

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 6, 2025

New Butchery Opens in Mount Vernon: The Cut

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

The Mount Vernon area got a special valentine on Feb. 14 when The Cut, a new European-style butchery opened in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center.

The sleek new shop with a distinctive black and white checkerboard tile floor has big windows for would-be shoppers outside and providing plenty of light inside to peruse fresh farm-to-table meats -- beef, poultry, lamb, pork (including pork bellies), seafood, charcuteries, spices, produce, wine, cheese and other products. A Tomahawk ribeye cut of beef is being dry aged for 40 days over four blocks of salt in a glass refrigerator, intriguing many customers.

The butchery also offers products like scone mix, Japanese fish sauce, pasta and 88-ounce-cans of tomatoes from Italy and sardines and squid in olive oil from Spain. Shoppers can choose from several kinds of salt: butcher's, fisherman's and sel de Jardinier. Translation: French gardener's sea salt, a salt and herb blend "with tarragon, garlic, parsley and chervil, the perfect seasoning for anything, in-



Opening Party Night for The Cut, with owner Alex Kilroy and Wendell Allsbrook, Head Butcher and Culinary Director.



Final touches before the doors open to the public for the first time.

PHOTO BY ELYSE @ TORCH PICTURES

cluding sautéed vegetables, sauces, soups and meats," says the Les Fleurs website, a vendor of French products.

"It's going great," said Alex Kilroy, the owner who lives nearby. He expects customer traffic to pick up once the weather warms up and

the grills and smokers come out for more outdoor cooking.

Kilroy got the idea to open a butchery when he wanted to grill a high-quality steak for his birthday, but he could not find one nearby that met his culinary standards. He believes people will want to shop

in The Cut because "customers are more educated than ever and are asking more questions about where food is sourced," he said in an interview. "We give them an alternative to the grocery store, something much fresher and meat that can be cut on demand." He

cited as examples, a one- or two-inch thick steak, a trimmed brisket, a whole chicken cut up, an ounce of salmon or a whole filet. "We can tailor it to the needs of the customer," he emphasized. "Our focus is on the highest quality and freshest

SEE NEW BUTCHERY, PAGE 3

Hoda Kotb Started at Fort Hunt Kotb named one of USA Today's 'Women of the Year'

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

In the early 1980s, the environment was right for Hoda Kotb at Fort Hunt High School in Mount Vernon. Kotb started off on the right foot to becoming a world-wide sensation in broadcast journalism and is now one of USA Today's "Women of the Year." She's joining "61 women across the country using their voices and determination to push for change and equality, and even joy," the recognition said.

She built a career on thinking positively and it is continuing to pave the way for success, urging women to be their own advocates and fight for themselves.

It all started in 1982, when Kotb graduated from Fort Hunt High School, which was converted into Carl Sandburg Middle School. Kotb went on to Virginia Tech University where she got a Bachelor of Arts in broadcast journalism. She was a local reporter in New Orleans, and Fort Myers, Florida, and then the Today show with Kathie Lee Gifford between 2008 and 2019. She was the co-anchor of NBC News' TODAY and the co-host of TODAY's fourth hour, alongside Jenna Bush Hager.

That's behind her now and she's raising two daughters even though she's over 60, another step she's

SEE , PAGE 3



NBC Today Show anchor Hoda Kotb walks onto the stage at the Fort Hunt High School 60th Reunion in 2023 at Carl Sandburg Middle School. Kotb was a 1982 graduate of Fort Hunt.



Hoda Kotb gives remarks at the Fort Hunt High School 60th reunion Sept. 30, 2023 at Carl Sandburg Middle School.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

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MORTGAGE

New Butchery Opens in Mount Vernon: The Cut



The Cut is between Walgreens Pharmacy and Riverbend Bistro in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center.

FROM PAGE 1

products for our customers.”

Classic European butcheries typically offer high-quality products, some meticulously curated and cut and products sourced from local farms.

