

# Alexandria Gazette Packet

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FEBRUARY 6, 2025

## Tragedy on the Potomac

Local lives lost as first responders aid in recovery.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The bodies of all 67 victims of the Jan. 29 plane crash along the Potomac River have now been recovered. Among those were Alexandria residents 12-year-old Olivia Eve Ter and her mother Olesya Taylor.

Taylor, a pediatrician in her home country of Ukraine, had texted her husband Andrew Ter just one minute before the fatal crash between American Eagle flight 5342 and an Army Black Hawk helicopter. She leaves behind her husband, mother Olga and daughter Anne Valerie.

"The pain of this loss is profound, especially for Anne Valerie, who now faces a world without her mother and sister," said Alla Levin, who has organized a GoFundMe for the family. "I also want to acknowledge Olesya's mother, Olga, who is grieving the loss of both her

daughter and granddaughter. This family was built on love, and now they are left with an unimaginable void."

The Unified Command said on Wednesday that the bodies of all 67 passengers killed in the crash have been recovered and identified. "This marks a significant step in bringing closure to the families and the community," the Unified Command said in a news release.

Among the emergency person-

nel responding to the scene were 30-40 first responders from the Alexandria Fire Department. Fairfax County Fire and Rescue sent 22 units/pieces of apparatus and 68 personnel. The Salvation Army, headquartered in Alexandria, was on site as well as City Cruises, operators of the Alexandria Water Taxi, providing support for the rescue and recovery operation.

"We are deeply grateful for the people who risked their lives last night on a moment's notice, and spent the whole night on the river in the ice and the wind, serving us," said U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, who has opposed the expansion of flights at DCA.

"Through the NTSB investigation we've got to make sure that at the federal level – and with the support of Virginia, Maryland, and D.C. – we're doing everything we can to make sure that this does not happen again."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expects to remove all major parts of the

American Airlines plane by Thursday. Operations will then shift to removing the remaining debris from a field which extends along

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**"We are deeply grateful for the people who risked their lives last night on a moment's notice, and spent the whole night on the river in the ice and the wind, serving us."**

— Rep. Don Beyer



PHOTO/ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
Debris from the wreckage of the collision between American Eagle flight 5342 and a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter is removed from the Potomac River Feb. 4.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Alexandria resident Olesya Taylor, right, shown with her husband Andrew Ter, was among those killed in the Jan. 29 collision between an American Eagle airliner and a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Alexandria resident Olivia Eve Ter, 12, was returning from an ice skating competition when she was killed in the Jan. 29 crash.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Olesya Taylor, back left, with her mother Olga and daughters Olivia Eve Ter and Anne Valerie Ter. Taylor and Olivia Eve Ter were killed in the Jan. 29 collision at Reagan National Airport.



## SENIOR LIVING

# Register Now!

## Senior Services of Alexandria and At Home in Alexandria Speaker Series Event

BY MARYANNE BEATTY  
SENIOR SERVICES OF ALEXANDRIA

**M**any older adults in our community are aging by themselves or what we like to call “solo aging.” This can cause anxiety and a fear of loneliness, but it doesn’t have to be that way. By taking advantage of resources to stay connected to the community and developing a network of friends, solo aging isn’t so scary, and even maybe the best time of one’s life.

Senior Services of Alexandria, along with At Home

“Strategies for Addressing Solo Aging, Social Isolation, and Mental Health for Seniors”

Feb. 19 - 1 - 2:30 pm - Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street

in Alexandria (AHA), a local senior village, is bringing together a group of experts in the field to talk about this topic by exploring practical strategies for supporting older adults as they navigate solo aging, combatting social isolation and prioritizing their mental health.

Speakers include Steve Gurney of the Positive Aging Community, and Rhonda Williams, Supervisor of the city’s Older Adult Clinical Services Team.

Also, attendees will learn about local resources on how to stay connected to the community. This event is free! Please RSVP by email at [events@seniorservicesalex.org](mailto:events@seniorservicesalex.org) or call 703.836.4414 ext. 110.

## City of Alexandria Offers Free Tax Preparation to Qualifying Individuals at Del Pepper Community Resource Center

The Department of Community and Human Services is offering free tax preparation services to qualifying individuals who live in the City of Alexandria on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon, and Wednesdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. now through April 19 at the Del Pepper Community Resource Center (4850 Mark Center Drive). For an appointment, please call 202-830-1480 (English) or 202-869-2999 (Spanish). Limited walk-in spots are available.

Taxpayers may be eligible if their income is below \$67,000 for individuals and families. Expert volunteers from Community Tax Aid, Inc. will ensure that taxpayers apply for all applicable credits and deductions, especially the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, which people may not realize they are eligible to receive. Electronic filing is provided.

The Del Pepper Community Resource Center is a five-minute walk from the Mark Center Transit Station and is served by DASH transit. For DASH schedule information, call 703-370-DASH (3274) or visit [dashbus.com](http://dashbus.com). For Metrobus schedule information, call 202-637-7000 or visit [wmata.com](http://wmata.com).

Please visit the website at [alexandriava.gov/DCHS](http://alexandriava.gov/DCHS) to view the flyer in English and Spanish and for information on required documentation and eligibility.

In the event of inclement weather, check [alexandriava.gov/Calendar](http://alexandriava.gov/Calendar), or, [alexandriava.gov](http://alexandriava.gov). If City services close, tax services will also be cancelled.

### BULLETIN BOARD

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

#### VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive

assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. [www.volunteeralexandria.org](http://www.volunteeralexandria.org)

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention

Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/ALIVE>

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides

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## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

# The Ringing Success of the Bell Family

A family's historical connection to Alexandria and the Masonic Temple.

BY CHAR McCARGO BAH  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE PACKET

The construction of the Masonic Temple on Shooter Hill began on June 5, 1922, and it took 10 years to complete. There was a cornerstone ceremony that took place on Nov. 5, 1923. President Calvin Coolidge laid the cornerstone using the same trowel that President George Washington had used on September 18, 1793, when he laid the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol building. Many dignitaries and Masons attended the ceremony. Unfortunately, John S. Bell, who delivered the building materials for the Masonic project, did not live to witness that ceremony or the completion of the Masonic Monument in 1932. His participation in the building of the Masonic Temple became part of his family's oral history.

It was a warm morning when John Stuart Bell left his home on Oct. 4, 1922; the morning temperature was 53 degrees Fahrenheit. He drove his wagon and a team of mules from his home at 409 North Patrick Street before sunrise to pick up his load from the brickyard. That day would be the last time he'd see his wife and four children. Bell headed to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial construction site to deliver his supplies. It was 7:30 a.m. when the team of mules that he was driving ran away and threw him off his wagon. The wagon rolled over him and crushed his chest. Bell was immediately taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead. His body was taken to Demaine's mortuary chapel, where the coroner's jury investigated his death. It was determined that Bell's death was caused by the accident.

Bell's descendants, Freida Bell Brockington and Andrew "Andy" Evans learned that John S. Bell worked on the Masonic Temple, but did not know about the role he played in its construction. He was a well-respected man in his community.

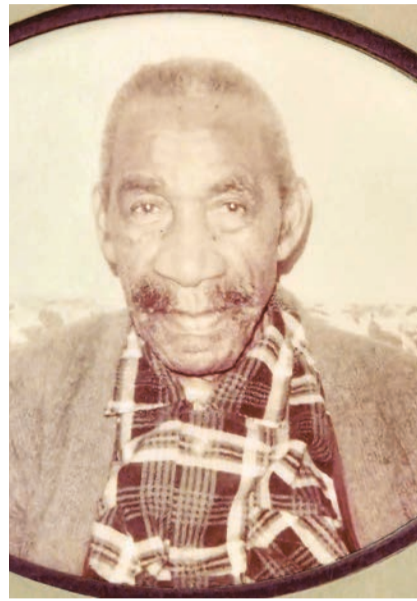
Bell was born in Winchester, Va., in 1868. His father's name was John and his mother was named Mary. They were free African Americans before the Civil War. After 1870, John Sr. moved his family to Alexandria and he lived on Fairfax Street. Bell's mother died in 1895, and his father died sometime before 1900. The obituary stated that his mother's services were at Shiloh Church and that she was a well-known and respected resident of Alexandria. Freida remembers hearing stories about her family history. Her great-grandmother, Mary Forrest Bell, the wife of John S. Bell, lived a long time, from 1874 to 1973. Freida said Mary worked for Mr. Smoot, who owned the lumber yard. Mary was renting when she was working for Mr. Smoot; Freida recalls her family saying that Mr. Smoot said to Mary, "You probably paid for this house over and over in rent, you need to buy a house." After getting advice from Mr. Smoot, Mary purchased the house at 510 North Alfred Street.

Another descendant, Andy Evans, shares

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



John J. Bell and his daughter, Freida Bell Brockington.



