

CONNECTION

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BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
OPINION, PAGE 8 ♦ SENIOR LIVING, PAGE 10 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 16 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18

Martha Wescoat-Andes and her dad Jim Wescoat with his Quilt of Valor. Jim Wescoat, 103 years old who served in the Marines in WWII, lives at The Woodlands, a retirement community in Fairfax, and was honored with the gift of his Quilt of Valor.

Quilt of Valor from A Grateful Nation

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Former Supervisor Gerry Hyland Remembered

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Fairfax Chocolate Festival Is Coming

PAGE 6





38th Annual Mount Vernon District Town Meeting

Saturday, February 8, 2025

NEW TIME

8:30 a.m. – Exhibit Hall Open
10:00 a.m. -12:30 p.m. – Speakers, Q&A's and Virtual Tour

Mount Vernon High School
8515 Old Mount Vernon Road
Mount Vernon, VA 22309
Live on Channel 16 & Facebook
More: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/

Be There for the Big Reveal:

New Name, Logo & Identity for the OMOVHS Redevelopment Project!

Learn More



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Oakton Doctor Pleads Guilty to Running Pill Mill

An Oakton doctor pled guilty Jan. 15 to conspiracy to distribute oxycodone and amphetamines, maintaining drug premises, and false statements relating to health care matters, said United States Attorney Jessica D. Aber, Eastern District of Virginia in a release, which included the following details:

According to court documents, Virginia pharmacies filled approximately 7,330 prescriptions for oxycodone prescribed by Allingham, totaling approximately 405,164 pills. Multiple of Allingham's patients died of drug overdoses within hours, days, or weeks of receiving an oxycodone prescription from Allingham.

According to court documents, David Allingham, 64, was the owner of and sole medically licensed practitioner at Oakton Primary Care Center, an urgent care center. Between at least April 2019 and January 2024, Allingham wrote prescriptions for opioids and amphetamines for numerous patients without properly assessing the individual needs of those patients. These actions were outside the usual course of professional practice and regulations and without legitimate medical purpose. During that time, Virginia pharmacies filled approximately 7,330 prescriptions for oxycodone prescribed by Allingham, totaling approximately 405,164 pills.

All of Allingham's patients were instructed to pay out of pocket for office visits at Allingham's practice, which cost \$300-\$550 per patient, typically paid via cash, credit card, or Venmo. An extra \$700 was required if the patient wanted a doctor's letter. Allingham required his chronic pain patients to pay for an office visit at least every 21 days, though he allowed a significant number of these "office visits" to be conducted via a phone call to employees who were not medically trained. Allingham authorized renewals of medication without physically examining patients or without medical indication other than the uncorroborated information the patients provided.

Multiple pharmacies investigated Allingham's opioid prescribing practices and thereafter refused to fill prescriptions for controlled substances issued by Allingham. After a national pharmacy chain informed Allingham that its stores would no longer fill prescriptions written by him, Allingham instructed his employees to phase out all brand pharmacies in favor of "mom and pop" pharmacies to avoid further scrutiny of his patients and so he could continue to prescribe high-dose opioids for them.

Allingham authorized and directed untrained medical staff to issue prescriptions for controlled

substances for his patients in his absence and without a proper medical exam. Allingham directed untrained staff to issue his prescriptions for opioids or amphetamines on at least 487 occasions, generating at least \$168,000 in proceeds.

Allingham typically required a urine drug screen at each in office appointment but failed to act on them in a medically appropriate way. Allingham consistently excused or ignored failed urine drug screens, which were then withheld from patient files or falsely documented in his medical records. One patient failed 40 drug tests between 2019 and 2023. Allingham's medical record falsely documented that the patient had tested positive for cocaine in his urine merely from handling currency contaminated with cocaine residue. Allingham nevertheless continued to prescribe oxycodone to the patient.

Allingham also prescribed amphetamines to multiple chronic pain patients to assist them in weight loss in a way that was against regulations. Allingham prescribed amphetamines for weight loss purposes regardless of whether the patient was obese. Allingham distributed at least 527 prescriptions for amphetamines for this purpose, totaling over 13,500 pills.

Allingham also unlawfully used and directed his employees to use another doctor's identity without authorization to prescribe medications for himself and his family. Allingham instructed his employees to provide the Oakton Primary Care Center phone number for prescriptions purportedly written by that doctor and directed them how to respond if pharmacists called inquiring about the prescriptions, because at that time the doctor was not an employee of Oakton Primary Care Center.

Multiple of Allingham's patients died of drug overdoses within hours, days, or weeks of receiving an oxycodone prescription from Allingham.

In July 2023, law enforcement conducted a search of Allingham's residence and medical practice. When interviewed by law enforcement, Allingham made false statements regarding his prescribing practices and directed at least one of his employees to delete records of her text message communications with him.

Allingham is scheduled to be sentenced on April 30 and faces up to 20 years in prison. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed. Route	State R.	Road Name	Creek	Effective Date
DINWIDDIE	6050	624	HILLS DRIVE	WHITE OAK CREEK	1/3/2025
DINWIDDIE	6025	613	SQUIRREL LEVEL ROAD	HATCHERS RUN	1/2/2025
POWHATAN	13837	603	ROCKY FORD ROAD	BRANCH ROCKY FORD CREEK	12/17/2024
WYTHE	19757	681	BRUSHY MOUNTAIN ROAD	BR REED CREEK	12/10/2024

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit vdot.virginia.gov and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730 or corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov.



Holding their election certificates are (from left) Anthony Amos, Billy Bates, Stacy Hall, Catherine Read, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Rachel McQuillen and Tom Peterson.



Rick Herrington presents Catherine Read with her certificate of election.

Fairfax City Council and Mayor Are Sworn In

Former government leader urges them to work together.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Unless it's an uncontested race, most elections pit one side against another. But when the dust settles, and the winners are chosen – especially in local, municipal elections – it's important that the leaders work in unison for the good of the city or town they serve.

That was the message former Fairfax City School Board Chairman and former City Councilmember Janice Miller delivered last Tuesday, Jan. 14, prior to the swearing-in of the City's mayor and Council. Whether they heed her advice will become apparent during their two years in office.

"Being an elected official is about serving the community we all love," she said. "Governing is hard, working together is difficult, finding common ground is challenging." But, urged Miller, "Please listen and learn. Put 'we' before 'I' and work together."

In November, Catherine Read was elected to her second term as the City's mayor. But with three of the previous Council members choosing not to run – and two others not re-elected – Billy Bates is the only incumbent, joined by newbies Anthony Amos, Stacy Hall, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Rachel McQuillen and Tom Peterson.

At the outset of her speech before a standing-room-only crowd in Council chambers, Miller thanked the outgoing Councilmembers for their service, plus everyone who ran for office, and said she hoped they all continue to stay engaged in the City. She also congratulated Read and the incoming Council. "Our community stands behind you and



Janice Miller gives advice to City Council. Behind her, from left, are Stacy Hall, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Rachel McQuillen and Tom Peterson.

wishes you well," said Miller.

She then shared with them some hard truths learned firsthand via her own decades of service to the City. "Being a small-town, elected leader is a blessing – an opportunity to serve – but it's also a challenge," said Miller. "The path forward is not always easy."

"When I moved from the School Board – where just about everyone was happy to support our kiddos, teachers and schools – and moved to Council, I was surprised that every issue became a bit more contentious. And working together became more of a challenge. Today, resolving community conflict appears to be more challenging than ever. But focusing on how we are alike, rather than how we differ, is a good place to start."

Miller then made some observations about the City's new leaders. She said they're from three different age decades, with two people in their 20s, two in their 40s and three in

their 60s. And they all live in different areas of Fairfax.

"For the first time in our history, we elected the first African American female, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, and we have two African Americans on Council," said Miller. "Anthony Amos is only the second African American male who's served on our City Council. I'd also like to point out that, for the first time [ever], the City elected the first, female majority [three Councilmembers plus the mayor] – and it only took 63 years."

Next, Miller recommended they seek out what connects them all, not only on policies, but as colleagues and leaders. "Let's look at the many, similar experiences you all share," she said. "You're all committed to serving this community, and I applaud you for that. Also, Billy went to our local schools and graduated from Fairfax High, Catherine's and Tom's children attended lo-

cal schools and are Fairfax High graduates, Stacy Hall and Rachel have kiddos attending our schools, and Catherine, Billy, Rachel and Anthony have attended George Mason University for either undergraduate or advanced-degree programs."

Miller further noted that the newly elected leaders are also ambitious and caring residents who've volunteered their time on many of the City's boards and commissions. McQuillen and Hall each served two years on the School Board, and Peterson, Hall and Bates (as its student representative) served on the Environmental Sustainability Committee. McQuillen was on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and Hardy-Chandler was a member of the Commission for Women.

In addition, Amos is an appointee on the GMU Advisory Board. And Read has been a longtime advocate for having a walkable City, bathrooms in Fairfax's parks, free public transportation via the CUE buses, diversity, equity for all residents, and a welcoming and inclusive City for everyone. And, added Miller, "You all have also worked on local PTAs, civic associations, the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. Individually and collectively, you've served this community in countless ways."

Then, addressing each of the leaders personally, she told them, "Today, you're offered an amazing opportunity, as well as the chance to bond over shared experiences and goals. The next two years can be simply difficult or merely challenging. Being 'difficult' means not working together; being 'challenging' means seeking information, looking for solutions, partnering with our [City] staff and community and finding common ground. Look to see what joins you, not separates you. For the sake of our community, let's make the next two years work."

SEE SWEARING-IN, PAGE 14

Retired Supervisor Gerry Hyland Remembered

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Gerald W. “Gerry” Hyland, 88, retired Mount Vernon District Supervisor of seven terms (1988-2015), died over the weekend.