For the non-meat eaters, Kilroy believes his shop “supports all at the dinner table. We sell seafood, pasta and vegetables for people with dietary restrictions. We can fill out a meal for the entire family.”

High Visibility

Kilroy says he chose the spot facing Fort Hunt Road because the Hollin Hall Shopping Center “is the closest to a main street feel. It’s in a densely populated area and the customers in the area are very supportive of neighborhood businesses. I believe that what we are trying to cultivate in the shop is a good fit for the dynamic and support of the neighboring communities.”

To sharpen his knowledge and

management and marketing skills, Kilroy took butchering classes in Sperryville and studied 20 butcher shops on the East Coast. He visited farms to learn about cattle genetics and dietary and water needs. Talking to farmers bolstered his respect for their work, he offers. “It was a learning curve,” he said.

That self-education effort led to a row of crystal clear glass cases offering juicy red cuts of beef, glistening seafood and other products that are drawing many admirers with taste buds tingling.

Behind and above the meat counter is an eight-by-fifty-foot mural of a Virginia landscape painted by Patrick Kirwin, a Torpedo Factory artist. “The mural could be anywhere in Virginia,” Kilroy said. “We wanted to have



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Gabe Tosé holding a bone-end ribeye steak.

a little bit of mystery behind it.”

Kilroy has partnered with Virginia farms, local seafood and produce wholesalers and others.

The Cut Butchery is at 7968 Fort Hunt Road, next to River Bend Bistro and the Walgreens Pharmacy. Visit <https://thecutbutchery.com/>.



Customers can explore two counters of meats and other food.



Piccante salami, one of several appetizers at The Cut.



Littleneck clams ready for customers.



Italian sausages for sale.

Kotb Named One of USA Today’s ‘Women of the Year’

FROM PAGE 1

proud of.

Amongst the 2025 Women of the Year, Kotb is there with Eleanor Holmes Norton from D.C., astronaut Kellie Gerardi, Veteran advocate Sen. Tammy Duckworth, (D-Illinois) and Sabrina Burress in Virginia who is the founder and executive director of ARROW, an organization that helps provide

mental healthcare for people without insurance. These are just a few of the Women that make a difference on the list.

In addition to her journalism career, Kotb is a cancer survivor, and has taken on several initiatives to raise awareness in that area too.

Her awards include a 2016 Gracie Award for Outstanding Host in Entertainment/In-

formation for her radio show, “The Hoda Show on SiriusXM,” and a Gracie Award for Outstanding Host in News/Non-fiction and a Webby Award in 2015. In 2008 she won the Alfred I. du Pont – Columbia University award, a Peabody Award in 2006 for a Dateline NBC report, and several Daytime Emmys as part of TODAY’s recognition as the best morning news program, the Today

show information said.

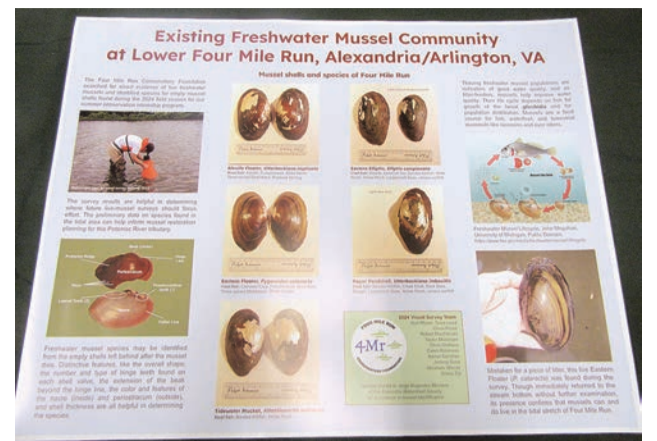
She made such an impression in Fort Hunt that in 2018 a bunch of fellow FH grads took a road trip and hung out in front of the studio in NYC where Hoda was filming the Today show. Read the Gazette story here. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2023/may/04/fort-hunt-alums-cheered-fellow-grad-outside-30-roc/>



Dean Naujoks, Potomac Riverkeeper



Michael Nardolilli, Executive Director, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin and Naujoks



Post of mussels found in Four Mile Run

More Mussels Make Cleaner Rivers

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
GAZETTE PACKET

Mussels are not cute, cuddly or charismatic. They are bivalves with a soft body inside two shells hinged together by a ligament, shellfish that like to embed in river bottom sediments. While they typically don't get the attention of other wildlife, they are important, known as nature's "cleanup crew."