John A. Bell

PHOTOS COURTESY FREIDA BELL BROCKINGTON

The Bell family became successful in every endeavor they undertook, and every succeeding generation did better.

stories about John S. Bell's son, John Augustus Bell. Andy said, "My grandfather lived at 405 North Henry Street. He worked at the Mutual Ice Company, delivering ice to the African American communities. He drove an icehouse truck and took ice from his truck to his customers. He carried a big block of ice on his shoulder. My grandfather did this until he was around 70 years old."

This family is very proud of its heritage.

Each generation, from John Bell, who was born in 1845 and migrated to Alexandria from Winchester, to the next generation of John S. Bell who is associated with the Alexandria Masonic Temple, to the next generation of John A. Bell, that worked for Mutual Ice Company; and to Frieda's father, John J. Bell, that worked for the federal government. The latter was a well-known photographer. The Bell family became successful in

every endeavor they undertook, and every succeeding generation did better. Freida and Andy did well, just like their forefathers.

Bell would be proud of his two great-grandchildren. Freida retired from the Federal Government after 37 years of service. She was an Associate Director at the U.S. Selective Service System, overseeing the agency's Human Resources, Financial Management, and Contract Procurement. During her government career, she became involved in real estate and continued this career into her retirement. Freida has been a Realtor for 30 years. She maintains a viable real estate business and is skilled in staging, marketing, and investments. If that was not enough, she is also a talented Interior Designer and Event Planner.

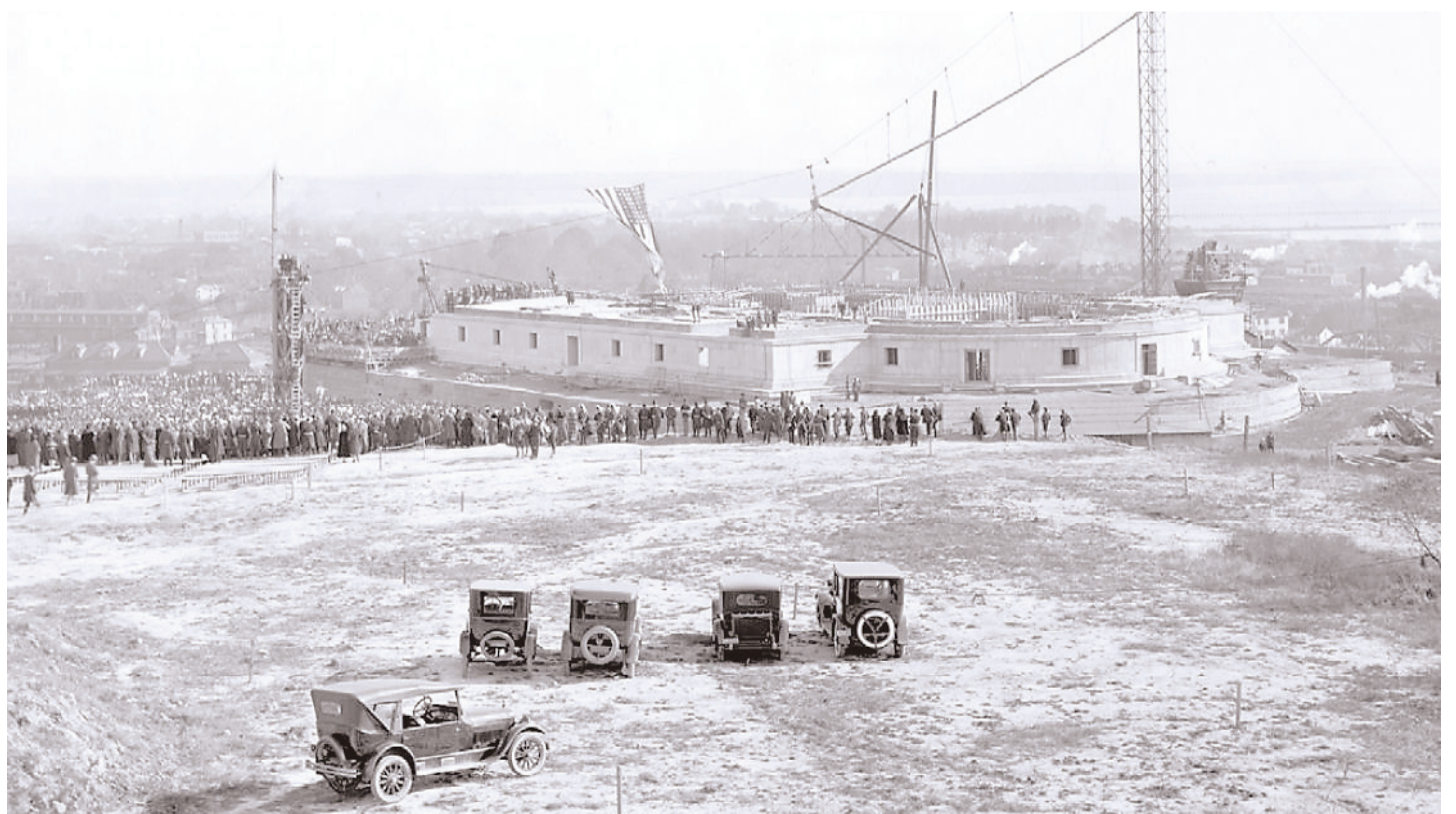
Andrew "Andy" Evans has lived a very productive life.

He has been a politician, an activist, an author, a counselor at George Mason University, and now a comedian. Again, just like his ancestors, he is a high achiever.

The accomplishments made by the four generations of John Bells are major achievements for their family. Each generation built a legacy of a solid foundation of hard work, entrepreneurship, and resilience that would continue in the future.

Each time one of the Bell family members sees the George Washington Masonic Temple, they will remember John S. Bell, who contributed to its construction.

The writer, Char McCargo Bah, is a published author, freelance writer, independent historian, investigative/genealogist researcher, and a Living Legend of Alexandria. Her blog is <https://www.theotheralexandria.com>.



Laying of the cornerstone of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial on Nov. 1, 1923.

PHOTO/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



# LUNAR NEW YEAR

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

# Year of the Snake

Lunar New Year festival returns to Old Town.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

A slithering hiss was heard as Alexandria ushered in the Year of the Snake with the third annual Lunar New Year festival Jan. 25 at the Atrium in Old Town.

In 2025, the Lunar New Year began Jan. 29, closing out the previous Year of the Dragon. Also known as the Spring Festival, the holiday celebrates the beginning of a new year based on the lunar calendar. The holiday is typically celebrated for the first 15 days of the lunar calendar. During this time it is traditional to honor household and heavenly deities as well as ancestors. The highlight of the Spring Festival is the Lantern Festival, which happens on the 15th and final day which will be Feb. 12.

Now in its third year, the Old Town festival brought together local Asian American vendors and featured performances and cuisine celebrating Asian American culture.

“Since we started the ALX Lunar New Year Celebration three years ago, our goal has always been simple: to bring people together to celebrate the Lunar New Year and give local AAPI small businesses a free platform to showcase their products and services,” said organizer Minh Pham. “This year, we were blown away when we saw more than 2,200 people join us to celebrate the Year of the Snake at the Atrium. Watching this event grow — not just in size but also in the meaningful connections and sense of community it fosters — has been an incredible experience.”

Cultural performances included the traditional Lion Dance as well as Korean, Indonesian, and Vietnamese entertainment.

Ông Địa, or “the Earth God” widely regarded as the patron of good fortune in Vietnamese culture, made an appearance. Ông Địa symbolizes luck, prosperity, and protection.

The festival also included craft activities, face painting featuring Chinese zodiac animals, and a photography station with Vietnamese traditional clothes. A Lunar New Year Market showcased local small businesses.

“From the original idea of showcasing how different Asian American communities celebrate, we are so grateful to witness how the ALX Lunar New Year celebration has become a space where people of all backgrounds can come together, share traditions, learn from each other, and simply enjoy the magic of the New Year,” Pham said. “As we welcome the Year of the Snake, we look forward to continuing this tradition, fostering deeper connections, and celebrating the beauty of our diverse community for years to come.”



Traditional cuisine was featured at the Lunar New Year festival Jan. 25 at The Atrium in Old Town.



Mimi Luu, Yen Luu, Jazzlina Thung and Brubeck Thung (in front) serve traditional Vietnamese street food as part of the Lunar New Year festival Jan. 25 at The Atrium.



Traditional dances are performed at the Lunar New Year Festival Jan. 25 at The Atrium.



Attendees enjoy the traditional Lunar New Year entertainment Jan. 25 at The Atrium.



Ông Địa, or “the Earth God,” is the Vietnamese patron of good fortune.



Tuose Pham at the Lunar New Year Festival Jan. 25 at The Atrium.



Ông Địa, or “the Earth God,” performs as part of the Lunar New Year Festival Jan. 25 at The Atrium in Old Town.



# Honor George Washington's Legacy

Two events on Saturday, Feb. 15, 2025.