The week after Hyland announced on Jan. 31, 2015, that he was retiring, his daughter, Christina Gigi Hyland, wrote “A Daughter’s Perspective.” In it, she says, “If you believe in things as fate-filled as ‘callings,’ my Dad’s calling has always been to be a public servant. ... My Dad is really about one thing, above all else -- helping people.” She goes on to say that it sounds “deceptively simple,” helping people, but “at its toughest, ‘helping people’ is messy, frustrating, complex, and often exhausting. ... Not for Dad. He always has and always will take that 6’3” frame and those size 14 feet and wade barefoot into the swirling waters of an issue because someone (or many someones) needs help. And he does it with the utmost patience and grace.”

In 2019, at the Sept. 20 dedication of the Gerry W. Hyland Building, formerly named the South County Government Center, Hyland said, “I miss being your supervisor, the best job I ever had.”

Elected in November 1987, a Washington Post story described Hyland as someone who “knows how to get things done.” Hyland “had himself thrown in jail and wouldn’t come out until he had raised \$10,000 for charity.”

As a new supervisor, Hyland said the top priority on his agenda was to encourage continued redevelopment of the Rt. 1 corridor.

Hyland announced his retirement early in 2015. Sue Langley, chair of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee, said in a statement that “his tireless devotion to the citizens of the Mount Vernon District will be difficult to replace.”

As a supervisor, Hyland had many achievements. Among them are that he insisted upon the expansion of the Mount Vernon Hospital rather than closing it, started a new farmers market in Lorton, increased police patrols in the Richmond Highway corridor reducing the crime rate in the Mount Vernon area, and is credited on creating one of Fairfax County’s first dog parks.

Hyland supported expanding the trails in Mount Vernon and the County and created a park and golf course in the Lorton community. Before he retired, Hyland won his fight and supported the community in closing the Lorton Landfill.

Hyland also started the tradition of



CREDIT: FAIRFAX COUNTY

Retired Fairfax County Board Supervisor Gerry Hyland comments at the dedication and renaming of the South County Government Building to the Gerry W. Hyland Building on September 20, 2019. The name change honored Hyland, the Mount Vernon District representative on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors from 1988-2015.

the Mount Vernon Annual Town Meeting, which will celebrate its 38th event this year, according to Supervisor Dan Storck, who won his empty seat.

During his tenure as supervisor, Hyland earned the nickname, “Mr. Pothole;” because he aggressively pursued road improvements and street repairs in his district.

Just because Hyland retired does not mean he stopped advocating for his Mount Vernon community.

In December 2021, Hyland wrote a letter to the “Special Masters” at the Supreme Court of Virginia regarding their proposed redistricting map in the area of Fairfax County that he had represented for 28 years. He signed it, “Very Truly Yours, Gerald W. Hyland. Retired Mount Vernon District Supervisor.”

Hyland urged the court to “create one delegate seat for the Mount Vernon Community and a separate delegate seat for the Lee Community (you call it ‘Franconia’ in your memorandum),” writing that it “better aligns the delegate seats with the communities that actually exist.” A master of facts and the use of visuals, he included five maps in his letter.

According to Fairfax County public affairs, “Hyland also served as chairman of the Virginia Railway Express and is a past president of the Virginia Association of Counties. He has served as a board member of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, the Environmental Policy Committee, the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Improvement Study Coordinating Committee, the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee, the Washington Metropolitan Area

Transit Authority and the Board of Zoning Appeals.”

Hyland was born and raised in Holden, Massachusetts. He graduated from the College of Holy Cross and received a law degree from Georgetown University in 1962. He earned a master’s degree in taxation from George Washington University. Hyland served as a colonel in the Air Force Reserves and was past president of United Community Ministries.

The final paragraph of Christina Gigi Hyland’s “A Daughter’s Perspective” reads: “My Dad is the living embodiment of the quote from Quaker missionary Stephen Grellet: ‘I shall pass through this world but once. Any good that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.’ That’s my Dad. And I am so proud of him.”

Many local people are posting memories and tributes:

“I’m deeply saddened to share the loss of a community pillar, a true patriot, Mount Vernon leader for 30+ years, my friend and mentor, Gerry Hyland. He was committed to doing things right for the right reasons and challenged us all to be our best selves. We honored Gerry for his deep commitment and many successes in our community by renaming the South County Government Center after him in 2019. Gerry was notorious for his puns, sharp legal mind, and for being a leader who listens. As we celebrate his life, each one of us should find a

SEE GERRY HYLAND, PAGE 5

Gerald “Gerry” W. Hyland, 88

Gerald “Gerry” W. Hyland (Colonel, USAF, Ret.), 88, passed away peacefully on Sunday, January 19, 2025. Born on August 17, 1936 in Holden, Massachusetts, Gerry was the first of his family to attend college at Holy Cross and receive his Juris Doctor from Georgetown University School of Law, where he met and later married his law school sweetheart, Carmen Josefin Colon. He was a reservist in the Air Force with the Judge Advocate General’s Office and served four years of active duty in Normandy (France). Upon returning to the U.S., Gerry remained active in the Air Force Reserve for 30 years, and worked for the Credit Union National Association, as legislative counsel. Together with Carmen, they founded the law firm Hyland & Hyland in 1976 and he practiced law as a member of the Virginia State Bar for 50 years.

Public service was Gerry’s calling and passion. In Fairfax County, he served on the Board of Zoning Appeals and was elected in 1987 as the Mount Vernon District Supervisor, a position he held for 28 years before retiring in 2015.

He gave his all to ensure that the citizens of Mount Vernon were deeply involved in the decisions affecting their lives and the community. He was known as a “leader who listens” and who always considered how the County could support the most vulnerable of its residents.

Gerry was instrumental in the efforts to close the county I-95 landfill, he led the effort to keep the Inova Mount Vernon Hospital open and led the transformation of Lorton. His annual Town Hall Meetings and Lobster-fests, attended by hundreds of residents, politicians and County leaders, were testament to his deep commitment and connection to the community. In 2019, Fairfax County rededicated the Gerry Hyland Government Center, home to family services, community health, career programs, a senior and teen center and more, including many public rooms essential for community meetings and workshops.

In addition to his supervisor role, Gerry also served as chairman of the Virginia Railway Express, is a past president of the Virginia Association of Counties and served on the National Association of Counties Board of Directors.

Outside of public service and family, Gerry’s other love was “the farm” – his 35-acre “sanctuary” in Parksley, Va. where he grew vegetables, raised everything from a bull, to chickens, sheep and peacocks, and caught crab on his dock that he would bring back to share with cherished friends.

Gerry Hyland was predeceased by his wife Carmen, parents Maurice and Eve (Shimkus) Hyland, sister Cecile Gelardi, and companion Shirley Robson. He is survived by his daughter, Christiane Gigi Hyland, and son-in-law Christopher Revere of Mount Vernon. He is also survived by three siblings: twin sister Carole Santos of Marstons Mills, MA; brother, Ted Hyland and wife Tina of Southborough, MA; younger sister, Christine Sweeney and husband Jack of West Hyannisport, MA; best friend William Bock of Mount Vernon; and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews who adored “Uncle Gerry” and the delight he brought to family gatherings at the farm and on Cape Cod.

The Hyland family expresses eternal appreciation to Dr. Soren Caffee and the doctors, nurses and caregivers at Inova Mount Vernon Hospital and Paul Spring Retirement Community for their love and devotion. A community celebration of Gerry’s life will be held in the Spring. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the PKD Foundation (<https://pkdcure.org/>) or to the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (<https://veslt.org/>).

OBITUARY

Gerry Hyland

FROM PAGE 4

way to be of service to others, as he was to all of us. I hope you will join me to celebrate him at the 38th Annual Town Meeting on Feb. 8, where we can further honor his life and the town meeting tradition that he started.”

— **Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck**

“Deeply saddened to learn of the passing of longtime Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland. He was a good friend and stalwart advocate for his constituents. He was a consequential public servant who will be missed by all of Fairfax County.”

— **Rep. Gerry Connolly @GerryConnolly**

“He was the quintessential public servant who loved helping people every chance he could get. I’m so glad he was my political mentor and personal friend. He taught me a lot and was always there for me too like when he eulogized my parents at their funeral. God bless you Gerry.”

— **Paul Krizek @KrizekForVA**

“Gerry Hyland, former Fairfax County Supervisor (Mount Vernon District), was like family for me having lost my own. He was like a great uncle or second father. He cared so much for people and was always there to lend a helping hand. Thank you for being

my champion and a champion for all.”

— **Lisa “ERA” Sales @CABlueBlaze**

“Gerry was passionate about his constituents and served on countless regional, statewide, and national organizations. He loved his community and spent decades working to improve the lives of everyone whom he served. Gerry was a leader in every sense, but particularly when it came to providing services to our most vulnerable residents and promoting the revitalization of the Richmond Highway Corridor. He was especially proud of his work protecting the many historical properties in his district. “He always advocated for those who had no voice and those who needed county services and support. Gerry led with his heart.

“Gerry’s quick wit and good humor made him a joy to serve with and made him very effective. He never took himself too seriously and always had a pun ready about any situation he found himself in.

“Most importantly Gerry was a friend and mentor who will be deeply missed. His successes can be seen everywhere in Mount Vernon District and I am so proud the South County Center was renamed the “Gerry Hyland Government Center” in 2019 to honor the decades of service Gerry provided to our residents.’

— **Jeff McKay, Chairman, Board of Supervisors**

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BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Caitlyn Schawalder, proudly displays her chocolate-drenched marshmallow at a previous Chocolate Lovers Festival.

Fairfax City Celebrates 31 Years of Chocolate Festival

Three-day extravaganza runs Jan. 31-Feb. 2.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Mouthwatering chocolate treats in nearly every form imaginable are in store for everyone attending Fairfax City's upcoming Chocolate Lovers Festival. The 31st annual event is set for Friday, Jan. 31, from 6-8 p.m., followed by more tasty treats Saturday, Feb. 1, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, Feb. 2, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Held in the City's Old Town area, it'll feature a variety of fun for all ages. There'll be chocolate candy, cupcakes, cookies, cakes, ice cream and fudge, as well as chocolate fountains and even adult beverages flavored with chocolate.