Mussels can augment people's Potomac River cleanup efforts, Dean Naujoks told 45 attendees at a meeting of the Friends of Dyke Marsh on Feb. 23 at the Mount Vernon Government Center. Naujoks is with the Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN).

"Freshwater mussels are mollusks, similar to their marine clam and oyster cousins and are an essential component of our rivers and streams that improve water quality by acting as filters," explains the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources website. They filter bacteria, algae and other small particles.

National Harbor and Alexandria

Naujoks described two Potomac River mussel restoration projects.

For their 50 Million Mussel Project launched in 2019, they suspended cages of young mussels into the Potomac River in Smoot's Cove at Maryland's National Harbor with the goal of restoring 50 million by 2030. Though they have had to cope with waves, currents, hungry birds and enterprising otters, they are persisting and hope to soon have a new system called an "up-weller" to serve as a mussel incubator.

Naujoks also described a mussel restoration project just off Alexandria's Oronoco Park, started in 2023, where they will have introduced over 14,000 mussels into the Alexandria waters of the river by 2026. This restoration is funded by their \$300,000 settlement with the city of Alexandria to remediate decades of coal tar residue pollution from the abandoned Alexandria Town Gas Plant, in operation from 1851 to 1946. Coal tar, a liquid byproduct of coal processing, contains some carcinogenic chemicals like benzene. The city is now capturing the coal tar, has re-lined the pipeline and will dredge the soil to remove the pollutants, Naujoks reported.

Helping Mussels Upstream

Michael Nardolilli, Executive Director of



Lowering cages with mussel larvae into the Potomac River at National Harbor



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



The Potomac Riverkeeper's sign at National Harbor describing the project

the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), attended the meeting and later described a related ICPRB project. "Freshwater mussels act as filters of the Potomac River," he said. "Once plentiful, these bivalves depend upon American eels to transport glochidia (baby mussels) upstream in their gills.

"Unfortunately, eels were cut off from the north branch of the Potomac by old dams built for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. ICPRB has secured a Chesapeake WILD grant to build eel ladders around dam 4 (near Williamsport, Maryland) and dam 5 (near Shepherdstown, West Virginia) to restore freshwater mussels to the upper Potomac River. More eels lead to more mussels and cleaner water," he said.

At the meeting, Kurt Moser, President of the Four Mile Run Conservancy, shared posters describing five freshwater mussel

species that his organization found in Four Mile Run.

Is the Potomac Clean?

In the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson labeled the "nation's river" as a "national disgrace" and people were advised to get a tetanus shot if they fell in.

Today it is much cleaner, receiving an overall grade of B in 2023 from the Potomac Conservancy, but the watchdog group warned that pollution is still a problem. "Polluted urban runoff is the only growing source of pollution to the Potomac River. Polluted runoff occurs when excess rainwater flows across paved and hardened surfaces and carries street oils, lawn fertilizers, trash and even diluted sewage directly into local streams," the report said.

The riverkeeper network wants to make the river swimmable again for people, Naujoks said. Volunteers conduct water testing at 30 points from May to September along the Potomac, including one at Belle Haven Marina.

"When the first English settlers arrived on these shores, they were astonished to discover rivers practically paved in freshwater mussels," according to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. Today, 70 percent of mussel species in the U.S. are extinct or at risk of extinction. Virginia experts say that of the state's 82 species, only 30 percent are stable.

Naujok wants to reverse that disturbing

trend. "The river will be a lot cleaner than it is today by 2030," he predicted.

