

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JANUARY 9, 2025



The renovated rec center in Mount Vernon will be a big addition in 2025.



A two-story fitness center is included with the renovated rec center in Mount Vernon.

Coming Year is Full of Pluses for Mount Vernon

Ice rink, bike trails, road building plans move the district forward.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Mount Vernon ice skaters and recreation center users will be glad to hear that the newly rebuilt recreation facility that has been out of action for the past couple of years will finally be open this spring, pro-

viding an upscale resource that has been missed by many. This is only one of the district improvements coming in 2025.

"It will be a fantastic addition," said Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon), "truly a night and day change."

The 75,000 square-foot expansion to the facility includes a two-story fitness center, a second ice rink, multi-purpose areas, pool, indoor track and additional building upgrades.

Other improvements in Mount Vernon include transportation improvements on Richmond Highway, a new park in the Quander Road area, Kings Crossing improvements, a new CEO at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, and plans for future bike lanes on

SEE COMING YEAR, PAGE II



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

Supervisor Dan Storck cuts the ribbon this past year with other officials for new housing in Mount Vernon.

Herrity Joins 2025 Race for Lt. Governor

Pat Herrity (R) believes he can deliver Fairfax County votes in gubernatorial election.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Pat Herrity, the current Fairfax County Board Supervisor for the Springfield District and lone Republican on the board, posted a video on social media on Jan. 4 announcing his candidacy for Virginia lieutenant governor. Herrity joins the race with six other contenders. According to vpap.org, one other candidate is a Republican, and the other five are Democrats.

Herrity describes himself as "the liberal board's worst nightmare." Herrity says that not only is he the board's worst nightmare, but he also gets things done.



YOUTUBE.COM COMMONSENSE

Supervisor Pat Herrity.

"I stopped the meals tax that would hurt our businesses and working class families. I funded our brave men and women in law enforcement. I reformed our compensation programs to benefit employees while saving taxpay-

ers money when they wanted to silence parents, close schools and mask our kids, I said, 'Not on my watch.'"

Herrity emphasizes that Virginia has been on the right path by electing Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin in 2021. In 2025, Virginians "must continue the governor's legacy by electing Winsome Sears to the governor's mansion and re-electing Jason Miyares as attorney general, says Herrity.

Article V. Executive, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia prevents Youngkin, the 74th governor of Virginia since 2022, from running for the office of governor for a consecutive term. He could take a one-term hiatus, though. Virginia is the sole state in the union that does not allow consecutive guber-

natorial terms.

According to the Constitution of Virginia, Article V. Executive Section 14, the Lieutenant Governor's official duties are to serve as President of the Senate and preside over it but have no vote except in the case of an tie. Article V. Executive Section 16 also provides that the Lieutenant Governor is first in the line of succession to Governor.

As for his platform, Herrity says he wants to lower taxes, protect communities, and focus schools. "I'll focus school resources on students and quality teachers, not administrative burdens and political agenda," he says. Herrity says he agrees with Youngkin about repealing the car tax (a local tax) and ending taxes on tips.

On immigration, a hot-button

topic, Herrity says that "violent illegal criminals are raiding our communities. ... Under my watch, any locality (that) refuses to cooperate with ICE will lose its state funding," echoing Youngkin's position.

The Commonwealth's lieutenant governor, governor, and attorney general are elected every four years. The 2025 Virginia gubernatorial election will be held on Nov. 4, 2025, and primary elections will occur on June 17, 2025.

Winsome Earle-Sears, elected in 2021, currently holds the constitutional office of lieutenant governor. She announced her campaign for Virginia governor in late November. SEE HERRITY JOINS, PAGE II

live who you are

OPEN SATURDAY 1/11, 12-2PM



Broyhill Hills
4212 31st Street North

\$2,495,000 | Outstanding construction and design in this Craftsman beauty are evident and it features six to seven bedrooms and five and one half baths. The outdoor living is as sumptuous as the indoor with a screened-in porch, rocking chair front porch, patio and fenced backyard.

Janet Catterson Price : 703.622.5984
JanetPriceHomes.com

OPEN SUNDAY 1/12, 1-3PM



Belle Haven
6100 Vernon Terrace

\$1,995,000 | This custom renovation on a flat lot is move in ready! Tailored to the cosmopolitan consumer, the chic and sophisticated details in this two suite home is what you have been looking for. Entertaining flow on the interior opens up to spectacular landscaping in the rear.