## George Washington Birthday Parade

**Time:** 2-4 p.m.  
**Where:** Old Town Alexandria, Parade Route  
 Thousands of spectators will gather in Old Town Alexandria for the nation's oldest and largest George Washington Birthday Parade. This year's theme, George Washington: America's Commander-in-Chief, commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War and the founding of the United States Army. Lieutenant General Heidi J. Hoyle, Deputy Chief of Staff of the United States Army, will serve as the Grand Marshal. Don't miss this patriotic celebration! Parade registration ends January 31. For details and registration, visit [www.washingtonbirthday.com](http://www.washingtonbirthday.com).

## George Washington Birthnight Dinner

**Time:** 6:30-9:30 p.m.  
**Where:** Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal Street  
**Tickets:** \$150 per person, available at [Alexandria-va.gov/Shop](http://Alexandria-va.gov/Shop)  
 Step back in time with a four-course period-inspired dinner and wine at Gadsby's Tavern Museum. General Washington, portrayed by Brian Hilton, will be your host, while Dr. Peter Henriques, Professor of History,



George Washington, first President of the United States.

Emeritus at George Mason University, offers insights into Washington's military career and legacy. Cocktail attire is recommended.

OPINION

# Message from Mayor Alyia Gaskins On Immigration Enforcement

For many who call Alexandria home, recent events across the United States and in neighboring jurisdictions, have resulted in fear, confusion, and concern. As your Mayor, I want to emphasize that Alexandria is committed to being a city where all residents are supported, respected, and valued. We will always be a community where all are welcome.

I understand many have questions about immigration enforcement. While Federal officers may take enforcement actions in our City, the City of Alexandria does not participate in federal immigration enforcement. The City of Alexandria's law enforcement

officers do not participate in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") raids or arrests to enforce immigration laws. This applies to Alexandria police officers, deputy sheriffs and fire marshals.

We take seriously our responsibility to comply with federal and state law. The City also remains committed to upholding the civil rights of all individuals, regardless of immigration status. I have the utmost confidence in our law enforcement officers. They will continue to carry out their duties with integrity—following the law and protecting the constitutional and civil rights of all people.

For more information on immi-

gration enforcement in the City, please visit <https://alexandriava.gov/Immigration>. Information on student and family resources can be found at the Alexandria City Public Schools' Family & Community Resources webpage.

We take great pride in the fact that we are a community that cares about one another. Here in Alexandria, we will govern based on our values and facts. Our strength is in our ability to support one another and to uphold the values that make Alexandria the community we all choose to call home. In the days ahead, please be assured that we will continue working for you and with you to keep you informed.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 2

reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email [info@alnv.org](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).  
 Join Friends' Board. Those who

care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work

needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email [FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com).

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, [stemvolunteers.org](http://stemvolunteers.org), during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers

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# Love Is in the Air

Couples share their secrets to happiness.

It's that time of year, when love is in the air as Valentine's Day approaches and stories of love abound. From engagements to decades-long love affairs, some local couples share the heartwarming beginnings of their "till death do us part" true love stories.

- JEANNE THEISMANN

**"Greg is like the calm in our sometimes crazy, chaotic, beautiful life."**

— Mayor Alyia Gaskins



**Merrick and Marsha Malone**

**Marsha:** Merrick was living in Detroit when we met at an Urban League dinner in Houston. A mutual friend introduced us - we're both from Ohio from towns that are no more than 30 miles apart. We were rival schools. I was a cheerleader so when he was on the field playing football I was on the sidelines cheering against him. We had both been married and I hadn't dated much. But he started making trips every other weekend to see me in Virginia. He has an adventurous spirit and is so intelligent. This world is so exciting and he takes full advantage of it. In fact if there is anything where we really differ I think he gets like six hours more out of a day than I do. If he had more time he would do even more. I admire that so much about him. I'd been all around the world and end up with a guy from down the road. That is essentially what happened.

**Merrick:** We were married in 1996 so going on 29 years. I had been to law school in DC so moving back here to be with her was easy. I admire her tenacity. I always say that if you're in a negotiation with my wife she closes like a freight train. She is incredibly organized and I admire how nurturing she is - she is truly the matriarch of our families. I look at the experiences that we have shared over these past 30-plus years and we always look at each other and say our imaginations would not have been large enough to imagine all the things we have done, the presidents we have met, the rooms we have been in. There's no question we were meant to be and we are so grateful. She is the air I breathe and I love her beyond measure. I'm the luckiest guy in the world.



**Bill and Harlene Clayton**

**Harlene:** We grew up in a small town on the Chesapeake Bay in Crisfield, Md. We went to the same high school and our romance began in Washington DC where we both ended up attending school living near each other in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood. We married in 1966 and moved to Parkfairfax a year later. The rest is history. We love Alexandria - it's where we have called home for 57 years and where we raised our family. We love giving back to our community, being with friends and traveling. And we love to dance!



**Angela and Chris Harris**

**Angela:** We've been married almost 6 years. We met on the dating app Plenty of Fish. He reached out to me but not even a couple of texts later he wants my phone number. I said no, let's talk here for a little while. Then he disappeared so I kept going out on dates and of course they were horrible. I went back and looked and he was still on there so I hit him back up and it went from there. My favorite thing about Chris is that I never have to question his feelings for me. He always makes me feel secure about his love for me and just wanting to do whatever makes me happy.

**Chris:** I love that she always challenges me. She's helped me grow a lot as a man and supports everything I want to do. She is someone I can communicate with and I've never really had that before. Once I was able to talk to her and confide in her I knew she would be the one. And of course I love her body. Can I say that? She is my best friend.



**Mayor Alyia Gaskins and Greg Gaskins**

**Alyia:** We will be married 10 years on Feb. 20. We were introduced by a mutual friend who went to the University of Pittsburgh. When I was home for the summer she said, "We always hang out with the football players so you have to come join us." So I pretty much showed up on Greg's doorstep. If I had to name one quality I love most about Greg it would be his calming presence. He is like the calm in our sometimes crazy, chaotic, beautiful life.

**Greg:** Even though we've been married going on 10 years we've been together 15 years. The thing that I love about her, that I loved about her then that I still love about her now is her smile. We'll celebrate by getting a cabin in the Shenandoah Valley to spend some time with just the two of us



**Matthew Lehman and Andrea Espinosa**

**Matt:** We've known each other for almost three years now - it'll be our anniversary on Feb. 25 - but we got engaged last July and will be getting married in September. As soon as I saw her I knew it was meant to be. Her eyes just light up the room. Between school and life trying to find a good time to get married isn't easy but with Andrea it just felt right.

**Andrea:** Matt has just the kindest heart in the whole entire world. He cares so much about other people he's such a giving person and you can tell that just from the moment you meet him. We'll celebrate Valentine's Day and our anniversary with our yearly tradition of going to the same Italian restaurant where we had our first date - Mia's.



**Duhyun and Lee Choe - owners of The Uptowner Coffee Shop**

**Duhyun:** The business keeps us very busy but we will find time to celebrate Valentine's Day by going out to dinner.



## NEWS

# Inaugural Superbowl Soberride Launched

A local nonprofit organization announced today that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during this Sunday's Super Bowl LIX.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the inaugural 2025 Super Bowl SoberRide® program will be in operation beginning at 8 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 9 and operate until 4 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 10 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period.

During this eight-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide code in the app's 'Payment' tab (under the 'Add Lyft Pass' option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's 2025 Super Bowl SoberRide promo code will be posted at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 9 on [www.SoberRide.com](http://www.SoberRide.com).

"Nearly 40-percent of U.S. traffic fatalities during the 2022 Super Bowl period involved drunk drivers according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration," said Kurt Erickson, WRAP's President.

WRAP's 2025 Super Bowl campaign effort is the charity's first new SoberRide offering in a decade. WRAP also offers its SoberRide program on St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Halloween and the winter holidays through and including New Year's.

Sponsors of WRAP's 2025 Super Bowl SoberRide® campaign include 395 Express Lanes, Anheuser-Busch, Beer Institute, Brown-Forman, Constellation Brands, Diageo, District of Columbia Association of Beverage Alcohol Wholesalers, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility, Giant Food, Glory Days Grill, Lyft, Molson Coors Beverage Company, New Belgium Brewing, Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington and the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association. WRAP's 2025 Public Partner SoberRide® Sponsors include the District of Columbia Highway Safety Office, Maryland Highway Safety Office/Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration and Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.

Since 1991, WRAP's SoberRide® program has provided 93,706 free safe rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

### BULLETIN BOARD

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in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or [donaldrea@aol.com](mailto:donaldrea@aol.com).

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

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

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serv-

ing, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at [chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org](mailto:chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org) or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit [www.rsvpnova.org](http://www.rsvpnova.org).

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

Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed. To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, [brianmorreale@gmail.com](mailto:brianmorreale@gmail.com)

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## TWO POOR TEACHERS

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## Can Data Centers Co-Exist with Responsible Development and Increased Energy Demands?

BY SEN. ADAM P. EBBIN

Every time you make an online purchase, scroll through social media, or check your email, a data center processes the information. Data centers contain storage for computer systems for everyday usage by consumers and businesses, and have grown exponentially in recent years, with usage expected to double in the next few years. Northern Virginia has the largest data concentration center in the world, handling 25 percent of Internet traffic in the Americas and 13 percent of the total in the World. One data center in Ashburn alone averages 31,000 credit card transactions per second. These transactions are a key part of our modern economy, and keep the Commonwealth on the cutting edge of innovation and commerce.