Information

Friends of Dyke Marsh www.fodm.org
Potomac Riverkeeper Network, www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, www.icprb.org
Four Mile Run Conservancy Foundation, www.fourmilerun.org

How Do Mussels Reproduce?

The life cycle of the freshwater mussel is one the most complex and interesting in the animal world. Unlike other animals that can actively search for a mate, the sedentary mussel depends on the river current to reproduce. The process begins with the male releasing sperm, and the female located downstream drawing it in through her in-current siphon. Numbering in the 100's to hundreds of thousands, the fertilized eggs develop into glochidia within her gills. Once mature, they are released into the water column to begin the second part of their lives-attaching to the gills, fins, or scales of freshwater fishes. At this point, the process is further complicated because not only do the glochidia have to find a fish, but it has to be one of a few specific fish species for the life cycle to continue. If a glochidium attaches to the correct fish species, it encysts into the fish's tissue and undergoes a short life as a parasite.

Alice's Kids to Pay for Prom Tickets for Altadena High Schoolers

Sometime this week, every senior at the six high schools in Altadena, California, learned that Alice's Kids, a nonprofit organization based in Mount Vernon, Va. is paying for their prom tickets. This will help about 850 kids, many of whom have had their lives turned upside down by the tragic fires. Normally, we approve one request at a time but we thought this was a very special circumstance.

Every school held special assemblies to announce the good news and, to top it off, they will learn the news in a video prepared by actor Steve Carell. Steve apparently is very popular with high school seniors as they re-discovered his show "The Office" during COVID and for his voiceover in "Despicable Me."

Find out more and donate at <https://www.aliceskids.org/>

Mid-Winter Festival

The Mid-Winter Festival returns in a new location this month.

Come enjoy this free Folk Festival featuring musical performances, dance demonstrations, singing and instrument workshops, storytelling, family programming, and more.

Featured performers 2025 Include: Capital Accord Chorus, Capitol Hillbillies, Wombat Crossing, Rock Creek Morris Women, Foggy Bottom Morris Men, RAYMI, Archie Edwards Blues Heritage Foundation,

Fiddlin' Willie Band, and more

Volunteers needed. Contact president@fsgw.org
Questions about performing contact office@fsgw.org

WHERE: Browne Academy, 5917 Telegraph Road Alexandria, VA 22310

WHEN: March 22, 2025, 11am - 6pm, with a community dance from 7 - 10pm

FOOD: We will have food trucks - Two Smooth Dudes Food Truck from 11am-3pm, and The Roaming Coyote from 3-8pm.

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. Or email to calendar@connectionnewspapers.com

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince

William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org. STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for

the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or donalдреа@aol.com.



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General Assembly Proposed Budget Differs from Governor's

End of session report

BY SEN. ADAM EBBIN

The 2025 General Assembly session concluded in February. We are scheduled to meet again on April 2 when we will reconvene to act on vetoes and amendments from the governor on legislation that we passed during our 46-day session.

Governor Youngkin received 1,895 bills from the General Assembly this year. The governor must act on all bills by midnight on March 23, which is 30 days after adjournment of the General Assembly.

I am happy to have worked with a diverse group of stakeholders, constituents, and subject matter experts to navigate nineteen of my bills and one constitutional amendment through both chambers of the General Assembly, a majority of which received bipartisan support. Except for the Marriage Equality Constitutional Amendment, which he has no role in, the nineteen other pieces of my legislation head to Governor Youngkin for his consideration. Here I have linked the status of the bills that were sent to the governor.

In our budget, we are providing \$1.1 billion for immediate and ongoing tax relief to Virginia's fami-

lies. Virginians will receive a \$200 rebate for individuals and \$400 for joint filers by Oct. 15, 2025.

In addition, \$686.1 million is appropriated over the biennium to fully fund Medicaid and the children's health insurance forecast. We are also increasing state funding for public education by \$728.4 million over the biennium as we strive to ensure all students have access to a high-quality education. The budget fully funds support staff with \$222.9 million to provide critical resources for students and educators. The budget also includes \$310 million in school construction grants over two years — an additional \$150 million to modernize and repair school buildings.