Janet Catterson Price : 703.622.5984
JanetPriceHomes.com

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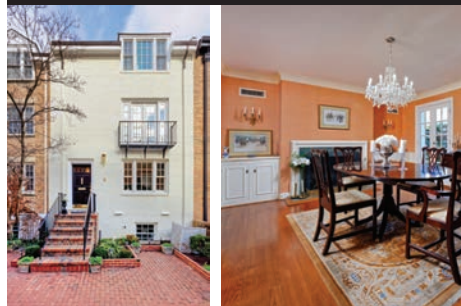


Rosemont
700 Ramsey Street

\$1,925,000 | Newer construction Rosemont stunner built in 2017 with 4 bedrooms and 3.5 bathrooms. Short walk to metro. Inviting front porch, open floor plan, chef-inspired kitchen and more.

The Peele Group : 703.244.5852
ThePeeleGroup.biz

OPEN SUNDAY 1/12, 2-4PM



Old Town
416 Princess Street

\$1,495,000 | 4-bedroom, 3.55-bathroom townhome blends historic character and modern convenience. Hardwood floors, custom built-ins, 2 fireplaces, and new windows. Entertaining spaces include living room with wet bar and dining room opening to landscaped patio.

Babs Beckwith : 703.627.5421
OldTownAlexandriaLiving.com

OPEN SUNDAY 1/12, 2-4PM



Liberty Row
540 Second Street #204

\$1,100,000 | Stunning, spacious 2-bedroom, 2.5-bathroom condo featuring gourmet kitchen, spa-like primary bath, 9-foot ceilings, crown moldings, double-sided gas fireplace, hardwood floors, 2 garage parking spaces in a prime location!

Heidi Burkhardt : 703.217.6009
RealtorHeidiB.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

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ACM ATLANTIC COAST MORTGAGE



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
THE GAZETTE

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.

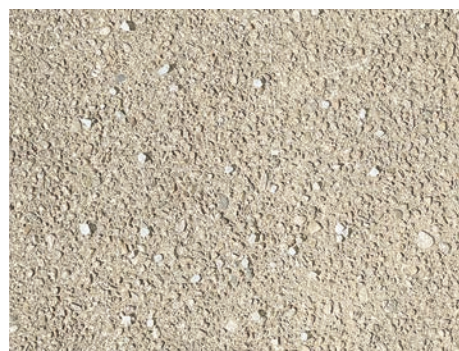
Because salt is corrosive, it can deteriorate plumbing and highway infrastructure like bridges. Salt accelerates metal corrosion in vehicles.

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.



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 GAZETTE

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 5



Del. Karen Keys-Gammara, 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



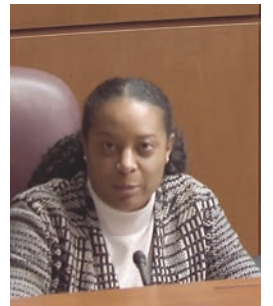
Sen. Scott Surovell, 34th



Del. Karrie K. Delaney



Sen. Stella G. Pekarsky 36th



Sen. Jennifer Carroll Foy 33rd



Del. Vivian E. Watts, 14th



Supervisor James Walkinshaw



Melanie Meren, Fairfax County School Board

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.

**More on page 6
Fairfax County Residents
Differ on Hot Topic Priorities
and Funding**

... 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 Fairfax 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.”

Catch up with projects along
Richmond Highway in Fairfax County

UPCOMING MEETING
Wednesday, January 15, 2025

- » **When:** 7:00-9:00 PM
- » **Where:** Gerry Hyland Government Center (8350 Richmond Hwy)
- » **What:** Brief presentations by Fairfax County and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), followed by an open house



RICHMOND HIGHWAY
CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
vdot.virginia.gov/richmondhighway

Free on-site childcare and shuttle transportation to the meeting are available (from Gum Springs and Hybla Valley Community Centers). Please email Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services at ncsrcrcregion1@fairfaxcounty.gov to request these services.

Meeting will be conducted in English with live Spanish translation available. Date subject to change – please check the website the day of the meeting for confirmation.

Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) ensures nondiscrimination in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need this information in an alternate format or language, contact FCDOT at 703-877-5600, TTY 711.



The Richmond Highway BRT project is funded in part by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.



fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/richmond-hwy-brt



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Fairfax County Residents Differ on Hot Topic Priorities

Bringing to light little known legislative needs.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

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 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.”