The signature event is the Taste of Chocolate, where at-

2025 Event Map

Fairfax City
Chocolate Lovers Festival

Map Key:
■ Event Location
P Public Parking

Event Locations

1. Musical Cakes • Old Town Square • 10415 North Street
2. City of Fairfax Regional Library • 10360 North Street
3. Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center • 10209 Main Street
4. Historic Fairfax County Courthouse • 4110 Chain Bridge Road
5. Liquid Chocolate • Old Town Square • 10415 North Street
6. Ratcliffe- Allison-Pozer House • 10386 Main St.
7. Taste of Chocolate • Old Town Hall • 3999 University Drive
8. Construct a Cupcake • Fairfax Ace Hardware • 10310 B Main Street
9. Make-Your-Own Chocolate Bar • Old Town Square • 10415 North St.

BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Chocolate Festival map of event locations.

tendees purchase samples of chocolate treats from two floors of vendors in Old Town Hall. And throughout the festival, children and adults will enjoy a full slate of activities.

There'll be musical performances, cake walks, puppet shows, a make-your-own chocolate bar station, a balloon artist, Chocolate Caper mock trial, children's entertainers, cupcake-decorating, make-and-take crafts, chocolate tours, plus open houses in historic buildings. (See the Schedule of Events at <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/chocolate-lovers-festival/>)

schedule-of-events for specific times, locations and other details).

Liquid Chocolate

Featuring an intriguing assortment of chocolate libations, this year's Liquid Chocolate is set for Friday, Jan. 31, from 6-8 p.m. It's held inside a heated tent on Old Town Square's

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WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL

Three-day Extravaganza Runs Jan. 31-Feb. 2

FROM PAGE 6

upper parking lot, 3999 University Drive. And because it's so much fun, it'll return Saturday, Feb. 1, from noon-5 p.m.

There'll be beverages for all ages, ranging from offerings such as chocolate soda, hot chocolate and milkshakes for children to chocolate wines, chocolate beers and dessert wine pairings for adults. Admission is free; alcohol tastings cost \$2 each, non-alcohol tastings, \$1 each.

In addition, there'll be a special Hot Chocolate Bar on Sunday, Feb. 2, from noon-3 p.m. Attendees will be able to customize their hot cocoa with a variety of toppings and mix-ins, both with and without alcohol.

Taste of Chocolate

The festival's centerpiece, the Taste of Chocolate, will be held Saturday, Feb. 4, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday, Feb. 5, from noon-4 p.m., in Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive (corner of Main Street and University Drive). Strollers may be left on the front porch; a fully accessible entrance is at the door on Main Street.

Sponsored by Sandy Springs Bank, admission to this event is free. Visitors buy pogs for \$1 each and then browse vendors' tables to see the wide array of chocolate treats being offered. They purchase them with the pogs and may buy as many pogs as they want

from roaming volunteers in red aprons.

There's always a wide variety of goodies includes chocolate candies, bars, brownies, cakes and fudge, chocolate-covered strawberries and ice cream. And one of the biggest hits each year are the chocolate fountains into which customers may dip bite-sized treats such as fruit, doughnut holes or marshmallows.

Live Music and a Chocolate Stroll

On Friday, Jan. 31, head to the Sherwood Center at 3740 Blenheim Blvd. to enjoy musical entertainment. The Bonita Lestina Performance Series will present Bootsie and The Groove at 8 p.m. This high-energy band plays a mix of funky rhythms, soulful beats and smooth melodies.

And throughout the festival, people may enjoy a Chocolate Stroll, featuring special chocolate-themed offerings from participating businesses. For example, Forever Enchanted Candle Co. will be selling chocolate-scented candle, and Lucy Loves will have unique items and treats. Paradise Games and Gifts is offering chocolate-themed games, and Commons Fooderie will sell hot chocolate, white chocolate mocha lattes and mocha lattes.

For more festival information, go to <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/chocolate-lovers-festival>.

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.

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia is starting the new year with exciting news for nonprofits and students throughout the region. As of January 8th, applications are now open for the Foundation's 2025 grants and scholarship cycles. Nonprofits are encouraged to apply for funding to support their community-focused initiatives, while students can apply for scholarships to advance their educational goals. Applications for grants will be accepted through February 5, 2025. Visit the Foundation's website at www.cfnova.org.

NEW YEAR! NEW UNDERWEAR!

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer organization that partners with several Title 1 elementary schools across the region. These schools have a high percentage of low-income students whose families have a difficult time providing basic necessities. Assistance League helps fulfill basic needs by providing food and clothing. A series of monthly wish lists helps Assistance League expand the scope of what can be provided. The January Wish List focuses on new underwear, a basic clothing item that is greatly needed and frequently requested by the schools the organization serves. As the New Year starts the community is invited to make a contribution from this month's New Year! New Underwear! wish list. There is a variety of colorful multi-pair underwear packages for boys and girls in all sizes. Use this link: <https://tiny.alnv.org/undies> to make your selection and help the schools replenish their supply of this important necessity that many children need. Please select Assistance League of Northern Virginia as the mailing address to assure timely delivery.

HOMELESS SHELTER LIST

During the winter months when low temperatures pose a greater risk for homeless people living outdoors, additional sheltering resources are available. NVRC's information on regional hypothermia shelters was updated on December 3, 2024. NVRC's annual update to the Suburban Virginia Homeless Shelter List describes the shelters throughout the region and the requirements for participation in their programs. Visit the website: <https://www.novaregion.org/DocumentCenter/View/11735/Suburban-Virginia-Winter-Shelters-December-3-2024-PDF>

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 18

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YEARS OF SERVICE

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Virginia Legislature Begins Work

One of the more bizarre starts ever

BY SENATOR SCOTT A. SUROVELL

The first week of the 2025 regular session of the General Assembly which began on Jan. 7 was one of the more bizarre starts I have ever experienced.

While Fairfax County got around eight inches of snow, Richmond had three inches, but the snow managed to take down the entire public water system for six days. Two backup systems failed along with a switch and several pumps. This forced General Assembly leaders to gavel in on the first day of the session and then recess until Jan. 13.

While the lack of water meant a slow start, we have plenty to do. I am carrying approximately 25 bills and about 30 budget amendments, and have responsibilities as Senate Majority Leader, Chairman of the Courts of Justice Committee, the General Government Subcommittee of the Finance and Appropriations Committee and the Cannabis Subcommittee of the Rehabilitation and Social Services Committee.

For now, I'll single out several of my bills that have directly impact our area. First, we continue to see many collisions on the south George Washington Memorial Parkway ("the Parkway") at Belle Haven Road and Belview Boulevard. I have received numerous complaints about excessive speeds and a lack of enforcement by the United States Park Police, especially in the wake



of the Bijan Ghaisar shooting. I have introduced a bill to authorize the Virginia State Police and Fairfax County Police Department to conduct traffic enforcement on the Parkway and to allow those agencies to install photo speed monitoring devices.

A second bill I have proposed addresses access to health care facilities. People entering and leaving a women's health clinic in our community have experienced significant harassment. My bill requires anyone picketing a health-care facility to stay at least 40 feet away from the main entrance and to refrain from obstructing access or leafleting patients in that zone.

This is similar to the state's rules for polling places.

Holding the Line on Property Taxes

In 2016, MGM opened a new casino at National Harbor and announced that one-third of their revenue would come from Virginia customers. I wrote a column in the Richmond Times Dispatch arguing that Virginia needs to embrace casino gaming or else we would be exporting hundreds of millions of Virginia tax dollars to Maryland, West Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, states that have casinos. Last year, the National Harbor casino grossed \$850 million in tax revenue for Maryland and Prince George's County. One-third of those dollars came from Virginia.

I have introduced legislation to authorize the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to put a referendum on the ballot to allow Fairfax County voters to vote on a casino in Tysons Corner.

Experts estimate that it could generate at least \$100 million for Fairfax County which equals about three percent of Fairfax County's current real estate taxes or about \$300 per year Fairfax County household.

For too long, Fairfax County has relied on real estate taxes for revenue and since at least 1970, the county has attempted to diversify its tax base by attracting more commercial office space, but commercial space valuations are cratering due to remote work. This is in part why Fairfax County now has the highest real estate tax rate in all of Virginia (except for Falls Church). This project would take pressure off your real estate taxes.

A casino would be only five percent of the entire floor space because the bill also requires the project to include a 1.5-million-square-foot entertainment complex and convention center. Fairfax County is larger than eight states and does not have a place to host 1,000+ person conventions, events that can also generate significant revenue.

The project will create 2,000 union construction jobs and 5,000 permanent union casino jobs, opening doors for non-college-educated and other workers to both live and work in Fairfax County.

Every year since I was elected in 2009, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has asked for authority to diversify their revenue sources. Two years ago, the General Assembly gave the county the same taxing authority as cities. This bill is one more step to help keep your taxes down.

Please email me at scott@scottsurovell.org if you have any feedback. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

Reporting from Richmond

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

Greetings from a very chilly and busy week down here in Richmond at the General Assembly. While today (Wednesday) is only the third day we have had legislative business in the Capitol due to last week's water crisis, today still counts as the eighth day of session, so we have a lot to catch up on in a very short amount of time!

Bills introduced by my colleagues are slowly being referred to their respective committees and subcommittees to be scheduled for hearings, and I have my very first bill up to be heard today, HB 2077 which aims to add Virginia's federal and state recognized tribes as entities eligible to receive grants from the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund.

Now that we are officially underway, I thought it would be a great opportunity to write about a few of my legislative initiatives introduced this session.

I reintroduced the Virginia's

Great Outdoors Act (HB 2059) which I championed last year. This legislation directs at least \$200 million from recordation tax revenues and at least \$30 million of bond proceeds to support funding to our underfunded Virginia state trails, parks, battlefields, and other public land, protect farm and forest land at risk of development, as well as include a "Get Outdoors" fund to support communities working to increase their access to outdoor spaces.