With the rise of artificial intelligence, data center demand is growing even faster than anticipated. More than 23 bills dealing with data centers were introduced

in the General Assembly, including my bill, SB 1449. More than 13 of those bills remained under consideration as of Monday, Feb. 3.

After spending a year researching the data center industry and soliciting input from more than a hundred diverse stakeholders, ranging from technology advocates and utilities to environmentalists and grassroots activists, the Virginia General Assembly's highly respected Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) released their findings in December. JLARC found that data centers are responsible for more than 74,000 jobs and \$9.1 billion in annual revenue in Virginia.

However, data centers are not without some concerns. They require a huge amount of energy to operate. Data center energy usage can vary from the equivalent of the average usage of 20,000 homes to over a million homes. By 2040, unconstrained demand could double our energy needs, and we must balance the economic benefits with the challenges and energy im-

pact of data centers.

Other potential data center challenges include power transmission lines, water usage, noise issues, and construction near historic sites. JLARC says we are a relatively water-rich state, but that usage could be more efficient. We must work with local governments to address these challenges and ensure that we are still on a path to transition to a greener energy mix as the demands around data centers increase.

My Bill, SB 1449, will empower localities to require a sound study before a data center (or other "high energy use facility" that uses more than 100 megawatts of power) can be sited within 500 feet of houses or schools. It will also allow local governments to decide whether a site assessment of potential impacts on nearby resources – such as water, agricultural land, parks, historic sites, or forestland – is appropriate before approving a new facility. Del. Josh Thomas of Prince William has similar, but not identical, legislation that has passed the

House of Delegates.

I believe my legislation will strike a reasonable balance: it will empower localities to make more informed choices as they manage responsible data center development, while not overly burdening an essential industry that already falls under many local, state and federal regulations that are intended to protect Virginians.

For the past 15 years, data centers have helped provide economic growth, jobs, and funding for community priorities in the Commonwealth, especially in Northern Virginia.

Loudoun County alone reaped \$875,000,000 in 2024 in tax revenue from data centers, an increase of 19.5% from the year before, helping the fast growing county to fund their needs with lower property taxes than neighboring jurisdictions. I am hopeful that we can continue to be a leader in technology and 21st century jobs. If managed correctly, data centers can provide jobs, substantial tax revenue, and further investment in the Commonwealth.

## Environmental Wins and Losses at Virginia General Assembly Crossover

The Virginia General Assembly session has reached its midpoint, marking some wins and losses for key environmental measures.

These measures would enhance our management of Virginia's living resources, provide better planning for our growing solar industry, improve water quality, protect public health, and align with Governor Youngkin's recent recommitment to Chesapeake Bay restoration.

At this point known as "crossover," bills started in one chamber must be passed in order to move to the other chamber for consideration, a key moment for legislation focused on flood resilience, protection of vital species, and advancements in clean energy.

### Key environmental wins and losses include:

Protecting Virginians from Flooding and Extreme Weather

❖ HB 2034 introduced by Delegate Shelly Simonds: This establishes efforts to protect the state's existing tidal and nontidal wetlands, which are natural water filterers and sponges. This bill

passed the House and will now head to the Senate.

❖ HB2630 introduced by Delegate Rodney Willett and HB2638 introduced by Delegate Patrick Hope: Another natural sponge that cools our neighborhoods and reduces our energy use, trees would be easier to preserve and replace under these two bills that expand local authority. Both passed the House are under consideration by the Senate.

❖ HB 2077 introduced by Delegate Paul Krizek and SB 1335 introduced by Senator David Marsden: These bills allow federally-recognized tribal governments access to Community Flood Preparedness funding. Both bills passed their respective chamber.

❖ HJ 434 introduced by Delegate Michael Feggans and HJ 437 introduced by Delegate Kelly Convors-Fowler: HJ434 direct studies on how state and localities would fund Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSR) plans. HJ437 reestablishes the Joint Subcommittee of Recurrent Flooding. Both bills passed the House and on to the Senate for consideration.

### Protecting and Restoring Key Species

❖ CBF is disheartened that legislation for an oyster stock assessment helping ensure the wise management of the state's oysters as well as legislation and an accompanying \$3 million budget amendment to move forward with a much-needed study of menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay did not advance in the General Assembly. CBF thanks Delegate Paul Milde for introducing the menhaden efforts and again notes the increasing need for scientific studies into the impact of factors including climate change and an industrial fishery on this important forage fish.

❖ CBF continues to support HB2782 introduced by Delegate Shelly Simonds that removes the one-fish daily limit for blue catfish longer than 32 inches, helping to reduce the predatory pressure of this invasive species in the tidal waters of the James, Rappahannock, and York Rivers. HB2782 has passed the House and is under consideration by the Senate.

### Durable Future for Clean Energy

❖ To achieve established clean



# 67 Dead After Airplane Collides with Army Helicopter

Wreckage and passengers plunge into the Potomac River.

BY JAMES LIBRESCO AND  
NOAH STERNBERG  
THE GAZETTE

Officials said there are no survivors after a commercial jet with 64 passengers and an Army helicopter carrying three soldiers collided shortly before 9 p.m. on Jan. 29 outside of Ronald Reagan National Airport (DCA) in Arlington and plummeted into the Potomac River.

An Alexandria Police Department dispatch at exactly 9 p.m. described the event as a “mass casualty incident” and deployed Alexandria fireboats and ambulances.

An initial investigation by the Federal Aviation Administration found that air traffic controller staffing at Reagan National Airport during the crash was “not normal for the time of day and volume of traffic,” according to the New York Times. One air traffic controller was covering two different positions at the time of the collision, but a former FAA air traffic manager, told CNN this was a common practice. The airport reopened the day following the crash and is at full operational capacity, though several airlines canceled some scheduled flights.

The airport had 19 fully certified controllers as of September 2023, according to a report to Congress, which is well below the FAA’s target of 30. But as one of his first actions as president, Donald J. Trump froze hiring for groups of federal employees including air traffic control personnel. Trump, at a press conference in the White House, blamed Barack Obama, Joe Biden and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives for the crash.

Washington’s Fire Chief John Donnelly confirmed the worst possible scenario at a separate Thursday morning press conference.

“We don’t believe there are any survivors,” he said, adding that “extremely frigid conditions,” including “heavy wind” and “ice on the water,” made the rescue operation difficult to manage.

Horrifying audio from the police scanner



PHOTO BY NOAH STERNBERG/THEOGONY

Officials used a floating crane Feb. 7 to remove the wreckage of American Airlines flight 5342 and the Black Hawk helicopter that collided midair.

“Three of our FCPS students and six of our FCPS parents were lost, affecting multiple schools and departments here at FCPS.

Two of the parents were current or former FCPS staff members.

Multiplying the grief are the siblings” and others ...

— Michelle Reid, superintendent, FCPS

the previous night revealed that divers found multiple people still buckled into their seats. As of Feb. 2, 55 victims have been identified, Donnelly said at a press conference. Donnelly said that after officials extracted the plane the following day, they would be able to “recover everyone.” That task was complete on Tuesday, Feb. 4.

Three students and six parents — including two school officials — from Fairfax County Public Schools were on the fatal flight, with several returning from a figure skating camp, according to a statement from the FCPS superintendent of schools.

It is still unclear if any Alexandria residents were involved in the crash.

“Our prayers are with everyone affected,” said Alyia Gaskins, Alexandria’s mayor, in a statement. “This devastating loss is felt by all of us.”

This article was first published in *Theogony*, Alexandria City High School’s student-run newspaper.

## Tragedy on the Potomac

FROM PAGE 1

the Alexandria waterfront to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

Beyer, whose district includes Reagan National Airport, held a candlelight vigil Wednesday evening at Rivergate City Park in Alexandria.

“As our community remains deeply saddened by this tragedy, this candlelight vigil will allow us to come together in remembrance of the lives we lost and offer our collective support to the families,

friends, and loved ones directly impacted,” Beyer said in a message to constituents.

As recently as 2024, Beyer and other regional elected officials opposed the FAA reauthorization of additional flights into DCA.

“National is home to the busiest runway in America,” Beyer said at the time. “The airport is designed to serve 15 million passengers annually. Last year, it served 24 million. That is 9 million passengers,

or 60 percent, over capacity. Any additional flights that are added to DCA will worsen delays, exacerbate pilot and flight crew exhaustion, and risk the safety of flights in and out of National Airport. Safety, not convenience, must come first.”

As far back as 1991, when the airport marked its 50th anniversary, former Alexandria Mayor Charles Beatley also indicated concern about the expansion of air traffic in the region.

“It’s a very substandard airport for the sophisticated and even medium-size jet,” said Beatley, a retired airline pilot who flew into National for 23 years starting in 1943. “Still all hazards are relative.”