How To Spend \$2 Billion

Home care providers who save Virginia millions of dollars each year, but most earn less than \$15 an hour in 2025.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

A long line of speakers, 39 strong, testified for approximately two and a half hours at the Northern Virginia Regional public hearing on Gov. Glenn Youngkin's Proposed Amendments to the 2024-2026 Biennial State Budget on Friday, Jan. 3. They told lawmakers in detail how to spend the state's surplus tax dollars, which totals \$2 billion.

"I hope that each of us will learn something new today that we may not have thought about before. That's the main reason we're here today," said House Appropriations Chairman Luke Torian, D-Prince William, as he began the two-and-a-half-hour hearing. Registered speakers had three minutes to testify.

Speakers' testimony focused on various issues, among them those affecting the region's most vulnerable populations, individuals with disabilities and aging challenges. Testimony raised concerns about the adequacy of Medicaid waiver rates, the need for collective bargaining rights for home care workers and the undervaluing of their work, and the obstacles faced by families with children on Virginia's Developmental Disability waiver waiting list, currently with 15,000-plus names.

Andy Rankin focused on support services for individuals with severe disabilities and the need for respite care, short-term care that would allow families with a paid family caregiver (Legally Responsible Individuals) to be eligible for paid respite services.

Rankin said that his daughter needs someone to attend to her "pretty much all the time. ... We

have struggled to find and keep employed attendants to help us. For a time, I had to work as a paid attendant." Rankin explained many families unable to find anyone to work as a caretaker attendant for their loved one, have ended up losing their respite hours just because they are serving as paid attendants. "Parents need and de-

"Virginia may rank as the best state for business, but Virginia ranked as the 26th best state for working people, according to Oxfam America."

— Tammie Wondong Ware, SEIU Virginia 512 Fairfax Chapter

serve respite," Rankin said.

Jessica Hubbard of Fairfax also advocated for respite care. Hubbard said her daughter, Ainsley, has autism, intellectual disabilities, developmental delays, ADHD, anxiety, and no verbal speech.

"As a single working mother, the Medicaid waiver has made our life

"I urge you to approve the budget amendments sponsored by Senator Surovell and Delegate Krizak to reduce social isolation of older Virginians by expanding access to villages."

— Carol Paquette, Arlington Neighborhood Village

possible ... but daily life is still a struggle to get her needs met," said Hubbard. Finding qualified caregivers is "extremely difficult," given the complex needs of children on a waiver and the waiver's low pay scale. Hubbard described having to step in as a caregiver, but that threatens access to respite care. "Please support the Arc of Northern Virginia's agenda, including plans to study core services, funds to start new providers, and a plan to ensure that all families have respite care," Hubbard said.

Paul Gallagher, representing CRI in Chantilly, formerly Arlington Community Residences, Inc., said, "While the organization respects

the governor's positivity around the roaring Virginia economy, it has so much surplus money that there should be additional tax relief. We would offer another place to invest some of that money when stabilizing the workforce of the care community, (to) those who support and lift up our fellow citizens who have developmental disabilities."

Gallagher added, "Current funding every day is a balancing act for providers, for our valued direct care professionals, who often work two or three jobs to make ends meet." CRI provides development disability, mental health, and youth services.

Tammie Wondong Ware, SEIU Virginia 512 Fairfax Chapter Executive Board president, said that she is often in the presence of families who cannot afford health insurance, healthy food, increased rent, and utilities. "Virginia may rank as the best state for business, but Virginia ranked as the 26th best state for working people, according to Oxfam America." Wondong Ware requested legislators focus on "legislation and budgets," and "pass collective bargaining for care providers so they too can gain a seat at the table."

LaNoral Thomas, president of Virginia SEIU 512, said they hear from home care providers who save Virginia millions of dollars each year. Yet, the vast majority of home care providers in Virginia earn less than \$15 an hour in 2025. "This has to change... There is not a shortage of providers; there's a shortage of home care providers who can afford to work for pennies."

Thomas made two requests. Pass collective bargaining rights for all public employees, including home care providers and repeal the 16-hour cap and allow home care pro-



VIDEO CONFERENCE, SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Sen. Scott Surovell, (34)



SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Sen. Barbara Favola, (40)
Arlington County



VIDEO CONFERENCE, SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Sen. Jennifer Boysko, (38)
northern Fairfax County



VIDEO CONFERENCE, SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Del. Paul Krizek (16) southeast
Fairfax County



SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Del. David Reed, (28) eastern
Loudoun County



SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Andy Rankin and his daughter-
Urged that families not lose their
respite hours because they are
serving as paid care attendants



VIDEO CONFERENCE, SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Jessica Hubbard, Support the Arc
of Northern Virginia's agenda



VIDEO CONFERENCE, SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Overton McGehee urged the res-
toration of funding for mobile
home park residents and down
payment assistance



VIDEO CONFERENCE, SENATE OF VIRGINIA
LaNoral Thomas-Pass for col-
lective bargaining rights for all
public employees, including
home care providers



SENATE OF VIRGINIA
Cheryl Binkley-Advocates for
increased funding for public
schools and dual enrollment
programs.