Turning to labor efforts, I have reintroduced a bill to expand the eligibility for workers' compensation to include injuries or diseases caused by repetitive and sustained physical stressors. As the only state in the nation without this coverage, this legislation will fill the current gaps in worker compensation eligibility to ensure greater financial security to Virginia residents and their families injured in the workplace. I am also working with Virginia's firefighters and law enforcement officers to expand workers' compensation benefits

related to anxiety disorder or depressive disorder from one year to two years, and benefits due to post-traumatic stress disorder from 52 weeks to 500 weeks. This expansion will provide our frontline disaster responders with the care and support they and their families need while recovering from traumatic workplace situations.

SEE KRIZEK, PAGE 18

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Property Near Kingstowne Slated for 10-Acre Park

Banks family land has local roots but some aren't happy with plan.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

On the eastern edge of Kingstowne, a piece of property once owned by the Banks family is the center of local attention recently. A Fairfax County Park Authority plan is emerging to demolish the home and push forward, turning the site into a county park.

Some people are concerned that the park authority might plan to include a dog park on the property. The large Banks home has been vacant for many years and some think that a dog park might go where the house is located once it's demolished, but the dog park has been removed from the plan.

The Franconia Museum posted information about the property, urging supporters to contact local elected officials to save the property but it's unclear what the immediate plans entail. "The FCPA is planning to turn the house lot into an off leash dog park," said the Museum. Many on social media aren't happy with that concept but the park authority says the off-leash dog park has been taken off the plan.

"So they want to tear down a historic house to build a pooping lot?" asked one.

"So why is the house important?" asked another.

Former Hayfield Farm resident Jean Mulroy Martelli chimed in and said she's read up about the property and it doesn't meet the guidelines or requirements for the historic structure designation to possibly save the house.

According to a FCPA slideshow, dating back to May 2011, the 10-acre site was purchased by the Park Authority in 2001 from Mr. Banks who survived his wife. In 2005 the park was dedicated and a monument sign was installed by the family. There is a map with the park divided into an open zone, a managed natural area with a stream restoration zone, a leisure zone and an activity zone which is where the current house is now. The park plan includes a playground, picnic facilities, a meadow with the stream running through it and courts, parking and the off-leash dog area.

According to FCPA spokesperson Ben Boxer, the Park Authority has been working to develop the project plan to proceed with implementation of the Master Plan.

"We have also been communicating with members of the family along the way on how to share the Banks' family story on the homestead and will keep the lines of communication open," Boxer added. Those details are not yet finalized, but the FCPA will be sharing that information with the community as it becomes available, Boxer said.

Banks Auto Parts

It all started in about 1940 when Olander Banks Sr. started emerging as a business



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

entrepreneur in Alexandria, selling ice at 4 a.m., dabbling in real estate, and opening the Zero Cab taxi service in Alexandria. Then he opened Banks Auto Parts at 718 North Henry Street in Old Town, and a bigger auto parts place out in Woodbridge.

In 1957, Olander Banks and his wife Margaret bought the property off Old Telegraph Road and built the home shortly after where they raised nine children.

"In August 2001, the Fairfax County Park Authority was given the land for recreation," their website read. The only access to the land is off Old Telegraph Road and it's bordered by a line of trees so it's easily overlooked by passing traffic.

The old Banks house dates back to the 1950s.

A calendar for Banks Auto Parts which started in Alexandria but expanded into Prince William County.



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13805 Smoketown Road Woodbridge, Virginia
780-7510 339-5700 494-3156
1 Mile West of I-95 at Dale City Exit

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Olander Banks Sr. working in the office.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Martha Wescoat-Andes and dad Jim Wescoat with his Quilt of Valor.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

From left, Martha Wescoat-Andes photographs her dad receiving his quilt from Madonna Rabatin.

Local Marine Veteran Receives Quilt of Valor

Jim Wescoat, 103, is honored before friends and family.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Jim Wescoat was born on Dec. 7, 1921, in Atlantic City, N.J. Exactly 20 years later, after Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941, he joined the Marine Corps.

Now 103, he's the only Marine WWII veteran living at The Woodlands, a retirement community in Fairfax. And on Jan. 10, he received a patriotic quilt there from the Quilts of Valor Foundation (QOV), which makes quilts for military veterans.

"He's given a lot to his country, and we believe he's most deserving of this award," said Madonna Rabatin, the foundation's Virginia coordinator. "It's an expression of gratitude from a grateful nation."

She was among the women who together made his quilt. And her sister, Toni Rabatin, also with the foundation, explained its origin and purpose. A national organization, it was founded in 2003 by a Blue Star mom, Catherine Roberts.

"With a son deployed in Iraq as a gunner atop a Humvee, she had a vision of a post-deployed warrior in the middle of the night, struggling with his war demons, while sitting on his bed, wrapped in a quilt," said Toni Rabatin. "The quilt not only comfort-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA WESCOAT-ANDES
Jim Wescoat in his 20s, as a WWII Marine.

ed the soldier but warded off the demons. [Thus], Quilts of Valor was founded with the message, 'Quilts Equal Healing.'"

"The foundation's mission is to cover active-duty service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor," she continued. "While many bear the physical scars of battle, many others have been [affected] in less-visible ways by conflicts past and present." Then,



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA WESCOAT-ANDES
The Wescoats on their wedding day, June 30, 1951.

addressing Wescoat directly, she said they'd come to honor "your service, sacrifice and commitment to our Constitution. We're indebted and thankful to you for taking the oath to defend our freedom."

Since its inception, Quilts of Valor has garnered more than 11,000 volunteer quilt-makers and awarded more than 400,000 quilts worldwide. Rabatin said each quilt is created with love, care and gratitude. And

she told Wescoat, "Your Quilt of Valor comes from the hearts of many thankful women and men. Through this quilt, you'll forever be in our hearts."

Noting that a quilt has three layers, she said the top features many colors, shapes and fabrics representing the many communities and individuals in the organization.

Jim Wescoat, 103, Is Honored

FROM PAGE 10

The batting – the filling in the center – provides warmth. “It represents our hope that this quilt will bring warmth, comfort, peace and healing to you who receive it,” said Rabatin. “The backing is the strength supporting the other layers and represents the recipient’s strength and the support of your family, our community and our nation. And each stitch holding the layers together represents love, gratitude and, sometimes, the tears of the maker.”

Then, as her sister Madonna wrapped Wescoat’s quilt around him, Rabatin said, “With our deepest appreciation, we say, ‘Thank you for your service and welcome home.’”

Next, fellow Woodlands resident Ron Gallier read a poem he’d written about Wescoat, calling him “Woodlands’ pride and joy and every resident’s friend. It’s not to his age that I raise my glass, but to his incomparable touch of class.”

All the residents were gathered for the ceremony, and the guests included one of Wescoat’s daughters, Martha Wescoat-Andes of Fairfax. With her beaming proudly beside him, he told everyone, “This is incredible. I am so very, very thankful. The thoughtfulness and effort you put into this is outstanding and very much appreciated.

“I must tell you, though – in the service, I got more than I gave. I was a high-school dropout when I enlisted in the Marine Corps. In the military, I acquired a little bit of self-confidence. And when I got out [in 1945], I went back to high school and they said, ‘Yeah, we remember you, but we’ll try it again.’ They said if I did all my courses, they’d give me a diploma – the lack of which cost me dearly during my service.”

Besides being grateful to finally obtain his diploma, Wescoat said he was also thankful for that experience because, while on campus, he met “the gal who became my wife, the mother of my four children and my wonderful inspiration every day, still today. I appreciate all that’s been done for me and helped me, but I can’t find the words, except to say, thank you and God bless.”

A pianist then played the Marine Corps Hymn, and Army Col. (ret.) Jim Miller, also a resident, spoke about Wescoat. He said Wescoat served aboard the USS Denver during WWII.

“As the Marines landed and took the Japanese islands, one by one, and Guadalcanal, the Navy provided an armada of ships – including the Denver – that shelled these islands before the Marines landed,” explained Miller. “I was a little boy then. But Jim [Wescoat] was a fighter, and I’m awful proud of him. Jim, thank you so much for your service, and I’m so happy you’re here with us and we can be friends.”

After the ceremony, Wescoat and his daughter told the Connection further details about his life. On the Denver, he said, he was a buck sergeant directing the ship’s 40-millimeter, anti-aircraft guns. He operated the equipment that lined them up to shoot at the enemy.

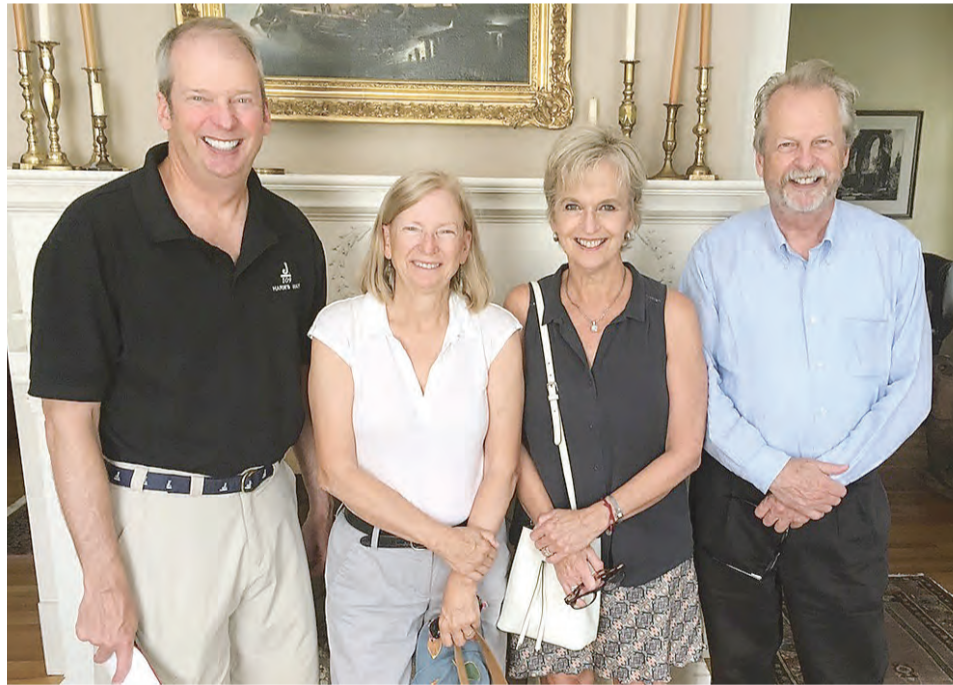
But his ship was eventually torpedoed. “I



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
WWII Marine veteran Jim Wescoat wearing his Quilt of Valor.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA WESCOAT-ANDES
Jim and Bonna Wescoat celebrating his 100th birthday on Dec. 7, 2021.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
The Wescoat siblings in September 2018 (from left) Andy, Bonna, Martha and Jim.

was in the boiler room, and we were in Japanese waters and vulnerable,” said Wescoat. “They could have sunk us but didn’t. We were towed back to Guadalcanal and then to the States for repairs and then returned to the war.”