The General Assembly's budget would also invest \$134.4 million for a \$1,000 bonus for our hardworking instructional and support personnel in June 2025. We voted to boost special education funding by 10% with a \$52.8 million increase to provide resources to students with disabilities. This budget would also expand access to early childhood education with a \$25 million public-private partnership to set children up for success from the start.

We also voted to dedicate \$12 million to initiatives that improve

student achievement and close learning gaps.

In higher education, we would invest \$55 million to maintain affordable access to public colleges and universities, and would continue our commitment to Virginia's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with \$20 million in funding.

Finally, we voted to invest in public employees and working families by appropriating \$83.1 million to fund a 1.5% bonus for state and state-supported local employees — recognizing the essential work of public servants across Virginia.

Our total General Fund Budget will be just north of \$69 billion for FY25 and FY26.

The General Assembly's priorities differ from the Youngkin administration. The General Assembly has appropriated more for K-12



Ebbin

Education, VA Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program, disaster funds for Hurricane Helene Victims, and community violence intervention programs than the Governor.

Resources for Federal Workers

Many of you join my concern for the cuts to federal workers by the Trump Administration. I have put together a resource page for federal workers here. Please share this page with anyone you know that is affected by these cuts.

I have worked this session to pass legislation to help out my constituents with unemployment benefits, and will continue to use my voice to speak out against cuts to the federal budget.

Thanks for the continued opportunity to serve you in the State Senate.

LETTER

Fairfax County CERT: Beacon of Resilience in Our Community

To the Editor,

In times of crisis, the Fairfax County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) stands as a crucial pillar of strength and preparedness for our community. This all-volunteer organization empowers residents with essential knowledge and skills to navigate emergencies, from natural disasters to everyday incidents. You can learn more about CERT's services and initiatives at <https://fairfaxcountycert.org/about/why-cert/>.

CERT volunteers are rigorously trained to assist themselves, their families, and their neighbors when the need arises, and they continu-

ously extend this training to others. Another vital part of CERT's mission is to support Fairfax County's first responders. These dedicated volunteers assist with traffic and crowd management, participate in exercises and drills as role players, and more recently, provide canteen services at major incidents across the county. CERT's contributions, described in more detail at <https://fairfaxcountycert.org/about/table-of-services/>, exemplify community service at its finest.

Despite the program's importance, its future hangs in the bal-

SEE LETTER, PAGE 14

Oppose Release of PFAS In Virginia Waters

Join Wild Virginia for an online program this Thursday, March 6, 2025, at 7 p.m. to oppose permits drafted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that would allow releases of dangerous per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to state waters. We will be calling on DEQ to hold public hearings to give residents and water users a better chance to share their opinions and concerns about these threats to our environment and our communities. And we will insist that the permits include monitoring for PFAS and limitations to stop known PFAS releases.

One permit under review is proposed to control polluted stormwater from Fort Belvoir that is discharged to Accotink Creek and other tributaries to the Potomac

River. The U.S. Army has found serious contamination of land and water by PFAS in and around its facilities. Those findings make it essential that DEQ impose stringent requirements to protect Virginians. So far, DEQ has failed to even address the known PFAS sources in its draft permit - let alone enforce the law to stop the discharges.

The other permit would allow pollutants to be discharged from a municipal wastewater treatment plant owned by the Arlington County Water Pollution Control Bureau. Data collected by the plant's owners show that dangerous levels of PFAS have been discharged to Four Mile Run, another tributary to the Potomac River. As with the Fort Belvoir permit, DEQ has refused to acknowledge the problem or live up to its legal duty to stop the pollution.

RSVP:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/commenting-writing-party-oppose-permits-allowing-discharges-of-pfas-tickets-1247356790739?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

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NEWS

Hybla Valley Park Renewal Includes Futsal

This soccer variant could be a spark for success in this part of Mount Vernon.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

The Fairfax County Park Authority recently put out a “pardon our dust,” announcement for work on Hybla Valley Park off Lockheed Boulevard where they are “sprucing up,” the park but also including a futsal court, for the soccer fans in this area.