How To Spend \$2 Billion

FROM PAGE 7

viders to continue to provide the vital care our consumers need and depend on to survive.”

Michael Thomas, board president of The Arc of Northern Virginia, a social services organization in Merrifield, discussed the challenges faced by families with children on Virginia’s Developmental Disability waiver waiting list, which currently has 15,000-plus names. Thomas said the list prioritizes needs based on severity, not chronological order.

Thomas requested that in this budget year, lawmakers focus on those individuals on the waiting list who are not eligible for DD services while they wait. “We request your support for the idea of core services that are basic, highly efficient, and low-cost care to ensure that we keep families from waiting in limbo for years or sometimes decades for a waiver and to help us avoid crises and better plan core services that can help pull families together by offering essential breaks each week and a case manager to guide people towards other resources. We ask that the General Assembly fund the \$250,000 request to study for services and to ultimately fulfill any proposals to put them into action.”

Terry Lynch requested \$4.35 million in additional funding for the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging. The funds would address not only unmet needs but also the growing demand for care for Virginia’s residents as they age. Triple A’s services include home care, personal care, transportation, home-delivered and aggregate meals, case management, a long-term care ombudsman, and Medicare counseling. “Virginia’s 25 area agencies on aging are your front line in supporting older Virginians who want to remain in their homes, for the homes of family members,” Lynch said.

“Virginia’s total population is expected to grow by 22 percent by

2050; the population aged 60 and over will increase by 69 percent over the same period, and Virginia’s most at-risk and vulnerable population, those 85 and older, will more than quadruple.”

“Virginia’s total population is expected to grow by 22 percent by 2050; the population aged 60 and over will increase by 69 percent over the same period, and Virginia’s most at-risk and vulnerable population, those 85 and older, will more than quadruple.”

— Terry Lynch, for Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging

Jane King, speaking on behalf of the Northern Virginia Aging Network, requested that the state’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit increase from \$23 to \$50 a month. The network, an advocacy group, comprises stakeholders, including local commissions on aging and non-profit agencies. King said SNAP’s benefits are, however, limited by its federal monthly benefit of \$23 in Virginia.

“North Carolina has found that support for and participation in SNAP helps to reduce its cost for Medicaid; several other states supplement the meager federal minimum benefit, but Virginia does not, and I urge your support of a supplement for the federal minimum SNAP benefit of \$27 to bring the total minimum benefit to \$50 per month.”

Carol Paquette, founder of Arlington Neighborhood Village, reported that the Surgeon General has reported that the US is experiencing an epidemic of social isolation and this results in serious cognitive and physical health risks, especially among older adults. Community-based programs like villages are recognized as a key way to address this public health problem.

“The Virginia Villages Collective is requesting funding to expand the statewide village network to help thousands of older Virginians safely age in their homes connected to a caring community. ... On behalf of the villages in northern Virginia and the statewide village community, I urge you to approve the budget amendments sponsored by Senator Surovell and Delegate Krizak to reduce social isolation of older Virginians by expanding access to villages.”

Katie Schnitter and Henry Siglio advocated for increased funding for Brain Injury Services and the importance of workforce retention.

John Luci of the Arlington Chamber reiterated support for workforce development programs and childcare funding.

Cheryl Binkley criticized the governor’s budget amendments and advocated for increased funding for public schools and dual enrollment programs.

Derek Max supported extending the standard deduction, opportunity scholarships for low-income students, and the governor’s car tax proposal.

Overton McGee, executive director of Habitat for Humanity Virginia, urged the restoration of funding for mobile home park residents and down payment assistance.

Dr. Jessica Roberts of Arlington, director of Habitat Connectivity in Virginia at Wild Virginia, spoke about the importance of reducing wild-life-vehicle collisions and how she has seen firsthand how the current road infrastructure fragments vital habitat and cars decimate native wildlife populations.