He left the Marines in November 1945, two months after the war ended. And while getting his high-school diploma, he met his future wife, Bonna – then a college student – when she returned to the school to visit a former mentor, who introduced them. He later attended UVA on the GI Bill, graduating around 1950 with a degree in engineering.

Wescoat then worked for Esso, Hess and Mobil in their oil refineries. “I was a safety and security inspector and went to all the

refineries around the world that Mobil had,” he said. Afterward, he was with Mobil for decades as an engineer.

Along the way, he and Bonna married and had four children – Jim, Bonna, Martha and Andy – raising them in both Texas and New Jersey. After the children were grown, Mobil moved its headquarters to Fairfax in the late 1980s, so the Wescoats spent the next 30 years in Oakton. They eventually had eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild and were married for more than 70 years until Bonna died, two years ago, at age 93.

After retiring from Mobil, Wescoat served his community as a volunteer. In Fairfax City, he helped the homeless by working for several years in The Lamb Center’s kitchen.

And at Waple’s Mill Elementary in Oakton, he taught children how to build bridges out of cardboard during recess.

He’s also remained close with his family members. “He’s important to everyone in our family and is very much in touch with his grandchildren,” said Wescoat-Andes. “He and my mother were a team, and he’s a central figure in our family.” Re what she believes contributed to his longevity, she replied, “He’s a good and thoughtful person, led a good life and did good things for people.”

As for her dad’s Quilt of Valor, she said, “It’s such an honor. I quilt, so I know the amount of work and effort that goes into it.” Pleased with the ceremony at The Woodlands – which included a luncheon and cake – Wescoat-Andes said, “The Marines and other military veterans here have a strong community, which he really enjoys. They get together and support each other. And The Woodlands put on a beautiful event today – they really celebrate their residents.”

“I’ve lived here about six years,” said Wescoat. “It’s a nice place with friendly staff and residents. I also like the concerts and other entertainment we have here.” Regarding the quilt, he said, “So many people are much more deserving than I am, in terms of their contribution to the war effort.”

Still, he was happy to be recognized with such a special ceremony. “I’m overwhelmed,” said Wescoat. “It was a wonderful effort by some very thoughtful people, and I’ll treasure the memories and the quilt.”



Jim Sullivan nominated Wescoat to receive his Quilt of Valor. To make a nomination, go to <https://www.govf.org/nominations-awards/>.

Sculpting the Snow That Wouldn't Go



A snowman and his snow-dog greeted walkers who braved icy trails in Laurel Hill Park.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Northern Virginians are not used to seeing snow accumulations in recent years. However, the snow that fell earlier this month has remained with us due to the prolonged freezing temperatures, and has not been all about slippery roads, icy sidewalks, and inconvenience. Many found the snow a cold delight that brought a smile that could be sculpted into a demonstra-

ble expression of love for snow.

Typically found in cold, snowy regions, snowmen in the U.S. often have three round spheres, representing a head, middle, and lower torso. Sticks serve as arms; in more recent years, stones have replaced less available coal, for eyes; a carrot is a common nose. Some may be dressed in hat and scarf, but going unclad in public is acceptable in snowman culture.

Some of these typical attributes were adopted as a result of the 1950s popular song "Frosty the Snowman"

by Jack Rollins and Steve Nelson. Although origins of the snowman are unknown, references have been found to them dating back to the Middle Ages.

History records that Michelangelo was commissioned to build one for his patron in 1494.

Area snow artists have fashioned a variety of forms and sizes. If you are up for a challenge next snowfall, be aware the record to beat is a 122-foot-1-inch behemoth named Olympia. It's been held by Bethel Maine since 2008.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

This snowman had a lasting smile as cold temperatures followed the area's recent heavy snowfall.



Devoted snow sculptor Richard Cotton, of Springfield, molded his "Love" for snow (for more on Cotton's past creations and other past snowman efforts, see The Connection, Jan 24-30, 2024, pg 10-11).



PHOTO BY CHRIS DARLING

The Olympia snowman in Bethel Maine, built in 2008, still holds the world record for the largest.

Bill Paves Way for Fairfax Casino Referendum



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Sen. Scott Surovell (D-34)



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Sen. Stella Pekarsky (D-39)



SCREENSHOT FACEBOOK

Sen. Jennifer B. Boysko (D-38)

Coalition seeks to 'kill the bill;' sponsors say Fairfax County needs the money for schools and property tax relief.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A 50,000-member Facebook group called the No Fairfax Casino Coalition is out to “kill the bill,” SB982 — Casino gaming; eligible host localities in the Virginia Senate.

Prefiled Jan. 7 and offered Jan. 8, SB982 as of Saturday, Jan. 18 is referred to the Committee on General Laws and Technology, subcommittee gaming.

The bill would authorize a process by which voters in Fairfax County could eventually vote on a local ballot referendum on a casino development. The bill does not authorize a casino development.

The chairperson of the “No Fairfax Casino Coalition, Lynne Mulston said on Saturday, Jan. 18, that a previous Senate Bill, 675 in 2024 Casino gaming; eligible host localities by David Marsden (D-35) “put a bulls-eye for a casino directly over Tysons.”

Last year, the Virginia Senate subcommittee voted on Feb. 2 to “continue” Senate Bill 675 until 2025, essentially killing the bill. The reasoning was to allow for more in-depth projections regarding a potential casino in Northern Virginia.

SB982| 2025 does not explicitly name Fairfax County as “the eligible host locality.” Still, the land use description in subdivision A 6 can only refer to Fairfax County, specifically Tysons.

In the last five days, beginning on Wednesday, Jan. 14, with a press conference in Richmond concerning SB 982 hosted by Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D), the bill elicited

ed bomb-shell statements by state and county elected officials opposed to it. It strengthened calls for action by the No Fairfax Casino Coalition.

“The developer (Comstock) has made some eye-popping political contributions, over a million dollars,” Sen. Jennifer Boysko said at the press conference. “Arm twisting has begun in full force to build political support.”

Boysko said she is an avid union supporter but warned that there are “no guarantees” to developer claims that its casino will bring 5,000 union jobs.

“The developer doesn’t have the authority to make this guarantee to the potential worker,” she said.

Boysko pointed out that the developer proposing the casino project (Comstock) breaks promises. “The developer pulled out of a commitment in the Town of Herndon despite signing an MOU in 2017. As recently as this past August, they met with the town and reported that everything was on track and good to start the redevelopment. But then, after the election, they pulled the plug and said, ‘Nope, we’re backing out of the deal.’”

Boysko clarified that SB982 is written for Tysons and one specific area in Tysons. The legislation “ties the hands of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and infringes on their land use authority.”

“Every local official in the Commonwealth of Virginia needs to worry about this bill, because this is a new and frightening development in terms of state involvement in land use,” Supervisor Walter Alcorn said at the press conference.

“Anybody that tries to tell you that Tysons is failing, they don’t

know what they’re talking about. This is not a failing community. This is a community, as Sen. Boysko mentioned, is part of the economic engine driving Fairfax County and driving the Commonwealth,” Alcorn said.

Supervisor James Bierman (D-Dranesville) said, “I know a bad deal when I see it.”

Linda Colbert, mayor of the Town of Vienna, said, “Not a casino. ... It will hurt families. It will hurt individuals. It’s addictive.”

On Jan. 7, 2025, the Senate referred SB 982 to the Committee on General Laws and Technology (GL&T). On Jan. 20, 2025, the Senate assigned it to a subcommittee: Gaming.

The Chief Patron of SB 982 is Scott Surovell (D-34), who represents portions of Fairfax County roughly following U.S. Route 1, Mount Vernon, Kingstowne and Lorton. The Chief Co-Patrons are Sen. Lamont Bagby (D-14), who represents parts of Henrico County and Richmond City; Todd Pillion (R-6), whose district is in southwest Virginia and parts of Henrico County; and Sen. Stella Pekarsky (D-39), who represents western Fairfax County. Pekarsky served as Chair of the Fairfax County School Board before being elected to the Senate in 2023.

None of the patrons of SB982 represent Tysons, a census-designated place in Fairfax County located in Northern Virginia. It is minutes from Washington, D.C., and has direct access to Metro’s Silver Line. The county sees it as its future downtown.

According to Virginia.gov, “SB982 adds Fairfax County to the list of localities eligible to host a casino in the Commonwealth and provides that any proposed site for a casino gaming establishment considered by Fairfax County shall be (i) located within one-quarter of a mile of an existing station on the Metro Silver Line, (ii) part of a coordinated mixed-use project development consisting of no less

Comments by the Chief Co-Patrons of the “Entertainment District Bill”

Comments from the Jan. 14, 2025 Release: Senate of Virginia, Scott A. Surovell. Comments may be edited for space.

Sen. Stella Pekarsky (D-Fairfax): “My constituents are tired of rising property taxes hitting their pocketbooks, while our schools remain chronically underfunded and our teachers are underpaid. An entertainment district will generate hundreds of millions of tax revenue, dollars that can be used to relieve the pressure being felt by homeowners in Fairfax County, while also generating thousands of jobs.”

Sen. Lamont Bagby (D-Richmond): “I’m proud to join this effort to amend the historic legislation patron by Senator Lucas in 2020 to include a casino in Northern Virginia. These projects have delivered huge revenues across the Commonwealth to repair aging school facilities.” Bagby serves as the Chairman of the Black Caucus

Sen. Todd Pillion (R-Abington): “Virginia cannot continue to lose hundreds of millions in tax revenue to Maryland. The positive impacts of this bill will reach far and wide across the Commonwealth helping to fund our important priorities in keeping our taxes low.”

