Dranesville Small District 1A. There is no charge to audition, but participation in the production is \$150 for each actor who is cast. Most actors in the ensemble will play several characters, including both human and animal. Previous theatrical experience is preferred, but not required.



Plastic bag tax funded projects to date.

Plastic Bag Tax Making a Difference

Adds up to big numbers for environmental clean-ups.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Heading into the grocery store, without remembering to bring your reusable bags, you may be forced to pay the 5 cent per bag tax for that forgetfulness. As you rack up your bag use tally, you may be wondering: “Is this payment making a difference just how much money is being collected from everyone? Where is this tax revenue going?”

Surprisingly the five cents per bag you and others pay to the fund in a store visit has added up to over \$6 million dollars in Fairfax County’s coffers so far. That money is all going to protect our local environment in a variety of ways.

While the amount of funds collected is impressive, there also is evidence that a significant number of people have switched to using reusable bags on most shopping trips. That is making a notable difference in plastic bags collected as litter in area parks and along roadways. Board of Supervisors chairman Jeff McKay said, “We are seeing the results of this program in the significant reduction of plastic waste. The bag fee has never been about generating revenue but about changing behavior that helps our planet and helps our community reduce litter.” Plastic bags used in 2023 decreased by 1.6 million from 2022; and decreased again in the first eight months of 2024 by two million from 2023’s use.

Why use reusable bags instead of switching to paper bags? Fairfax County’s Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC) shares that when compared to the production of paper bags, “Making the switch to a reusable bag saves about 53MW of energy per year, as well as 7 liters of water.” An out-right ban of plastic bags would require enabling law by the Virginia legis-



Beau “Recycle” Benison of Springfield sets an example for all by picking up plastic litter on his daily walks.

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

lature. Fairfax County implemented its Plastic Bag Tax Ordinance just three years ago, on Jan. 1, 2022. It taxes plastic bags provided at grocery, convenience and drug stores. In accordance with the Virginia law that established the ability for localities to enact the ordinance, the funds are returned, by the collector, the State Department of Taxation, to the locality where collected. The uses for which the funds may be applied, also are dictated by the establishing law. They must be used in 1) education on environmental waste reduction, 2) environmental cleanup, 3) pollution and litter mitigation, or 4) providing reusable bags to recipients of SNAP or WIC supplemental benefits programs. The county’s Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination selects appropriate

projects, collaborating with a multi-agency selection committee, soliciting and reviewing applications for use of the revenues.

Among the initiatives paid for by the bag tax is a give-away of reusable shopping bags and compostable produce bags to visitors of the county-hosted farmers markets, aiming to further reduce reliance on disposable bags.

The largest allocation of the funds is going toward the on-going environmental project, Operation Stream Shield; with a \$390,000 allocation, 38 percent of total. That partnership project, begun in 2019 between county departments and several community shelters, provides those experiencing homelessness with part-time, temporary jobs removing litter and invasive plants, typically working in litter hot spots along streams and roadways. Just announced, a \$360,000 allocation funds the continuing program to remove illegal signs within VDOT rights-of-way for a clean, litter-free environment along county roadways. Also receiving six digit allocations are a latex paint pilot program which would divert unused latex paint from county landfills to Honduras for reuse; a new program for training on use of Zero Waste programs in opportunity neighborhoods; and to fund continuing collection and education about food composting at county-run farmers markets. Several other programs with allocations between \$77,000 and \$5,000 also are funded from the FY 2023 Carryover and FY 2024 Third Quarter \$2 million revenue allocation. The smallest programs at about \$2,000 each include an anti-littering campaign pilot program for signage at Laurel Hill Park in Lorton - a littering hot spot; and trash collection and bagging devices for use at two detention ponds and one open concrete channel, to identify strategies for litter management in stormwater systems.

Point Taken



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Monday sometime, unbeknownst to me, I stepped on a spikey thing (not “a pop top”), but I did “cruise on back home.” It wasn’t until later when I took my right sneaker off and couldn’t pull my foot out that I saw the rusty nail-ish thing that had penetrated the sole of my sneaker and then embedded itself in the ball of my foot, thereby preventing an easy removal (I was attached, sort of). However, after 15-plus years of miscellaneous chemotherapy, not only do I have neuropathy (as a side effect) in both feet, but I also have frozen/numb-ish feet (fortunately, no other extremities are affected). As a result, I didn’t feel the penetration. Only later, as I’ve described, did I see what had gone in.

Naturally, being a blockhead and stubborn male, I did nothing about this intrusion. I don’t even think I told my wife Dina about it. My theory and reasoning concerning this kind of possible medical event is not addressing it immediately and expecting/hoping that neglect will somehow lead to healing: wrong! And certainly not the smartest move by a long-term cancer patient who presumably has a compromised immune system, given that I’m still on chemotherapy/targeted therapy seven days a week, every week. That being said, and I hope I don’t jinx myself by saying it, but, I am never sick; cold, flu, allergies, nothing. I do take a lot of supplements, less than before, but I can’t say for sure whether they’re contributing to my overall good health or not. I’ll be naïve and say: I imagine they’re helping. After all, I am 15 years, give or take, past the original “13 months to two years” prognosis I received back in Feb. 2009.

But when medical incidents, like this spikey, rusty nail occur/intrude in life, common sense must prevail. I have always been told by my previous oncologist and medical staff not to hesitate but rather always call/come in when anything/everything happens. Being a cancer patient is serious business and offers little advantage to those who wait. If one is ever to have a chance minimizing the effects of whatever is causing pain, et cetera, it is better to be safe than sorry – or worse. Still, human nature (or at least my nature) sometimes wins out and the smarter more prudent action is not taken. My incorrect assumption is somewhere between the less said the better and I’ll be all right in a day or two. Hardly the right play when you have Papillary Thyroid cancer with a side of stage IV chronic kidney disease and have had meetings recently with a dialysis expert. I may be a cynic (may be?) but it’s unlikely being slow on the uptick is going to keep me alive. I need to be Quick-draw McGraw if I’m going to defeat this enemy. And if cancer isn’t the health enemy number one, I shudder to think who’s vying for the title. Cancer doesn’t need a competitor, it’s scary as hell on its own.

And maybe it’s that fear which haunts me, going into a hospital and never coming out. In fact, the end of this saga is, I finally went to Urgent Care after an appointment I had previously scheduled with and orthopedic doctor to address a chronic sore knee. The knee I knew to address, but the rusty spike I thought I should ignore. Good thinking, Ken. Hopefully, I’ve learned my lesson. I really don’t suppose the longer I’m an active cancer patient, the more able I’ll be to fend off whatever medical malady presents. It’s probably the exact opposite. Da! I guess I’m afraid of the slippery slope.

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

**THANK YOU* for a GREAT 2024!
Wishing you a JOYOUS New Year!*



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