“I’m here to urge you to support a budget amendment for funding wildlife crossing projects in Virginia. ... We have over 60,000 deer-vehicle crashes annually. Each incident costs \$41,000 in state and personal costs, according to our Virginia Transportation Research Council, and they endanger lives,” Roberts said.

On Governor’s Proposed Budget Changes

The Virginia Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee and the House Appropriations Committee held four virtual and separate public hearings on the Governor’s Proposed Amendments to the 2024-2026 Biennial State Budget on Jan. 3. Legislators from Virginia’s four regions — Northern Virginia, Western Virginia, Hampton Roads, and Central Virginia. The hearings provided Virginians a platform for residents to address their representatives.

View video here. Sen. Scott Surovell, District 34, Eastern Fairfax County; Sen. Barbara Favola, 40th Senate District, entirely contained in Arlington County; Sen. Jennifer Boysko, 38th District, which is northern Fairfax County; Del. Paul Krizek, who represents the 16th District in southeast Fairfax County and Del. David Reed, representing House District 28 which is in the eastern portion of Loudoun County attended the Northern Virginia public hearing that began Friday, Jan. 3 shortly after 10 a.m. and concluded two and half hours later.

On Dec. 18, Gov. Glenn Youngkin had unveiled his Proposed Amendments to the 2024-2026 biennial state budget before a joint meeting of the Virginia General Assembly’s money committees. Youngkin focused on tax cuts, education, the economy, workforce development, public health, and law enforcement, including cutting funds to localities that limit or refuse cooperation with U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement.

Here is a key overview of the Governor’s “Keep Virginia Winning” budget amendments. A video of the Governor’s remarks to the Joint Money Committee is available here. The Governor’s comments on his “Keep Virginia Winning” budget are available here. The Governor’s amendments to the 2024-2026 biennial budget bill are available here.

Special Elections Determine Control

The Virginia General Assembly opened its 2025 legislative session on Wednesday, Jan. 8, and immediately recessed until Monday because of after effects of winter storm Blair. How to allocate Virginia’s \$2 billion budget surplus during the 2025 legislative session and pass Gov. Youngkin’s 240 proposed amendments to the 2024-2026 Biennial State Budget could hinge on the outcome of Virginia’s state legislative special elections that were held Tuesday, Jan. 7. The Democratic Party maintained a narrow majority in the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate after , while the Republican Party maintained control over the governor’s office with Youngkin. Holding majorities in both chambers, the House and the Senate, would give Democrats a platform to advance their key issues of K-12 education funding, vote down amendments they do not approve, or amend them.

On Tuesday, Jan. 7, Virginia voters elected three new state lawmakers. Two Virginia district seats became vacant in Loudoun County. Results of the November election vacated the seat for State Senate District 32 when Sen. Suhas Subramanyam was elected to Congress and House District 26 opened as the Democratic incumbent resigned after winning the nomination to fill the state Senate vacancy. Democrats won both seats.

The third Virginia Senate seat opened in the solidly red state Senate District 10, which is west of Richmond. Republicans would have had to win all three elections to take control of the state House and Senate.

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

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.

Join Friends’ Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City’s most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental

Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria’s top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11

New Approach for 2025 for the Gazette Packet

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 Mount Vernon Gazette and Alexandria Gazette Packet, part of the Connection Newspapers, 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.connectionnewspapers.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 more advertising, for contributions and sponsors to help bridge the gap. Alexandria Gazette Packet and 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 Alexandria Gazette Packet or Mount Vernon Gazette or Local Media Connection or Connection Newspapers, 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 debfunk@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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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Mary Kimm
Editor and Publisher
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Jeanne Theismann
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com
@TheismannMedia

Mercia Hobson
Staff Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon
Contributing Writer
msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore, Glenda Booth
Contributing Writers

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment
Advertising
703-778-9431

Publisher
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Art/Design:
Laurence Foong
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

A Connection Newspaper



Breaking: Water Emergency in Richmond!

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

As I write this column, the General Assembly has just gaveled in (and then recessed until next Monday morning) for the 2025 Legislative Session. It is already proving to be another historic and memorable session here in Richmond.

It started with this week's Winter Storm Blair. Last weekend, legislators and staff from across the Commonwealth were advised to adjust our travel plans to arrive in Richmond early for the start of session on Jan. 8. I made the trek down I-95 on Sunday afternoon, just before the first flakes fell.

However, when the storm swept across our region bringing the first significant snowfall

we've seen in several years, it also knocked out the power for the City of Richmond's water treatment plant on Monday morning. This problem was further complicated when another equipment failure at the facility slowed efforts to restore water service.