Majority Leader Sen. Scott Surovell (D): “We are excited to get this bill passed and for the board of supervisors to begin a transparent process that will select the operator and site for this historic opportunity.”

What Happened to Two Other Casino Bills?

SB675 in 2024 and SB1543 in 2023

On Feb. 1, 2024, Supervisor Walter Alcorn and others testified opposing SB675, Casino gaming; eligible host localities, introduced by Sen. David Marsden (D-35). Marsden’s bill provided a path forward for a casino in Fairfax County through a referendum.

On Feb. 6, 2024, the Senate subcommittee continued SB675 to 2025 in Finance and Appropriations voting (13-Y 2-N), essentially killing the bill for the year. Developer Comstock targeted Fairfax County as a site for its vision of a casino establishment with a hotel, conference center, and arts venue.

A year earlier, in 2023, Marsden introduced similar legislation, SB1543, allowing casino gaming along the Metro Silver Line. Assigned to the Senate’s Committee on General Laws and Technology (GL&T) subcommittee: Gaming on Jan. 24, 2023, and on Jan. 25, 2023, at the request of the bill’s patron, SB1543 was “Stricken in General Laws and Technology in a vote o (15-Y 0-N),” according to LIS, Virginia’s Legislative Information System.

than 1.5 million square feet, (iii) within two miles of a regional enclosed mall containing not less than 1.5 million square feet of gross building area, and (iv) outside of the Interstate 495 Beltway.”

The No Fairfax Casino Coalition is an advocacy group fueled by the determination of its volunteer members and supporters.

The group’s online petition reads, “Rather than help us, a casino would hurt the county’s economic bottom line, harm local businesses, increase gridlock and public safety problems, lower property values, and encourage risky behaviors, while forever changing the character of our community.”

The coalition succeeded through lobbying and action to stop two recent casino gaming eligible host legislation. They are SB675 2024 — continued to 2025 in Finance

and Appropriations (13-Y 2-N); and SB1543 2023, — stricken at request of Patron in General Laws and Technology (15-Y 0-N).

Monday, Jan. 20, at 4 p.m. is the sole opportunity for people to testify advocating for or against SB982. No Fairfax Casino Coalition is marshaling allies for its planned 2025 assault operation against Surovell’s bill, SB982 casino gaming, eligible host localities.

Time matters because Crossover 2025 is on Tuesday, Feb. 4. Crossover is the last day for each house to act on legislation, including SB982; however, each house can act on budget bills after that date.

Jan. 18, one of the allies of the No Fairfax Casino Coalition, Fairfax County Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill), posted on X @WalterAlcornFFX, “My cards are all on the table: NO CASINO.”



Billy Bates



Stacy Hall



Rachel McQuillen



Rick Herrington and Anthony Amos

Fairfax City Council and Mayor Are Sworn In

FROM PAGE 3

Afterward, Rick Herrington, secretary of the City's Electoral Board, presented framed certificates of their election to the mayor and each new Councilmember. Then City Clerk Melissa Shinaberry administered the Oath of Office to them. Next, Read thanked Miller for her many years of service to Fairfax and for her advice to its leaders about working as a team for the City's benefit.

"That's really important because we up here are your neighbors," Read told the audience. "We're residents and taxpayers, we travel on the City's roads, use the parks and go to the restaurants, the same as everyone else. But we decided to step forward to become your local government. And it's citizen government – we don't have a democracy unless ordinary people serve in this capacity."

"And as Janice said, it's not always easy to do that – or to find the compromise, wisdom or the best way forward," continued Read. "But we've all taken an Oath of Office to do that together. And I appreciate every, single one of my colleagues on the dais because I know they come here with the intention of doing the best job they possibly can."

"So remember that when you're not always loving what we do. Try to love the people, even though maybe you don't love the decision. Try to love us the way we hope to love our community and do the best we can for the next 717 days that we're together as a team."

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



With Billy Bates and Stacey Hardy-Chandler looking on, Catherine Read addresses the audience.



Rick Herrington and Stacey Hardy-Chandler



Taking their Oath of Office are (from left) Anthony Amos, Billy Bates, Stacy Hall, Catherine Read, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Rachel McQuillen and Tom Peterson.



Rick Herrington and Tom Peterson

Notorious Norovirus Stalks Region

Frequent handwashing with soap and water could help avoid the scourge.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

It is winter, and a new strain of norovirus called GII.17[P17] is spreading across the U.S. including the northeast.

MedStar Health Urgent Care in our region is experiencing an uptick in norovirus across its 33 clinics, says its spokesperson. Norovirus is highly contagious, spreading easily from person to person on contaminated surfaces, in food and water, and can be airborne.

The CDC reports that most norovirus outbreaks occur because people do not wash their hands after going to the bathroom. Also, the CDC reports that foods commonly involved in norovirus outbreaks are leafy greens, fresh fruits, and shellfish (such as oysters).

See <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/outbreak-basics/> to learn more about norovirus the geographical source of certain oysters that the FDA is currently warning restaurants and retailers about not serving or selling and consumers not eating.

The virus can cause sudden and severe vomiting and diarrhea, known as "acute gastroenteritis." While not everyone who presents with symptoms is tested, MedStar Health Urgent Care data shows norovirus

cases are up 5-10 percent over last year as of Jan. 13, according to its spokesperson.

Jon Gonella, a MedStar physician's assistant, has 25 years of experience treating patients with vomiting and diarrhea and diagnosing and managing viral illnesses, particularly norovirus.

Gonella shared details about the incubation period for norovirus, symptoms, duration, virus transmission, and how to prevent exposure. This is important because hand sanitizer alone will not prevent norovirus from spreading. It lives on "fomites," inanimate objects that can transmit disease-causing viruses and germs from one person to another. Examples are doorknobs, countertops, furniture, school desks, phones, clothing, toys and eating utensils.

Gonella explained that norovirus most commonly spreads to these surfaces through the fecal-oral route. "An infected person sheds the virus through their feces," Gonella said. "An example would be someone who has the virus and uses the bathroom, then touches the door on their way out of the bathroom. The next person who comes in touches that door or touches a counter where the virus is, and then they acquire it that way. Then that whole process starts over again."

Norovirus can be airborne to some degree.

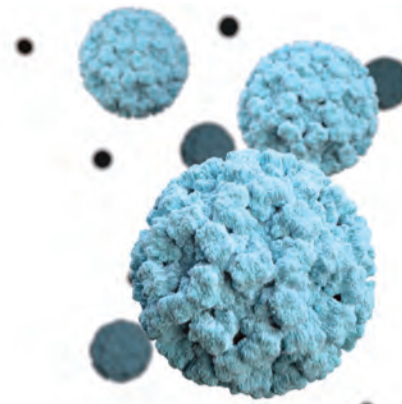


PHOTO CREDIT ILLUSTRATOR: ALISSA ECKERT, MS
Based on electron microscopic (EM) imagery, this illustration provides a three-dimensional (3D) graphical representation of a number of norovirus virions, set against a white background.

Gonella said that when an infected person is vomiting, the viral particles can spread through the air. For example, a parent holds the basin for the child to vomit. Understanding the airborne spread is important because only a tiny viral particle burden is necessary to transmit the virus.

According to Gonella, the concern with norovirus, or any of the viruses that cause vomiting, is dehydration. The impact can differ among age groups, with children and older people more susceptible to dehydration.

Any changes in mental status, such as the patient becoming lethargic or less alert, are

red flags to take the sick person to a medical office or emergency care. "If someone's had repeated vomiting or diarrhea, they may become more pale, more what we call pallor. Their skin color may change," said Gonella.

Asked how people clean up the vomiting and diarrhea mess, Gonella said, "Norovirus is somewhat resistant to our typical alcohol-or chlorine-based sanitizer. A lot of the hand sanitizers that we use are alcohol-based, and norovirus is resistant to that. We recommend washing hands with good old soap and water. We recommend a chlorine bleach water mix to clean up a norovirus vomiting episode." He added that contaminated surfaces should be disinfected with bleach, 5-25 tablespoons of household bleach per gallon of water.

He added the virus's incubation period, is 24 to 48 hours, and symptoms typically last 2 to 4 days. There is no antiviral treatment for norovirus, and the focus should be maintaining hydration and a bland diet.

Gonella emphasizes the importance of washing fruits and vegetables to prevent norovirus transmission, as well as hand washing.

Individuals suspected of having norovirus should not prepare food for others until at least two days after their symptoms resolve.

The CDC reports infecting someone can take as few as 10 viral particles. Norovirus causes an average of 900 deaths annually mostly among older adults, 109,000 hospitalizations, and 19 million to 21 million cases in the U.S. each year.

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ENTERTAINMENT

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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.



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

NOW THRU MAY 2025

"Magic Boots" by local artist **Jean Jinho Kim**. At Tysons Corner Center, located on the upper level between Lucid and Michael Kors. Experience the vibrant, abstract boot sculptures by South Korea artist, Jean Kim. The artworks represent the complexities of life's choices and challenges while honoring the resilience of women, particularly inspired by her mother.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 22

Senior Movie Day featuring, **"Nyad."** 10 a.m. At Movie theater at Reston Town Center. Reston Association presents Senior Movie Day. Join us on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided, and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie. Free for 55-plus.

THURSDAY/JAN. 23

Lunar New Year Celebration. 5:30-7 p.m. At the Jim Scott Community Center, 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax. Supervisor Palchik is delighted to invite you to her inaugural Lunar New Year Open House. It will be a joyous event honoring the cultural heritage of our Asian communities! In addition to delicious food, the event will feature an orchestral performance by Oakton High School and a Chinese calligraphy demonstration from our community members.