Futsal is a form of soccer that’s big in Argentina that’s growing a following in the United States as well. It’s defined as a variant of soccer played (mainly) indoors on a hard court slightly larger than a basketball court, with two teams of five players each, including a goalkeeper.

Apparently some of the residents in this area are aware of this sport too because they voiced support at the public information meeting last year. According to the county, FCPA presented multiple park renovation concepts to the community at Hybla Valley Elementary School in September 2024. The community feedback received during that meeting and the subsequent comment period confirmed that the community desired a substantial playground, a futsal court, a basketball court, and more places to sit within the park.

According to Brittany Vasquez, public relations manager at FCPA, the park renovation is part of the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access (PROSA) Strategy, which focuses on equitable access to parks and amenities. Using this framework, Hybla Valley Park was identified as an opportunity for investment that would have a lasting positive impact on the surrounding community.



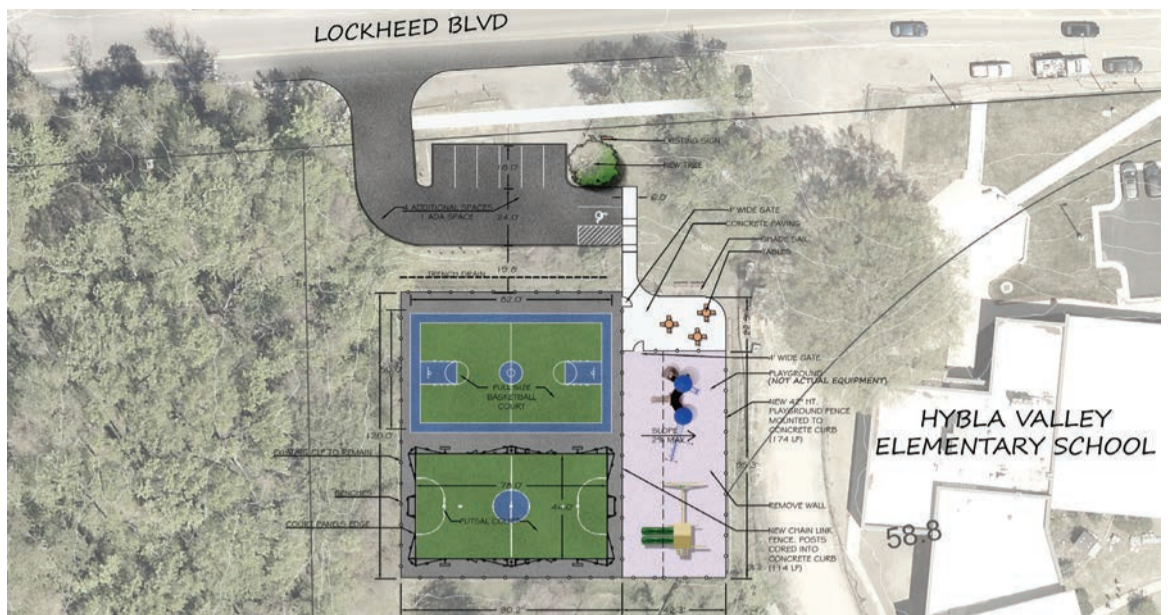
Marcia Tafarel is the inaugural head coach of the U.S. Women’s Futsal National Team.

They gathered feedback on court types and found that 79% of 90 respondents at a local meeting indicated that futsal and basketball would be the most beneficial court option for the community, surpassing tennis. Additionally, research in this area supports the need for more futsal and basketball facilities to meet community demand.

Futsal is a growing sport and provides players the opportunity to play or practice soccer where large sport fields are not always possible. The addition of a dedicated basketball court and a futsal court in this park is expected to be well used by not only the community but also by the adjacent elementary school, Vasquez said.