By Monday afternoon, the City of Richmond was under a boil water advisory, and many residents and businesses throughout the central Virginia region began experiencing low water pressure or weren't receiving water at all.

The General Assembly Building, along with all state government buildings, were closed to the public on Tuesday, and there was much uncertainty about whether the session would be able to begin as scheduled

Wednesday at noon.

Late Tuesday night, Paul Nardo, Clerk of the House of Delegates, alerted Delegates and staff that due to health risks of the lack of access to clean and safe potable water and non-drinking water for flushing toilets, washing hands, and fire suppression, the Capitol grounds and General Assembly Building will remain closed to everyone through Monday, Jan. 13 at the earliest. Except for the official opening of session, required by the Constitution, there will be no committee meetings, and no other legislative business conducted in either the Capitol or the General Assembly Building for the rest of this week.

At 12 noon Wednesday, Speaker Don

Scott officially gaveled in the start of the 2025 session with a quorum of legislators present in the House Chamber, and the Senate did likewise in their chamber down the hall. The members voted to approve two procedural resolutions to allow us to proceed. This afternoon the House will enter an extended recess period to reconvene on Monday.

This is far from the first time in recent memory that this oldest continuous law-making body in the Western Hemisphere has faced challenges and made creative adjustments to ensure that the people's business gets done, and I can assure you that we will fulfill our obligations to the Commonwealth and the constituents we represent.

NEWS

Plastic Bag Tax Making a Difference

Adds up to big numbers for environmental clean-ups.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE

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 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 legislature.

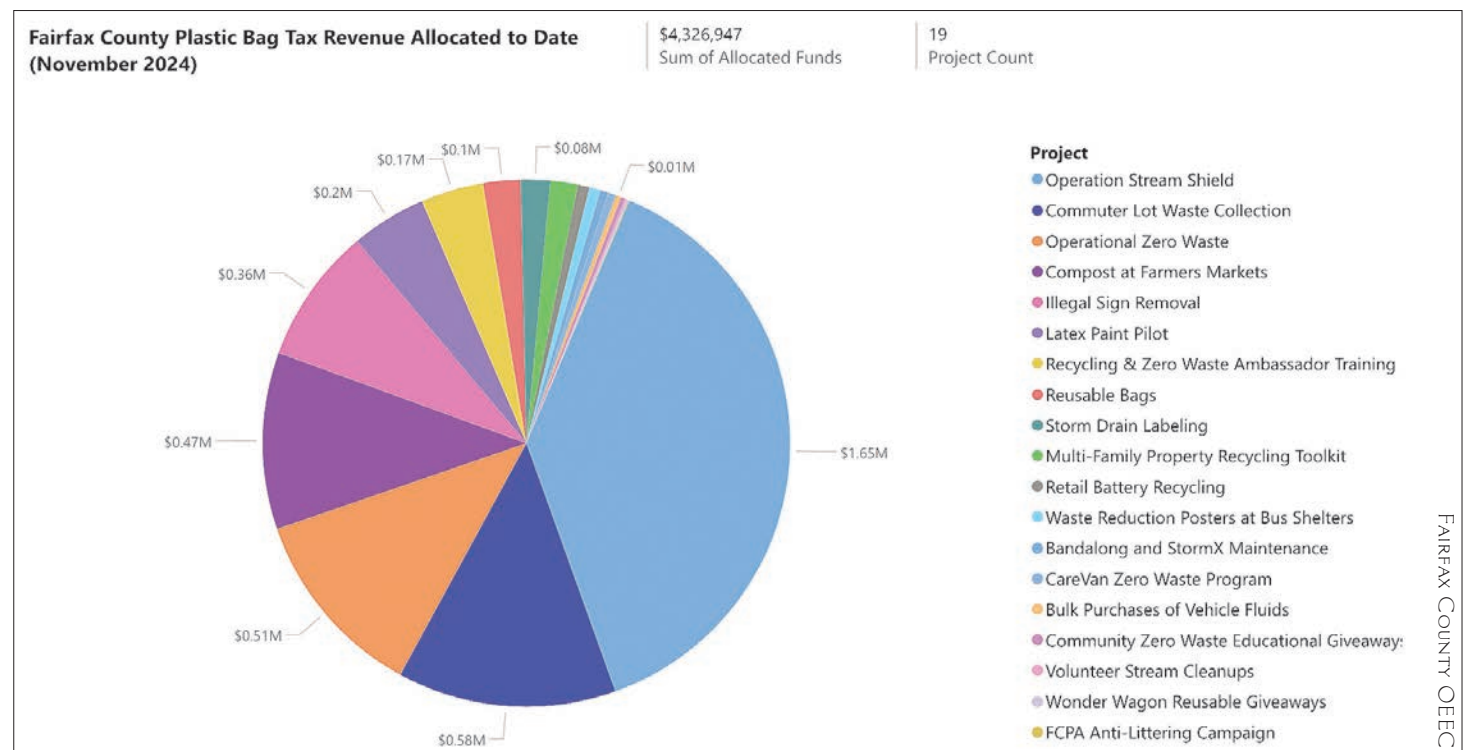
Fairfax County implemented its Plastic Bag Tax Ordinance just three years ago, on Jan. 1, 2022. It taxes plastic bags provided at grocery, convenience and drug stores. In accordance with the Virginia law that established the ability for localities to enact the ordinance, the funds are returned, by the 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.