THURSDAY/JAN. 23

Silkroad Ensemble Lecture/Demonstration. 2 p.m. At Center for the Arts at George Mason University, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. This special event, co-hosted by the Center for the Arts and the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution, features a musical demonstration by Silkroad Ensemble musicians, followed by a panel discussion moderated by Dewberry School of Music Professor June Huang. Topics include cultural understanding along the Silk Road, cross-cultural collaboration, and music as a tool for social impact. The event concludes with a Q&A.

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. 24-25, 31, FEB. 1

"Rumors" by Neil Simon. 8 p.m. Matinee at 2 p.m. on Sundays, Jan. 26 and Feb. 2. Presented by Vienna Theatre Company. This comedy intertwines mystery, deception and gossip that'll have you on the edge your seat and laughing the whole time. Tickets are \$16 each and can be purchased online at www.viennatheatre.com/register or in person at Vienna Community Center, located at 120 Cherry St. SE, Vienna, Va.

FRIDAY/JAN. 24

America at a Global Crossroads. 1-3 p.m. Reston Regional Library. Discussion of the U.S. foreign policy debate led by Deborah McCarthy, former U.S. ambassador to Lithuania. Great Decisions: America at a Global Crossroads - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home

FRIDAY/JAN. 24

Friday Night Flights: Petit Verdot. 7-8:30 p.m. At The Winery at Bull Run, Centreville. Take a "flight" around the globe during this guided tasting experience of Petit Verdot, led by General Manager & Virginia Winemaker, Dean Gruenburg. Your ticket includes the curated six-wine tasting with a wine educator, a tasting passport with detailed descriptions of the



The Village of Leesburg Ice Festival takes place on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025 off Route 7 in Leesburg.

wines and their origin, and small bites to enjoy during the event.

FRIDAY/JAN. 24

Italian Food and Live Music. 6:30-9:30 p.m. At Maggiano's Little Italy Restaurant in Tysons Galleria. Hosted by Assistance League of Northern Virginia. In addition to enjoying a wonderful family-style Italian dinner, you will be entertained by a live vocalist and instrumentalist. It will be an evening of fun and a night to remember! Tickets for the event are \$100 each and can be purchased by copying the link: <https://givebutter.com/hYFtdc> Your participation in this fundraiser will help Assistance

League of Northern Virginia continue to provide programs that support local children in need, with food, clothing and books. Visit the website: aln.v.org

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, Jurassic 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

Give Together, MLK Jr. Week of Service. At James Lee Community Center, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church. In honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the spirit of service he represented, Volunteer Fairfax presents Give Together, an in-person day of service for families, businesses, and youth. Service projects completed will benefit local nonprofits and community members in the Northern Virginia region. This experience allows children and teens to witness firsthand how impactful and valuable volunteering can be. Give Together is a free event and open event to the public. Visit www.volunteerfairfax.org for more information.

SATURDAY/JAN. 25

AIA Competition: South County High School Combined Drumline and Winterguard. 11 a.m. At South Lakes High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. First performance at 12 pm. Cost is \$15/adults; \$10/children; under age 5 free. Admission supports the SOCO HS Band Program.

SATURDAY/JAN. 25

Ice Festival. Noon to 4 p.m. At Village of Leesburg, Route 7. Award-winning ice carvers will be on the property on Saturday morning to begin working on their creations with official festivities kicking off at noon. The public will be allowed to watch the carvers work and then vote on their favorite carvings. The best time to see the carvers in action is between noon and 2 p.m. The event will feature free ice skating (skates provided) and great photo opportunities around the center. Other activities include a s'mores station, a face painter, and more. Grab a drink to go through Village at Leesburg's Drink in the Good Life program and enjoy exclusive deals and promotions throughout the Village. Visit www.villageatleesburg.com.

SATURDAY/JAN. 25

Benefit Magic Show. 5:45 to 9 p.m. At Centreville Moose Lodge #2168, www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

ENTERTAINMENT



A Concert of Broadway Favorites will be held on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax.



An Orleans Express Concert will take place on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025 at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Burke.

3529 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. The Society of American Magicians (S.A.M 252) presents "A Night of Magic," fundraiser to benefit the Centreville Moose charities. Tickets include a taco bar from 5:45 to 6:45; performance begins at 7 p.m. Features 12 professional and amateur magicians in a full-length performance. Cost: \$20 in advance until January 22, \$25 at the door

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

13th Annual Chocolate Festival. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At McLean

Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Rotary Club of McLean is hosting the 13th Annual Chocolate Festival featuring 12 regional chocolate vendors. Admission is \$3 for individuals aged 4 and up, which includes a tote bag. The proceeds generated from this festival will contribute to various community projects championed by the Rotary Club of McLean. The projects supported by the festival include scholarships for graduating high school seniors, books for Timber Lane Elementary School, McLean Project for the Arts, playground equipment at the Fairfax Children's Center, hygiene products for school-age girls, medical equipment and clean water initiatives in several African countries. The funds will also support global initiatives such as eradicating Polio abroad, medical needs in Central America, food insecurity across the globe, helping find abused single moms a safe place to live, and many other community projects. More information at www.mclean-chocolatefestival.org

SUNDAY/JAN. 26

Charcuterie Building Workshop.

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. At The Winery at Bull Run, Centreville. Learn to create a charcuterie display just in time for your Super Bowl Party! Sip on delicious wines and mimosas while learning to craft a beautiful charcuterie board with private instructor, Naomi (The Grazing Board VA). Your ticket includes one glass of mimosa or wine from our tasting menu upon arrival.

SUNDAY/JAN. 26

Orleans Express Concert. 7-8:15 p.m. At St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 6509 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Orleans Express (formerly Dixieland Express) has been delighting audiences since it was founded in 1999 to continue the creative sounds of early and mid-twentieth-century jazz. Known as traditional jazz or just plain "Dixieland", the music is straight from the heart of the New Orleans melting pot where immortals such as Louis Armstrong took it to new heights around the world. You will be transported to the fun and magic that is the spirit of the Mardi Gras, and will leave smiling and humming familiar melodies. There is no charge to attend. Visit the website: www.standrews.net



A virtual Conflict Resolution Workshop will take place on Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025 at Reston Library.

SUNDAY/JAN. 26

Concert of Broadway Favorites. 4 p.m. At Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd, Fairfax, VA. The Reston Chorale is bringing a bit of Broadway to Fairfax this month with acclaimed singers/actors Jacqueline Fontaine-Isaac and Alan Naylor. General admission tickets are \$35 each and available online only up to 4 p.m. on Saturday, January 25, or when sold out. Tickets will not be sold at the door. For tickets and more information, visit RestonChorale.org.

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.

JAN. 30 TO FEB. 16

"The Lake Effect." At 1st Stage in Tysons Corner. A drama of family secrets by Pulitzer Prize finalist Rajiv Joseph. During a fierce Cleveland mid-winter storm, estranged siblings are reunited by their father's sudden death. In the midst of closing his failing Indian restaurant, they must confront the painful memories and secrets that drove them apart. Show times are Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. General admission tickets are priced at \$25, \$40, and \$55. Student, educator, and military tickets are \$15. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

FRIDAY/JAN. 31

Memoir Writing With Shabnam Curtis. 2:00-3:30 p.m. At Reston Library. Series of memoir writing workshops led by Shabnam Curtis, author of *My Persian Paradox: Memories of an Iranian Girl*. Memoir Writing With Shabnam Curtis - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home

SATURDAY/FEB. 1

Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra with Branford Marsalis. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax.

Grammy Award-winning saxophonist Branford Marsalis joins the Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra in this special concert. An exceptionally versatile musician, Marsalis is a band leader, featured classical soloist, and composer, winning three Grammy Awards, Tony, and Drama Desk Award nominations for his work as a composer on Broadway, a citation by the National Endowment for the Arts as a Jazz Master, and a Primetime Emmy nomination for best original score.

SATURDAY/FEB. 1

Virtual Conflict Resolution Workshop. 2:00-3:30 p.m. At Reston Library. Workshop with life coach Shabnam Curtis to learn methods that help find peaceful resolutions to disagreements and misunderstandings.

Conflict Resolution Workshop - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home

SATURDAY/FEB. 1

Kiwanis Polar Dip. 2 p.m. At Lake Anne Village Plaza, Reston. The Kiwanis Club of Tysons is hosting its annual Kiwanis Polar Dip to raise money for organizations that benefit youth. The goal of the Kiwanis Polar Dip is to raise \$30,000 for Food for Neighbors and a variety of Kiwanis Youth Programs in the Fairfax County area. A portion will also benefit Camp Sunshine, a retreat for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Visit kiwanispolar dip.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 2

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. At the Old Brogue Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Featuring Beth Patterson and Sean Heely. Tickets must be purchased in advance at <https://oldbrogue.com/winter-celtic-concert-2025> - \$21 general admission. A season ticket for all 6 concerts is available for \$110. For info: www.oldbrogue.com or call the Old Brogue at 703-759-3309

SUNDAY/FEB. 2

Chamber Music - Ars Gratia Populi. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Ars Gratia Populi (Latin for "art for the people's sake") is a vocal ensemble that explores the interplay between art music and folk music in an a cappella setting.

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 19

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Krizek

FROM PAGE 8

establishes the Virginia Gaming Commission, an independent agency charged with overseeing and regulating all forms of legal gambling in the Commonwealth. This future agency is essential to streamline the oversight and enforcement of all gaming activities in Virginia. It will focus on prioritizing problem gambling treatment and prevention while promoting greater gaming responsibility to protect all Virginians. Therefore, any new gaming legislation, such as the establishment of a casino in Tysons Corner, should be put on hold until this agency is fully operational. This will ensure the agency can properly evaluate and regulate new projects to align with its mission.

For a full list of my introduced legislation, please visit the brand new Legislative Information Systems site at <https://lis.virginia.gov/>.

Today, the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber, the local Moms Demand Action, and a number of other constituents visited me, and I hope to see many more of you visit my office in Richmond this session. Please continue to contact my office to share your views on the bills that I will hear and vote on. It is an honor to serve as your Delegate representing you in Richmond.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME
Would you like to help a neighbor feel less lonely? Will you help someone get much-needed groceries? Form new connections and make a meaningful difference. Older adults in the Annandale, Falls Church, and Alexandria regions are waiting for volunteer social visitors and grocery shoppers. If you can give the gift of your time, consider providing invaluable support to someone in your community. Learn more about Volunteer Solutions at bit.ly/FXVSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 703-324-5406.