Olivia Eve Ter was a rising star in the figure skating community. She was a group of skaters competing in the U.S. Figure Skating Championships and development camp in Wichita, where the Amer-

ican Eagle flight originated. Ter earned silver and gold at her two events this season before finishing fourth in the juvenile girls division at the 2025 Eastern Sectional Singles Final to receive an invitation to National Development Camp.

As recovery operations continue, the Unified Command is asking anyone with information about the Potomac and Anacostia rivers recovery operation to call 911 and to not touch or remove anything.



# Community Mourns Young Ice Skaters Gone Too Soon

## Two Woodson High students die in tragic plane crash.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE GAZETTE PACKET

**W**hen an Army helicopter collided with a passenger jet at Reagan National Airport last Wednesday, Jan. 29, the tragedy killed 67 people. It ended their future hopes and dreams in an instant and forever changed the lives of those who knew and loved them.

The victims included friends Edward Zhou and Cory Haynos, both 16. They attended Woodson High in Fairfax, skated at the Fairfax Ice Arena and were members of the Skating Club of Northern Virginia (SCNV).

They were among 14 ice skaters returning from watching the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Wichita, Kan., and participating in a developmental camp there for young skaters. Compounding the loss, the parents of both young men – Kaiyan Mao and Yu Zhou, and Stephanie and Roger Haynos – were also aboard the plane, perishing along with their sons.

Expressing how “saddened and devastated” it is, Fairfax Ice Arena issued a statement saying, “We are mourning the heartbreaking loss of members in our skating community, who were some of our nation’s brightest rising stars in U.S. Figure Skating. Our deepest condolences go out to the victims’ families, friends and the figure-skating community.”

### Edward Zhou

The Skating Lesson, an ice-skating website popular with the ice-skating community, wrote that Edward “was tiny when he first learned how to skate, but he was fearless and unafraid of trying anything new. It’s been said that his coaches loved coaching him because he always smiled and laughed every time he fell. Edward was known for relentlessly cheering on the other skaters. He was an only child, and his parents were always at the rink; [the three] traveled together everywhere.”

Woodson junior Cat Boyett has been friends with Edward since they were in seventh grade at Frost Middle School. “What stands out to me was his unyielding kindness to all his friends and everybody he met,” they said. “He was one of the most outgoing people. Whenever I saw him in the halls at school, he’d give me the biggest smile and wave. His smile was infectious and just lit up the room.”

Cat and Edward both belonged to SCNV and skated together at its home rink – the Fairfax Ice Arena – until last year, when he moved to the MedStar Capitals Iceplex in Arlington. “He was such an amazing skater; he’d gone on to the National Development Team in the past,” said Cat. “Edward and other skaters from all over the country had



Edward Zhou at a 2023 competition.



Edward Zhou with a skating certificate and trophy.



Edward Zhou before a piano concert.

qualified for the National Qualifying Series, and they got to go to the developmental camp in Wichita because of it. The camp ended last Tuesday.”

PSA Airlines Flight 5342 – carrying Edward, Cory, plus other local skaters and their families home to the Washington Metropolitan area – was some 15 seconds from landing on the runway at Reagan, last Wednesday, around 9 p.m., when the mili-



Edward Zhou celebrates his mother's birthday with his dad.

FAMILY PHOTO IN NY TIMES



Friends Edward Zhou and Cat Boyett at the SCNV picnic in summer 2023.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARI BOYETT

tary helicopter collided with it.

The impact caused the plane to break in two, plunging it and the helicopter into the icy waters of the Potomac River. A massive search-and-rescue effort ensued. But ultimately, the plane’s 60 passengers and four crew members and the Black Hawk helicopter’s three soldiers all perished.

“I found out Thursday morning when my mom told me,” said Cat. “I’d heard there’d been a crash, but didn’t know the details. And then I had this sinking horror and realization that Edward wasn’t coming back from Wichita. I had to leave school early – I was crying all day. And ever since then, I’ve been up and down.

“Thursday, at the ice rink, they’d set up a memorial table of flowers – which has now grown exponentially – and it was good to be with my community. A poster board was set up for each of the kids that skated there – Edward, Cory, Olivia and Brielle – with their photos on it, so people could write messages on it. There were also videos of each skater set up.”

Olivia Ter, 12, and mom Olesya of Maryland, were on the plane, too, as were Brielle Beyer, 12, and mom Justyna of Aldie. “Last week, I was watching Olivia skate,” said Cat. “It’s just so surreal that I won’t see them again.”

SEE ICE SKATERS, PAGE 11  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



# Community Mourns Young Ice Skaters Gone Too Soon

FROM PAGE 11

Cat said Edward started skating at age 6. “He loved skating and being on the ice,” said Cat. “Edward was the reason I kept skating because he was my first friend at the rink, and we skated freestyle sessions together.”

He was also a standout student, plus an accomplished pianist. His piano teacher, Livia Lai wrote on Facebook, “Edward was only 3 when he first joined my Yamaha group music class. He was funny, intelligent, compassionate, curious, enthusiastic and kind. Edward will be deeply missed.”

Indeed, Cat’s mom, Shari Boyett, called Edward “an outstanding, conscientious student with a passion for doing well in all areas of his life.”

“We’re both AP students, and he took classes like AP chemistry and computer science,” added Cat. “He wanted to someday do something in the STEM field [as a career]. Edward’s parents pushed him to excel in skating, piano and academics, but he loved it all. We were talking two weeks ago about how he felt about computer science and that he’d finally gotten a handle on it. He also got 100 percent on his AP chem test. And in November, he’d landed his first triple lutz. We were always thrilled for each other’s achievements academically and on skates.”

Now, said Cat, the atmosphere at Fairfax Ice Arena is “so sad. A lot of the coaches there saw these kids growing up and basically raised them. I feel like there aren’t even words to describe how hard it is for me to know I’ll never get to see or hug Edward again.”

“He exuded so much joy. He could be silly – like when one of the coaches was filming a skating-skills test and he did funny things to avoid being on the video. He was thoughtful, too. For my 16th birthday last January, he got me a seafoam-green Polaroid camera because that’s my favorite color.”

On Sunday, the Fairfax Ice Arena skaters gathered for a private memorial to share their memories of their lost friends. And that same night and again this Friday, there’ll be counseling sessions at the rink. Woodson will also have counselors available.

To honor Edward, Cat will “keep on skating and striving toward my academic and skating goals. And I’ll hold the love Edward had for skating in my mind.”

Boyett said Edward’s parents came to the U.S. from China to study in graduate school and to have a better life. “They wanted a child for so long, so when Edward came along, he was their precious jewel. And it’s important that we keep his memory alive and keep him in our hearts.”

Since the crash, she said Cat’s received countless texts and phone calls from people expressing their support for them. “The arms of love extended from family, friends and the skate community have been tremendous,” said Boyett. “We have to grieve and feel our feels, but it’s my fervent hope that Cat will be able to live and skate joyfully in Edward’s honor.”



From left, Stephanie, Cory and Roger Haynos.



Cory Haynos on the ice.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF LANCASTER



Cory Haynos at a 2023 competition.



Cory Haynos enjoying the outdoors.

AIMEE CHO/NBC-4



Cory Haynos at home.

AIMEE CHO/NBC-4

## Cory Haynos

Cory Haynos qualified for the U.S. Figure Skating training camp in Wichita after placing third in his division at a sectional competition last November in Massachusetts. Former Swedish national medalists Kalle Strid and Mikael Olofsson were his coaches. And the day before the crash – on the last day of training camp, he landed a triple axel. He’s survived by his sister Emily, a college student in Ohio.

The Skating Lesson described him as “a powerful skater who dreamed of making it to Nationals as a competitor.” And Robin Wilson wrote online that his mother Stephanie served on the board of the Skating Club of Northern Virginia, and his supportive father Roger even cut music for his son’s routines.

“I remember Cory and his father Roger well,” added Wilson. “Dad used to pick up Cory from school to take him to skating practice or out-of-town competitions. His parents would send me clips of his performances. They were so proud of his talent and put their heart and soul into promoting his successes. May they all RIP and their memories be eternal.”

There was an outpouring of condolences for Cory and his family on The Skating Lesson’s Facebook page. Cindy Rose called the crash devastating and sent prayers for all who died – and “especially for Emily, who lost her whole family.”

Nancy Kelskey said the tragedy was “just heart wrenching in every way.” And Betty Morgan noted that Stephanie Haynos subbed

at her former school and Roger worked in IT before retiring from FCPS. “May they all rest in peace,” she wrote.

“I sat next to the parents for hours [last] weekend at Nationals and we talked about the balance of skating and high school,” said Sarah Hamilton. “They were so very proud of their son and his accomplishments. I was heartbroken for their daughter, Cory’s sister.”

“They were part of our local skating world; I’ve known them about 12 years, since their daughter skated,” said Haley Perez. “They volunteered and helped out everywhere and were so devoted. I just can’t imagine what Emily is going through.”



# ENTERTAINMENT



Alexandria Restaurant Week runs now through Feb. 9, 2025 at nearly 100 restaurants in Alexandria.