Plastic bag tax funded projects to date.

FAIRFAX COUNTY OEEC



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

The haunted house at the Workhouse Arts Center was a big hit this Halloween.

Coming Year is Full of Pluses for Mount Vernon

FROM PAGE 1

Fort Hunt Road. Fairfax County has dedicated “a lot of money to do a lot of infrastructure improvements,” Storck said.

This year’s haunted house around Halloween at the Workhouse was a hit, said Storck. “I think they had the best year ever,” he said. In addition the new Bunyan Brewery opened at the Workhouse.

In Lorton, the “Lorton Vision 2040” plan has moved further along, with many getting a look at what is planned for years in the future. This gives residents an opportunity to become part of the planning process. Supervisor Storck is behind this initiative.

The Alexandria Crossing area near Quander Road has recently gotten a boost when developers recently built townhouses along with the high-rise apartments in close proximity to the Huntington Metro Station. It’s a classic example of transit-oriented development,

where mass transportation is close to housing.

Indoor Skiing

One project that is not moving along is the indoor ski slopes at the former Lorton landfill area. In a letter from Fairfax County to Alpine X, dated Dec. 18, 2024, the future of the county’s only indoor ski facility looks bleak. “The Interim Agreement will terminate a Comprehensive Agreement coming into effect to govern the project going forward.

We share your disappointment that, due to various economic challenges (e.g., estimated construction costs, interest rates, etc.), the project has not moved forward for additional review during the Interim Agreement window,” the letter read.

Storck still has hopes for the project, but funding is an issue. “They have not raised the amount needed,” he said.

Herrity Joins 2025 Race for Lt. Governor

FROM PAGE 1

ber 2024.

John Curran is the only Republican other than Herrity in the race for Lt. Governor, and they would face each other in the primary. Curran lost his bid in the 2023 James City County Supervisor (Berkeley).

The other five candidates are Democrats: Babur B. Lateef, chairman of the Prince William County School Board; Aaron R. Rouse, Vir-

ginia Beach, state senator; Victor Salgado (Arlington), federal prosecutor; Levar M. Stoney, former Richmond mayor; and Ghazala F. Hashmi (Chesterfield), state senator.

Herrity is adamant that Republicans can win in November. Still, the party needs “someone who can deliver votes in Northern Virginia. ... I’ve won here before, and I will do it again as your lieutenant governor,” Herrity says.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 8

working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsOfAMHC@gmail.com.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school

year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or donaldrea@aol.com.

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

htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

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

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

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EVENTS

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We All Take a Snow Day

Much cancelled as the area experiences significant snowfall.

By SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE

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 GAZETTE

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 GAZETTE

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," fund-raising 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/THE GAZETTE

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.

FROM PAGE 11

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

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

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

SUPPORT GROUPS

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

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

The Caregiver Support Group is facilitated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center, 1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email DAAS@alexandriava.gov.