FCPA is delivering too. The plans include transforming the tennis courts into a dedicated futsal court and basketball court, converting the practice tennis court into a playground, parking lot renovations and furnishings.

Active construction is scheduled to begin now, the first week of March, and is expected to conclude by the end of summer 2025, FCPA said.



New park layout.

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Stunning Stitchery Stars at Woodlawn



Beached coral reef by Kim Berry-Rogers, surface embroidery.



Quaker sampler wing chair, counted thread, by Kathy Rabun.



Lt. Col. John Mosby by Dennis Yeatts, counted thread cross stitch.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Stitchery is both artistry and therapy, say needle arts practitioners, who called themselves “needlers.”

Diane Clark says that stitching “is excellent for one’s mental health. It’s calming and relaxing.” Dennis Yeatts credits his years of stitching with helping him recover from a serious injury and his wife’s passing.

In eight rooms, Woodlawn Plantation’s mansion is displaying 600 stitched pieces from 33 states and three countries at their annual needlework show. The event, continuing until March 31, is sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the show’s founders, Nelly’s Needlers, a group

celebrating their 50th anniversary and named for the first owner of Woodlawn, Eleanor “Nelly” Custis Lewis, a needlecrafter herself.

600 Pieces of Art

Exquisite needlework pieces depict nature, landscapes, buildings, people, food, abstract designs and many other subjects. The judged show has embroidery, crewel, drawn thread, needlepoint, counted cross-stitch, lace, smocking, beadwork, canvaswork, quilting and more. One show-stopper is Kathy Rabun’s blue-ribbon-winner, a Quaker sampler wing chair on which she meticulously sewed messages like “Highlights of My Life” and “My Heroes.”

This year’s entries “eclipse pre-pandemic numbers,” says Heather Johnson, Woodlawn’s In-

terim Executive Director. Sponsors tout that the show is the largest and longest-running needlework show in the country.

Deb Kempton, an event co-chair, offered, “It’s a universal language. Every culture has some type of cross stitch,” citing Scandinavia and Ukraine as examples. One example is a counted thread Romanian national blouse by Diana Grichuk. Clark, a Clifton resident, is the other co-chair.

Entrants span all ages. A group of Bush Hill Elementary School sixth graders crafted a quilt under the supervision of their teacher, Jenny Pratt. Each student made a nine-patch square and they dedicated the quilt to Ona Judge, an enslaved woman at George and Martha Washington’s Mount Ver-



Mermaid Dreams by Vicki Wernli, counted thread cross stitch.



Romanian national blouse by Diana Grichuk, counted thread.



Diane Clark, show co-chair, and her Hardanger embroidered pillow.



Bush Hill students’ quilt on the Lewises’ original bed.



Pelican by Kim Smith, counted thread cross stitch.



Smocking by Judy Gallagher.



Needlepoint rug by Nelly's Needlers for the raffle. Drawing on May 12, 2025.

Stunning Stitchery Stars at Woodlawn

FROM PAGE 8

non Estate who escaped and was never captured. The youngsters won first place in their division.

Yeatts first entered a Woodlawn show in 1981. He echoed Clark's view, explaining that stitching helped him recover from an injury and to rebound again after his first wife's death. He designs his own pieces and entered a cross-stitch piece with 22 shades of black and gray, depicting Confederate Civil War Colonel John Mosby and a map of Mosby's Virginia environs. Yeatts

has already completed next year's entry, a piece with 505 different colors to honor the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding.

The show had three needle arts judges, who rated entries by the creator's age and type of item. All work had to be done within the last year by a living person, stitched with a hand-held, threaded needle and "appropriately finished." The age categories were 18 years or older, 70 years or older, 17 years or younger. The youngster's group had three subdivisions -- nine and

under, 10 to 13 and 14 to 17.

In the printed program, the judges listed several features that can make a work outstanding:

"Each stitch is well executed."
 "Tension is consistent throughout the piece."
 "The thread is pristine, not worn."
 Nelly's Needlers made a needlepoint rug to raffle off in a drawing on May 12.