SUPPORT GROUPS
Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthy-mindsfairfax or www.nami-north-ernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers' Support Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact Jack Tarr at jtarr5@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

Commanders Watch Parties Planned for the NFC Championship on Sunday

Football fans can still cheer in unison at spots around the area.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

When the Washington Commanders meet the Philadelphia Eagles in the NFC championship game on Sunday, there's nothing like being at a crowded bar, cheering your team on with a cold one in hand. Sure, it could be loud but fun to many and in southern Fairfax County there's plenty of spots to watch this landmark game.

Things start off at 1 p.m. on Sunday at the Verizon store in Springfield Plaza where they are having the "Commanders Official Verizon Pep Rally with mascot Major Teddy, the Commanders dance team and other legends.

There are a nearly infinite number of options for seeing the game, the first time the Washington football team has been in the NFC Championship game in more than 30 years.

- ❖ **NFC Championship:**
Washington Commanders vs Philadelphia Eagles
Sunday, Jan. 26 at 3 pm
- ❖ **AFC Championship:**
Kansas City Chiefs vs Buffalo Bills
Sunday, Jan. 26 at 6:30 pm

Crystal City Sports Pub, 529 23rd Street, Arlington

With over 200 television screens including a big screen, fans will catch every minute of the action at this Arlington location. Appetizers are \$7.99 and beer specials throughout the afternoon.

Kalypso's Sports Tavern, 1617 Washington Plaza North, Reston

Fans will enjoy free barbecue wings with entrees.

Glory Days, 9459 Lorton Market Street, Lorton

The televisions will be tuned in and the fans cheering to their regularly priced beers and food. The real fun begins on Super Bowl Sunday where there is a \$35 entry fee to a party that includes drinks, food and more. "We have one every year," said the host.

Burtons, Kingstowne, 6452A Old Beulah St, Alexandria

Six televisions will be on behind the bar tuned to sports, and the Super Bowl, if requested.

Chili's Grill & Bar, 6601 Richmond Highway, Alexandria

Football fans are expected as usual for the Sunday afternoon festivities.

Theismann's Restaurant, 1800A Diagonal Rd, Alexandria, VA 22314

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 17

The six unaccompanied voices of the ensemble bring purity and intricacy to everything from Renaissance madrigals to Scottish Gaelic ballads to maybe even some modern standards.

FEB. 4 TO MARCH 2

Exhibition: The Creative Quest: Three Generations of Intuitive Painting. At Reston Community Center's Jo Ann Rose Gallery, 1609-A Washington Plaza North Reston. Featuring 30 works by intuitive painter Judith Forst and many of her students, and their students. Inspired by the teachings of Michele Cassou who founded the Painting Experience in San Francisco, CA, Reston resident Judith Forst transformed her traditional painting practice from an academic based approach to one focused on painting without inhibition. Focusing on the process rather than a product or desired result led to a freedom of expression and the discovery of a compelling authentic voice. Ms. Forst began sharing this technique in her home studio in 2001, and dozens of local artists have been exposed to this innovative practice. A selection of Judith's paintings will be featured along with works by 17 other intuitive painters.

FEB. 7-9 AND 14-16

"The Last Five Years." 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. At the Theatre at Seneca Ridge Middle School, Sterling. Presented by Sterling Playmakers. This intimate show juxtaposes the love story of two New Yorkers

over the course of five years - Cathy, the female, tells their story backwards while Jamie, the male, tells their story chronologically. They line up only once, half-way through the show at their wedding. Tickets can be purchased in advance at www.sterlingplaymakers.org/tickets or at the door.

**SATURDAY/FEB. 8
2025 CBA Ping Pong Tournament.**

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. No fee to enter. All ages and levels of experience welcome. To register, visit <https://C25K.redpodium.com/clifton-annual-ping-pong-tournament-2025>. Registration closes at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2025.

**TUESDAY/FEB. 11
Versa-Style Street Dance Company Lecture/Demonstration.**

7 p.m. At Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Boulevard, Fairfax. In this lecture demonstration, Mason Artist-in-Residence Versa-Style Street Dance Company introduces the audience to the electrifying world of Hip Hop and street dance culture. The session integrates both movement and discussion to explore the intersectionality between the arts, culture, and education using the lens of street dance.

**SATURDAY/FEB. 15
Crys Matthews.** 7:30 p.m. At The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling, 22135 Davis Dr Suite 104, Sterling. A troubadour of truth, Nashville

resident Crys Matthews is among the brightest stars of the new generation of social justice music-makers. An award-winning, prolific lyricist and composer, Matthews blends Country, Americana, Folk, Blues, and Bluegrass into a bold, complex performance steeped in traditional melodies punctuated by honest, original lyrics. Info and tickets at <https://focusmusic.org/shows#sat-2-15-crys-matthews-sterling-and-virtual>

**SATURDAY/FEB. 22
Ron Kowalski Real Estate Group's Monopoly Tournament.**

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Moose Lodge, 9612 Fernedge Lane, Lorton. To benefit the Lorton Community Action Center. They'll play 3 timed rounds of Monopoly - those with the most assets advance. Players of any / all skill levels are encouraged to play. Cash prizes: 1st-\$500; 2nd-\$250; 3rd-\$100. Trophies & door prizes too! Continental breakfast will be provided by South County Cares Church and lunch will be catered by Antonelli's Pizza & Subs. The registration fee is \$35 in advance/online; \$50 at the door. Ages 8+. A flyer is attached.

**SUNDAY/MARCH 9
Aurora Dance Fest.** 4:30 p.m. At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner.

Aurora Dance Fest will feature a vibrant evening of dance performances hosted by Gin Dance Company and featuring works by 10 companies and 16 talented choreographers. This event promises to be a delightful mix of contemporary ballet, modern dance, and the fiery passion of Flamenco from Southern Spain.

**SATURDAY/MAY 10
44th Annual Spring Civil War Mosby Bus Tour, "Mosby and the End of the War."**

Sponsored by the Stuart - Mosby Historical Society. Tour Leaders will be Kevin Pawlak and Rob Orrison. Follow Mosby's Rangers during the closing acts of the Civil War, from the final fights to the disbandment at Salem. Cost is \$80 members of the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society \$90 for non-members. Tour does not include lunch. To sign up contact Rob Orrison at 703-431-2869 or email mosbytours@gmail.com or send your check to Rob Orrison (make checks payable to Rob) at 102 Melody Lane Stafford, VA 22554. Venmo: @Robert-Orrison. No refunds after May 1, 2025.

End of an Era



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Sitting at my desk at home with my golden retriever Burton lying at my feet, unwrapping Christmas-colors-wrapped milk Chocolate Hershey's Kisses, I feel compelled to make an admission (not that any of you should care): I don't like Mars M&Ms anymore. And considering I've been eating them my entire life, Mars is losing one of their best customers.

To put this loss in some context, though it's impossible to quantify; let's just say for the sake of this column, I've consumed over a million M&Ms. Almost exclusively the plain M&Ms until the "peanut butter (orange bag) came along. Peanut M&Ms despite their lofty position atop various "most eaten candies" lists never appealed to me. Neither did any of the newer varieties which have appeared on the shelves over the last decade or two except the mint M&Ms. Whenever I see that green bag, I'm buyin'. Delicious but hard to find for some reason. To summarize then the percentages eaten over the years: 97% plain, 2.5% peanut butter, .5% mint. (As the peanut butter and mint flavors are somewhat new creations, comparatively speaking, their newness is reflected in these percentages.)

As to the reason for this rather drastic change in my candy consumption, I can't really remember the "Oh no"-moment when I took a handful, which had not melted in my hand, and tossed them into my mouth where they indeed melted (after I had crunched them all down to more eatable size). Nevertheless, me and my tastebuds have come to the same conclusion: our love affair with M&Ms was over. Though I finished whatever bag I had started, we parted as friends. Never again will I eat M&Ms unless there are extenuating circumstances ("extenuations" you might call them) as in the M&Ms are in plain sight, within arm's length and relatively unguarded. But my days as an intentional buyer are over.

I've had a similar falling out, though not nearly as definitive/life changing, with 3 Musketeers and Milky Way bars. For years, make that decades/half centuries even, these two bars were my go-to preferences (along with the M&Ms); now they're merely memories of a recent past. Unlike my M&M stoppage for which I had no specific event, I do indeed have one sort of, for the end of my similar love affair for 3 Musketeers/Milky Way bars. It was Halloween a few years back. Naturally, I had prepared a bowl of snack-size candies for the year's lucky participants: 3 Musketeers, Milky Way and Snickers. But few trick-or-treaters showed that year, so I was left with an ample-sized bowl brimming with chocolate goodies. And needless to say, or I wouldn't be writing this column, I overwhelmed their defenses and over the next few days (not weeks), rapidly (not slowly) and surely, I emptied that bowl. By week's end, the bowl was a shell of its former holiday self. I wouldn't say I was proud of myself, but other than my brother who could have accomplished what I did? (This was a rhetorical question. Those that know me, know the answer: no one.) To invoke curly Howard of The Three Stooges: "I seen my duty and I done it." However, my overeating had a consequence that overindulging often has: swearing off of the presumptive cause. For me, it was most definitely the 3 Musketeers and Milky Way snack/fun size bars originally meant for the neighborhood kids. In lieu thereof, I picked up the slack and haven't had a 3 Musketeers or Milky Way bar since. Added to the M&M loss, Mars must be feeling the pinch. One that a smaller company might not have survived.

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



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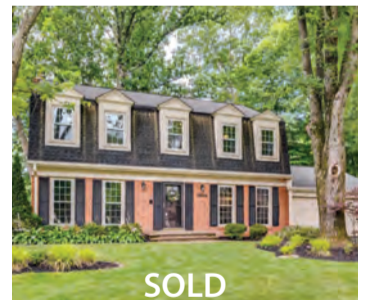
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