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

- ❖ Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.
- ❖ Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 15

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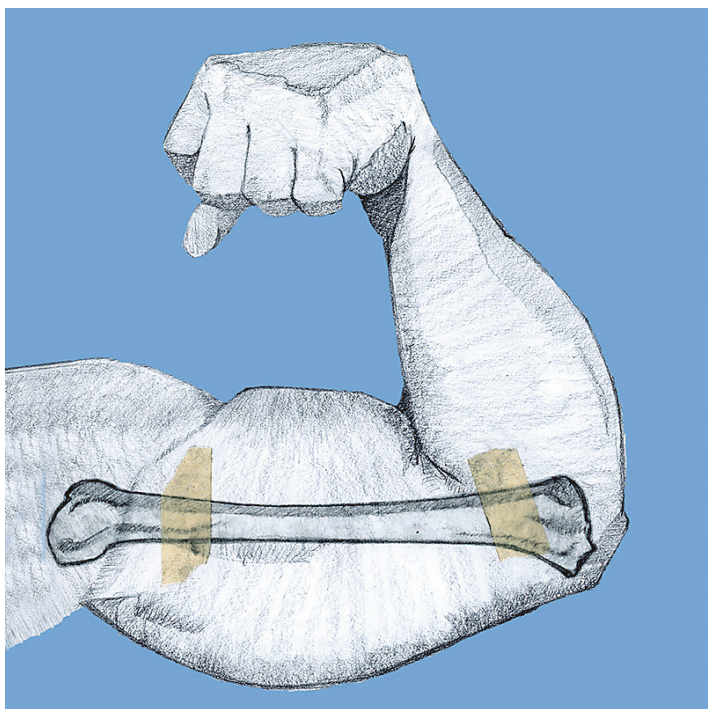
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Del Ray Artisans Gallery in Alexandria presents "Visual Humor" from Jan. 3 to Feb. 1, 2025.

DEC. 12 TO JAN. 12

A Gentle Unroot: A Latinx Perspective. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Curated by Claudina Hannon. Artist Reception: Sunday, Dec. 15, 4 - 6 p.m. Artist Talk: Sunday, Jan. 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.

7918 Ft. Hunt Rd., Alexandria. Featuring Dick Jemison's artwork, "Oracle 1987." Dick's artworks have been represented by the most well-known Southwestern U.S. art galleries: Elaine Horwitch Galleries (Scottsdale, Santa Fe, Sedona, and Palm Springs), Carson-Shapiro Art Gallery (Vail and Denver), Joanne Lyon (Aspen), Siegal Gallery (New York) and Riva Yares. Dick's artwork and his African pot collection are a part of the permanent collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art.

JAN. 1 - FEB. 23, 2025

Ice & Lights at Cameron Run offers daytime ice skating on weekends/holidays throughout January and February.

JAN. 3 TO FEB. 1

"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

THURSDAY, JAN. 13

Art, Wine & Cheese. 6-7:30 p.m. At the Nepenthes Gallery,

THURSDAY, JAN. 20

Art, Wine & Cheese. 6-7:30 p.m. At the Nepenthes Gallery, 7918 Ft. Hunt Rd., Alexandria. Featuring Winter Solstice Exhibit: Six Local Artists. The opening event will be Thursday January 23 and will feature original works by six local artists: Celia Chadwick, Lesley Clarke, Todd Key, Camille Kouyoumdjian, Nancy Ramsey, and Lori Welch.

THURSDAY/JAN. 30

Coffee & Connections. 8:30-9:30 a.m. At Wegmans Carlyle, Alexandria. The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network January Coffee & Connections. Kick off the new year by networking with the best and brightest women (and



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

men) from around the region at the first Professional Women's Network Coffee & Connections of 2025.

ALEXANDRIA RESTAURANT WEEK

Alexandria Restaurant Week returns January 31 to February 9, 2025. For 10 days and two weekends, nearly 100 restaurants will offer a \$30, \$40 or \$50 prix fixe dinner for one. Plus, find special fast casual offers.

https://visitalexandria.com/restaurants/restaurant-week/?mc_cid=6333e6a5dc&mc_eid=c8aed55232

FEB. 7 TO MARCH 1

The "MeWOW: Fabulous Felines" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Celebrate the mysterious and fascinating world of cats with "feline forward" artwork. Opening Reception on Friday, February 7, 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6pm, Fridays 12-9pm, Saturdays & Sundays 12-6pm. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

JANUARY

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

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 14

614 Four Mile Road. Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free. Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us for more.

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

ondsaturday.com for more.

ONGOING

Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program. The City of Alexandria has reinstated its sewer Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program for homeowners in designated areas that historically experience basement back-ups or flooding. The program reimburses homeowners for up to 50 percent of the cost of installing a BFP device by a licensed plumbing contractor, up to a maximum of \$2,000. The current program period is through Dec. 31, 2019. Alexandria homeowners should call the Department of Transpor-

tation and Environmental Services at 703-746-4014 or visit www.alexandriava.gov/tes.

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

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

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.

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