## JAN. 1 - FEB. 23, 2025

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

## JAN. 16 TO FEB. 23

**Eclipse: An Athenaeum Sculpture Invitational.** At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Artist Talk: Sunday, February 23, 2 p.m. Curated by Alison Sigethy, Eclipse is an all sculpture show examining light and shadow, liminal space, and the passage of time. Every artist brings a unique perspective to their work. Pairing sculptures by different artists amplifies that perspective. Sometimes those perspectives sing in harmony, sometimes they debate. In either case, the experience of each individual work is heightened by the art it is paired with.

## NOW THRU FEB. 9

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

[https://visitallexandria.com/restaurants/restaurant-week/?mc\\_cid=6333e6a5dc&mc\\_eid=c8aed55232](https://visitallexandria.com/restaurants/restaurant-week/?mc_cid=6333e6a5dc&mc_eid=c8aed55232)

## FEB. 7 TO MARCH 1

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

## FEB. 8-MARCH 1

**Roald Dahl's Matilda The Musical.** At the Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe Street, Alexandria. Thursdays to Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 2 p.m. Matilda Wormwood is an exceptionally gifted child with an extraordinary love of books, an incredibly vivid imagination, and just plain rotten luck in the parental department. Along with her friends and her teacher, Miss Honey, Matilda stands up for justice against the headmis-

stress (appropriately dubbed "The Trunchbull") and other adults who "can't be bothered with the affairs of "wretched, filthy children."

## SATURDAY/FEB. 8

**Garden Talk - Spice It Up with Herb Gardening.** 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Bring out the best in your cooking with herbs grown in your own garden. You'll be amazed at the difference it can make, adding fragrance and flavor to your recipes. Join Extension Master Gardeners to learn to how to plan, plant and harvest herbs in your garden or in a container, that look as good as they taste. \$12 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code A4RW62F

## SATURDAY/FEB. 8

**Starting from Scratch with Seeds.** 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Grow flowers, vegetables and herbs from seed and expand your garden. Be inspired by Green Spring staff members as they discuss potting mixes, containers, seed treatments, lighting, fertilization, watering, seed sources and timing. Then take home a few seeds to start your own collection. \$23 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code J1VKQFD.

## SUNDAY/FEB. 9

**Grand Romantic Gestures.** 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (Adult) Expressions of love have taken many forms throughout the centuries, from the sublime to the ridiculous. As Valentine's Day approaches, explore some history-making grand romantic gestures that went far beyond cards and flowers. \$40 (lecture + tea); \$18 (lecture only).

## SUNDAY/FEB. 9

**Winter Lecture - Gardens in the Age of Jumping Worms.** 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Researcher Jordan Thompson will dive into the impacts of the invasive Asian jumping worms on

soil health and garden ecosystems. Learn about the unique challenges these worms pose to soil structure, nutrient cycling and plant growth and get practical advice and actionable steps to preserve your garden in the face of this growing threat. \$15 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code K07.9K57

## TUESDAY/FEB. 11

**Cocktail-Making Class.** 6 p.m. At Vola's Dockside Grill & Hi-Tide Lounge, 101 North Union Street, Old Town Alexandria. Vola's invites guests to join them for a fun and interactive cocktail-making class at the Hi-Tide Lounge. Guests will have the opportunity to shake up two signature cocktails while enjoying a variety of appetizers, all for \$60 per person (plus tax). Whether celebrating Valentine's Day early with a special someone or simply looking for a unique night out with friends, this event offers something for everyone. The service charge is included in the price, but space is limited, so reservations are recommended to secure a spot. Visit <https://www.volasdockside.com>.

## WEDNESDAY/FEB. 12

**Galentine's Celebration.** 6 to 8 p.m. At Palette 22 VA, 4053 Campbell Ave., Arlington. Join Palette 22 VA for a fun-filled Galentine's celebration at Art & Sip - "I Can Make My Own Flowers". For just \$65 plus tax, guests will dive into the art of crafting stunning, long-lasting paper flowers in a relaxed, creative setting. No prior crafting experience is needed—under the guidance of skilled instructor Jill Welch, attendees will learn to transform simple sheets of paper into beautiful blooms. By the end of the night, each participant will walk away with at least one gorgeous flower, plus the skills and materials to create a small bouquet of three to five flowers at home. Visit <https://arlington.palette22.com/>.

## THURSDAY/FEB. 13

**"Romance & Mystery."** 6 p.m. At Elaine's Restaurant, 208 Queen Street, Alexandria. Best selling romance author Robin Covington and mystery writer John Adam



Eclipse: An Athenaeum Sculpture Invitational can be seen now through Feb. 23, 2025 at The Athenaeum in Alexandria.

Wasowicz combine for "Romance & Mystery Night." Robin will highlight 'Daring the Player,' a prequel novella to her new sexy sports romance series. John will discuss 'Spite House,' book 7 of the popular Old Town Loves Mystery series.

James Ross plays and conducts Mozart & Schubert. Also featuring Lee Hinkle, marimba Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2; Kevin Puts, Mari-ma Concerto Schubert Symphony No. 9, "The Great C Major." Visit [AlexSym.org](http://AlexSym.org).

## FRIDAY/FEB. 14

**Barca Pier & Wine Bar.** 6 to 8:30 p.m. At 2 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Barca Wine Bar will host a special Valentine's Day Wine Tasting with Ardi Staka. Guests will be greeted with a welcome drink before enjoying a multi-course wine tasting paired with food. Throughout the evening, Ardi will share captivating stories from the vine, offering insights into the grapes and wine regions behind each selection. The experience is priced at \$90 per person (plus tax). Whether attending with a partner, close friend, or on a first date, this event promises to be a memorable evening. After the tasting, guests are invited to stay and enjoy a delicious dinner at Barca to round out the night! Visit: <https://www.barcaalx.com>.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 15

**"History & Mystery."** 4:15 p.m. At Heron Hotel, Old Town Alexandria. Attend "History & Mystery" at the new Heron Hotel at the corner of Washington and Prince Streets, with a focus on George Washington as the first Spymaster-in-Chief who employed spy craft to win the American War for independence. The event will feature Town Cryer Ben Fiore-Walker, retired civilian U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army Historian Kathy Shenkle, Brendan O'Neil, and John Wasowicz, author of 'Spite House,' the new Old Town mystery. Copies of the book signed by all of the speakers will be available, with 20% of the proceeds donated to a local non-profit educational organization. The free event will serve hot chocolate to all attendees!

## SATURDAY/FEB. 15

**Alexandria Symphony Orchestra.** 7:30 p.m. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall Alexandria Featuring

## SATURDAY/FEB. 15

**Workshop - Make a Hand-Bound Watercolor Journal.** 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Learn from Mani Maree how to make a hand bound journal by sewing signatures together filled with watercolor paper and various types of paper. You will create a unique cover and add other special touches to some inside pages. Your journal will be a unique treasure ready to be filled with drawings, paintings or writing. It will be special but it is made to be used often. \$107 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code Y1S.QTNQ

## SATURDAY/FEB. 15

**George Washington Birthday Parade.** 2-4 p.m. At 300 King Street, Alexandria. Thousands of spectators will line the streets of Old Town Alexandria to cheer on the oldest and largest George Washington Birthday Parade in the country! This year's parade theme is George Washington: America's Commander-in-Chief, marking the 250th anniversary of the start of the Revolutionary War and founding of the United States Army. The Parade Grand Marshal will be Lieutenant General Heidi J. Hoyle, Deputy Chief of Staff of the United States Army. The parade features drum corps, color guards, bands, community and fraternal organizations, youth groups, local merchants, city dignitaries, and, of course, General Washington and Martha Washington.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 15

**Alexandria Symphony Orchestra.** 7:30 p.m. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall, Alexandria. Featuring James Ross who plays



# ENTERTAINMENT

Nepenthe is proud to exhibit original artworks by six local artists in the Winter Solstice 2025 exhibit. Pictured (from left to right) are Nancy Ramsey, Lori Welch Brown, Camille Kouyoumdjian, Celia Chadwick and Todd Key. Missing: Lesley Clarke. Artists, friends, and the local community gathered on January 23rd for an ART+WINE+CHEESE opening event at the gallery. The exhibit will be up through February 19th.



and conducts Mozart & Schubert. Alexandria Symphony, James Ross, Conductor and Horn Soloist; Lee Hinkle, Marimba; Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2; Kevin Puts Marimba Concerto; Schubert Symphony No. 9, "The Great C Major."

**SUNDAY/FEB. 16**  
**Winter Lecture - Rethinking the Invasive Plant Issue.** 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Join the conversation with JC Raulston Arboretum director, Mark Weathington as we assess what is a native plant and what plants are truly invasive. Mark shares his insights into these complicated issues and proposes ideas about where we should be focusing our time, energy and money. Exclusionary ecology cannot put the genie back in the bottle, so let's rethink our approach to invasive plants to achieve realistic, optimum outcomes. \$15 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code PSO.QN87

**SUNDAY/FEB. 16**  
**Alexandria Symphony Orchestra.** 3 p.m. At George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Featuring James Ross who plays and conducts Mozart & Schubert. Alexandria Symphony, James Ross, Conductor and Horn Soloist; Lee Hinkle, Marimba; Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2; Kevin Puts Marimba Concerto; Schubert Symphony

No. 9, "The Great C Major."

**WEDNESDAY/FEB. 19**  
**"Strategies for Addressing Solo Aging, Social Isolation, and Mental Health for Seniors."** 1-2:30 p.m. At Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria. Many older adults in our community are aging by themselves or what we like to call "solo aging." This can cause anxiety and a fear of loneliness, but it doesn't have to be that way. By taking advantage of resources to stay connected to the community and developing a network of friends, solo aging isn't so scary, and even maybe the best time of one's life. Senior Services of Alexandria, along with At Home in Alexandria (AHA), a local senior village, is bringing together a group of experts in the field to talk about this topic by exploring practical strategies for supporting older adults as they navigate solo aging, combatting social isolation and prioritizing their mental health. Speakers include Steve Gurney of the Positive Aging Community, and Rhonda Williams, Supervisor of the city's Older Adult Clinical Services Team. Also, attendees will learn about local resources on how to stay connected to the community. This event is free! Please RSVP by email at [events@seniorservicesalex.org](mailto:events@seniorservicesalex.org) or call 703-836-4414, ext. 110.

**FRIDAY/FEB. 21**  
**The Thirteen: To The Field of Stars.** At 7:30 p.m. At Virginia Theological Seminary, Immanuel Chapel, 3651 Deanery Dr. Alexandria. The Thir-

teen returns to the mystical Camino de Santiago de Compostela - Camino of St. James of the Field of Stars - with two works that explore transfiguration: David Lang's Pulitzer Prize-winning the little match girl passion and Gabriel Jackson's 2011 To the Field of Stars.

**THE BIRCHMERE**  
At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or [www.Birchmere.com](http://www.Birchmere.com).

**FEBRUARY**  
Thu. 6: Karyn White \$49.50  
Fri. 7: Yasmin Williams - Acadia Tour, with Amadou Kouyate \$29.50  
Sat. 8: Who's Bad: The Ultimate Michael Jackson Experience \$39.50  
Tue. 11: Mdou Moctar (Special Acoustic Performance) with Janel Leppin \$35.00  
Thu. 13: Infamous Love Songs: An OVER THE RHINE Valentine's Concert \$39.50  
Fri. 14: Valentine's Day with KEVIN ROSS \$65.00  
Sat. 15: Valentine's Day with KEVIN ROSS \$65.00  
Sun. 16: Daryl Davis Presents: Thanks For The Memories 2024! \$39.50  
Wed. 19: Billy F. Gibbons \$89.50 SOLD OUT!  
Thu. 20: Drew Lynch \$45.00  
Fri. 21: Gary Gulman "Misfit Stand Up Tour" \$59.50 SOLD OUT!  
Sat. 22: Newmyer Flyer Presents: Laurel Canyon \$39.50 SOLD OUT!  
Sun. 23: Chayce Beckham \$29.50  
Fri. 28: Aaron Watson "Buy The World A Round" Tour 2025 \$35.00

## Environmental Wins and Losses

FROM PAGE 8

treatment facilities have made important progress in nutrient reductions in recent years due to investments made by the General Assembly.

CBF Virginia Policy Manager Jay Ford released the following statement:

"Protecting Virginians from costly flooding, extreme storms, and the health impacts

of pollution is a bipartisan issue. This crossover period saw robust support for pollution reduction and measures to proactively prepare the Commonwealth for costly storms and flooding on our horizon.

"While we celebrate the progress made on several key environmental fronts, the losses related to menhaden and oyster studies and the need for a comprehensive

clean energy strategy highlight the urgency of the challenges facing the Chesapeake Bay.

"This moment presents a significant opportunity for legislators to demonstrate their commitment to a healthy environment and resilient communities. We urge them to prioritize the measures that will ensure a cleaner, healthier Virginia for the next generation."

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### Announcements

#### CLARIDGE HOUSE II ALEXANDRIA

301 N. Ripley St.,  
Alexandria VA 22304  
Tel: 703-823-5444  
Claridge House

Waiting list opens on 2/12/25.

Claridge House is an Elderly subsidized Section 8 apartments community for 62 years old & over and persons with disabilities.



### Legals

### Legals

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

#### VOLUNTARY REMEDIATION PROGRAM (VRP) ACTIVITY

VRP Project Number VRP01063  
811 North Columbus Street  
City of Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Participant  
805-823 Columbus Development LLC  
4445 Willard Avenue, Suite 600  
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815

The 0.57-acre subject property, which is addressed 811 N Columbus Street, Alexandria, Virginia and is bounded by N Columbus Street, Madison Street, and privately held land, is participating in the Virginia Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) administered by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The property is currently being redeveloped with a five-story, 78-unit multifamily building with one level of underground parking. The property was vacant prior to the beginning of the on-going redevelopment of the Site. A previous environmental investigation identified petroleum compounds, poly-cyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and metals contamination in soil and petroleum compounds and chlorinated solvent contamination in groundwater. The Participant, 805-823 Columbus Development LLC, proposed remedial actions to mitigate potential risks to human health and the environment from the contaminants. VDEQ approved the remedial actions, which consist of implementation of both an Environmental Health and Safety Plan and an Impacted Material Management Plan, disposal and removal of contaminated soil, installation of vapor intrusion mitigation controls, installation of concrete or clean soil cover, and a deed restriction limiting use of groundwater to environmental monitoring and testing or de-watering in compliance with law. A Certification of Satisfactory Completion of Remediation will be requested from the VDEQ VRP for the site. Questions or comments regarding this notice will be accepted for 30 days from the date of publication (ending March 8, 2025) and should be addressed to the contact below:

Nicholas R. Allen  
Environmental Consultants and Contractors, Inc.  
43045 Little River Turnpike  
Chantilly, VA 20152  
[publicnotice@eccfirst.com](mailto:publicnotice@eccfirst.com)  
(703) 327-2900

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FROM PAGE 7

**SUPPORT GROUPS**

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

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

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

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

- ❖ Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.
- ❖ Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, 614 Four Mile Road.

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

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

**ONGOING**

Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program. The City of Alexandria has reinstated its sewer Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program for homeowners in designated areas that historically experience basement back-ups or flooding. The program reimburses homeowners for up to 50 percent of the cost of installing a BFP device by a licensed plumbing contractor, up to a maximum of \$2,000. The current program period is through Dec. 31, 2019. Alexandria homeowners should call the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services at 703-746-4014 or visit [www.alexandriava.gov/tes](http://www.alexandriava.gov/tes).

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**Brown v. Board of Education  
SCHOLARSHIP  
COMMITTEE**

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS  
THROUGH APRIL 11, 2025

The Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program was established by the General Assembly to provide educational opportunities for persons who were denied an education in Virginia between 1954 and 1964 due to the closing of the public schools during Massive Resistance. The scholarship is now available to those individuals and to their descendants. The program is open to eligible applicants for the 2025-2026 school year. For applications and information on eligibility, visit:

**BROWNSCHOLARSHIP.VIRGINIA.GOV**

**Legals**

**Legals**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**NOTICE OF VOLUNTARY REMEDIATION**

Pursuant to the Virginia Voluntary Remediation Regulations, Virginia Administrative Code section 9VAC20-160-120, Inova Health Care Services (Participant) with an address of 8095 Innovation Park Drive, Fairfax VA 22031, hereby provides notice of voluntary remediation at the following site (Site):

Inova Alexandria at Landmark (West End)  
6055 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
VRP Number VRP01104

The Site is comprised of approximately 10.4 acres of land with Tax Map No. 047.02-03-10. The Site is located on the western portion of the former Landmark Mall and the former buildings on the Site have been demolished. The Industrial Development Authority of the City of Alexandria acquired the Site and leased it to the Participant. The Participant is redeveloping the Site with a hospital, specialty center, and cancer treatment center. Sampling on the Site detected the presence of volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, metals and petroleum hydrocarbons in soil and groundwater. The Participant applied to and was deemed eligible to participate in the Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) in order to assess and address any environmental risks associated with the detected constituents. A site characterization and risk assessment has been reviewed and accepted as complete by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The revised risk evaluation found that the following restrictions placed on the future use of the Site pursuant to the VRP will be protective of human health and the environment: (1) groundwater beneath the Site will not be used for any purpose other than environmental monitoring and testing or dewatering in compliance with law; and (2) the occupied ground floor or subterranean areas of buildings constructed on the Site will be situated over ventilated underground parking or other approved form of vapor mitigation operated and maintained pursuant to an operation and maintenance plan.

If you wish to provide written comments on the voluntary remedial action or request additional information you should contact the following person who is familiar with the Site: James A. Thornhill, Wire Gill LLP, 9200 Forest Hill Avenue, Suite C-1, Richmond, Virginia 23235, [jthornhill@wiregill.com](mailto:jthornhill@wiregill.com) 804-288-8400. Written comments will be accepted for a period of 30 days from the date of publication.

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# Helicopter Involved Flew out of Fort Belvoir

By MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

**T**he helicopter involved in the tragedy at Reagan National Airport operated out of Davison Army Airfield at Fort Belvoir.

Fort Belvoir put out a statement on social media following the crash. "While performing a training mission a United States Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from Bravo Company, 12th Aviation Battalion, Davison Army Airfield, Fort Belvoir, Va., collided in midair with an American Airlines Bombardier CRJ700 regional jet Flight 5342 Wednesday night at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The FAA, NTSB and the United States Army will investigate. The NTSB will lead the investigation. We are working with local officials and will provide any additional information once it becomes available," it said.

According to the Army, the three soldiers aboard the helicopter have been identified. They were Staff Sgt. Ryan Austin O'Hara, 28, of Lilburn, Georgia, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Loyd Eaves, 39,



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

The helicopter which collided with the plane at Reagan National Airport flew out of Davison Airfield which is across the street from the National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, which displays some of the Army helicopters such as this one.

of Great Mills, Maryland and Captain Rebecca M. Lobach, 28, from Durham, N.C. was the third pilot on the Army helicopter. It is not known if all the remains have been recovered yet.

Helicopters have operated out of Davison for years and have been the subject of noise complaints from housing in the immediate area, most of which was built years after Davison was in service.

## Community Mourns Young Ice Skaters

FROM PAGE 11

"Eddie Haynos (Roger's dad) lost his only son, his daughter-in-law and only grandson," said Marie Burnley. "My heart breaks for him. Emily lost her mom, dad and brother – heartbreaking. God, surround them with your love, strength and healing power."

Matthew Alan LaRaviere of Southern Virginia said his heart was broken at the loss of his cousin Roger, plus Stephanie and Cory. "Roger has always inspired me by his absolute love for his family and dedication to providing only the best for his wife and kids," he wrote. "Cory was an amazing skater with a very bright future with the U.S. Skating Team."

"Recently in a conversation with Roger, he was excited about his son's future and seemed honored that my wife and I were planning to travel north to see Cory perform. We all were expecting Cory to represent our country [someday] in the U.S. Olympics. While Roger, Stephanie, and Cory's plane did not land safely back on this earth, their flight no doubt continued on into the arms of a loving Saviour ready to welcome them home. Please pray for their daughter Emily, my uncle Eddie, Stephanie's family, and all the others who are suffering."

Jane Ellen said Roger "was so proud, sending screen videos of Cory's recent progress; gone way too soon. Roger, my friend, I miss you already. My heart is broken. I'll miss hearing about the kids and their success, both on and off the ice. Godspeed."

"Such a tragedy," added Monica Estevez. "Sending my condolences and prayers."  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Words cannot express the pain."

"Praying hard for Emily," wrote Jen Marco. "Someone, hold this young lady close. Do not let her go." And Erica Page Brewer said she "can't imagine the unbearable grief Emily's facing."

Ozge Ovun Sert wrote that "both Cory and Eddie were from my daughter's high school. It is incredibly heartbreaking and devastating for the families and the community. I think this tragedy reminds everyone [of] the meaning of life and gratitude. We are alive today, but we may have been in that plane yesterday. They will always be remembered with their smiles."

In addition, Olga Garrity – who coached both Cory and Emily – has set up a gofundme page to try to raise at least \$50,000 for Emily, 19, to help her finish college and meet her daily expenses. Teacher Terry Barr implored, "I taught both Emily and Cory for years, and Emily needs our help. Please donate if you can."

Explained Emily Desjardins, "Emily Haynos lost her entire immediate family on the flight, at the young age of 19. The challenges facing her in the days ahead are enormous. I skated with Emily for many years at Fairfax Ice Arena, and she and her whole family were loved by all."

"Roger and Stephanie were wonderful parents and so very proud of both Emily and Cory. They were the kind of people that were always the first to volunteer, always the first to help. In their memory, please consider donating to make the road ahead a little bit easier for Emily." To contribute, go to [https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-emily-haynos-in-honor-of-cory-stephanie-and-roger?fbclid=IwY2xjawINLsxleHRuA2FbQIX-MAABHemPp0svoy81EemdbUIBGt\\_y8N-PqAMj7kIkzSKrjee807HLLLeP2PNyD9g\\_aem\\_dh0ZrxCk1e5dg31VmBrWuA](https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-emily-haynos-in-honor-of-cory-stephanie-and-roger?fbclid=IwY2xjawINLsxleHRuA2FbQIX-MAABHemPp0svoy81EemdbUIBGt_y8N-PqAMj7kIkzSKrjee807HLLLeP2PNyD9g_aem_dh0ZrxCk1e5dg31VmBrWuA).

U.S. Figure Skating wrote, "We're devastated by this loss and are holding the victims' loved ones closely in our hearts. "We've established the U.S. Figure Skating Family Support Fund to provide financial assistance to [our] families directly impacted by the tragedy." Go to <https://secure.qgiv.com/for/usfigureskatingfoundation/event/usfigureskatingfund/>.

The First Baptist Church of Kingstowne, which the Haynos family attended, also established a donation site for them. Go to <https://fbckingstowne.churchcenter.com/giving> and select "Haynos Family Bereavement Fund."

On Fairfax Ice Arena's Facebook page, skating parent Leonard Tengco said everyone there – coaches, staff, skaters, parents – become like family. So when the unthinkable strikes, it affects them all.

"The staff watched those kids grow up and blossom into nationally competitive skaters and are now left to endure the pain caused by their tragic end," he wrote. "My heart deeply aches for my ice rink and the local figure-skating community. I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of those who have died."

"So sad, so many, so young," added Nancy Costello. "They are skating on the most perfect ice rink now, with their angel wings, as one big family."

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## "Diechotomy"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As a longtime cancer patient, I've always made a point of exuding as much positivity as I could muster (or die trying). My theory was that if I put out positive vibes than I'd likely receive them back. And by receiving positive vibes, et cetera, I'd feel more positive myself. Basically, it's a cyclical/selfish strategy to make me feel positive/good. And if there's one emotion a cancer patient can't get enough of, it's positivity – with a side of humor.

After 15+ years of various interactions with people who see me regularly and others who hardly see me at all, I have become hip to their well-intentioned observations. The dichotomy is, most of the comments about my appearance have been wrong but said for the right reason: my self-image/self-confidence. They tell me I look great. Incredibly so almost given the ravaging effects of chemotherapy. And though I'm not a look-in-the-mirror type guy, I certainly see what I look like every morning as I look in the mirror while I brush my teeth and often, it ain't pretty. The treatment's side effects don't usually enhance your appearance. Far from it, in fact. (The understatement of the last decade and a half. Hardly is chemotherapy to be confused with a health and beauty-type spa.)

As the years have passed (thank God!) I have noticed an unintended consequence of these, almost universally, flattering descriptions of my appearance. The "You look great, Ken" is invariably followed by a comparison to how bad I looked the last time this person saw me. Which in arrears now means I looked terrible before; my face was drawn, its color was off, my pallor was gray and so forth. Meant as a sincere expression of encouragement and my improvement/wherewithal on my condition, they are all too familiar. I can't look good now and have looked bad before when before I – at that time, you said I also looked good and so on and so on going back to 2009, when my chemotherapy began. Every present I was told I looked good compared to every before when I was told I looked bad. It was sort of an ambidextrous-type comment: I looked both bad and good - simultaneously. Irrespective of the truth, I was praised with positivity. As such, my reflection in the mirror bothered me less as their opinions seemed to affect me more. And if I did receive any negative/possibly honest opinions, I would recall one of my late father's go-to advisories: "Every knock is a boost." Regardless of what observations were made to/about me, I took it all in stride. Never too high. Never too low. And when the always good now/always bad before juxtaposition became clear to me, I laughed. I guess that's what friends and family do for people they care about.

Not that occasionally there wasn't an ounce (literally) of truth to their intended-to-be-sincere comments, but I never believed half of the over-the-top descriptions of how good I looked anyway. Besides, it was more important/beneficial to me that people's attitude toward me was upbeat and encouraging. Granted, the truth might set you free, but I needed/preferred that the lies carry me forward.

Undergoing chemotherapy is a long slog. And for me there were no guarantees. I'm not cured by any means, but I sure am grateful for all the positivity I received.

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



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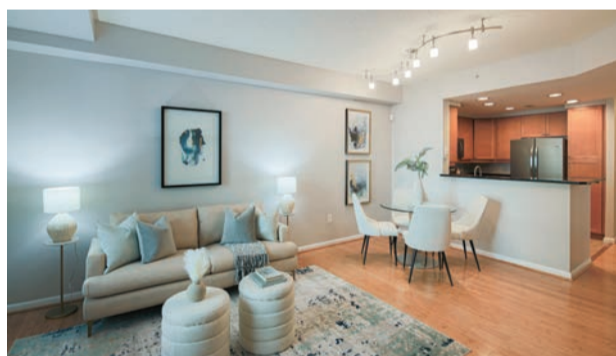
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