Paleoindian Stitchery

In a timely coincidental twist, this writer's son, Dr. Todd A. Surovell,

was an author of a recently published paper on "needling" 13,000 years ago. He and others working at the La Prele mammoth kill site in eastern Wyoming analyzed proteins in bones and for the first time identified some of the animals that Paleoindians used for bone sewing needles, including hares, foxes, bobcats and perhaps extinct cheetahs or lions. Surovell teaches archaeology at the University of Wyoming. He attended Waynewood Elementary, Carl Sandburg Middle and West Potomac High Schools. Read

more at <https://www.uwyo.edu/news/2024/11/uw-based-research-shows-early-north-americans-made-needles-from-fur-bearers.html>.

The Woodlawn show's business sponsors are In Stitches, Hampton Inn and Suites, Artistic Artifacts and Creative Print Group. All proceeds support preservation and education at Woodlawn and the next-door Pope-Leighey House. For more information, visit <https://www.woodlawnpope-leighey.org/needleworkshow-visit-the-show-1>.

Winners of the 2025 Fairfax Student Peace Awards

BY MERCIA HOBSON
 THE CONNECTION

Students and organizations from 25 Fairfax County public high schools and two private high schools have been named recipients of the 2025 Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County, designed to recognize young people who work as peacemakers. The event took place on Sunday, March 2 at Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Boulevard, Fairfax.

The 2025 Student Peace awardees are:

- ❖ Annandale HS – Sage Nagle
- ❖ Centreville HS – Jayden Lee
- ❖ Chantilly HS – Nila Elangovan
- ❖ Edison HS – Mia Martin-Escandarani
- ❖ Fairfax HS – Kiran Ashok
- ❖ Falls Church HS – Shri Bala
- ❖ Hayfield SS – Ava Saunders and Grace Varughes
- ❖ Herndon HS – Clarissa Dantes
- ❖ Justice HS – Muslim Student Association
- ❖ King Abdullah Academy – Essam Jazzar

- ❖ Lake Braddock SS – Manas Puri
- ❖ Langley HS – Anniyah Rizvi
- ❖ Lewis HS – Madison McLaughlin
- ❖ Madison HS – Hunter Guthrie
- ❖ Marshall HS – Ghalia Sakly
- ❖ McLean HS – Bushra Ehikhamenor
- ❖ Mount Vernon HS – Jennifer Vilalobos-Saenz
- ❖ Mountain View HS – Julia DeVera
- ❖ Oakton HS – Isaac Rodriguez
- ❖ Quander Road School – Jonathan Johnston
- ❖ Robinson SS – Jasmine Sklarew
- ❖ South County HS – Ghazi "Zizo" Hana-nia
- ❖ South Lakes HS – Jahnavi Nandanav-anam
- ❖ Thomas Jefferson HS for Science and Technology – Send-a-Smile Club
- ❖ West Potomac HS – Salaiha Najeeb
- ❖ West Springfield HS – Simeon Samuel
- ❖ Westfield HS – Westfield Unified Sports
- ❖ Woodson HS – Harun Khan

The Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County began in 2006 to encourage people to think more about peace as both a means and an end and to recognize young people working as peacemakers. Each year, every public high school and two private high

schools in Fairfax County are asked to select one junior or senior or a group of students whose work has promoted peace.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly was speaker at the awards and the U.S. House of Representatives is recognizing the 2025 Fairfax County Student Peace Awards recipients by entering their names into the Congressional Record.

Event organizer and program co-founder (2006), Margaret Fischer said Megan E. Corrado, Acting Deputy Director of Alliance for Peacebuilding of The United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA) was the keynote speaker. In addition to her role at the Alliance for Peacebuilding, she is an adjunct professor at the George Washington University, where she teaches gender, human rights, and international law.

The Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County is organized by volunteers and funded by donations from 17 secular and religious sponsoring organizations, including the Peace Awards founders and the Herndon Friends Meeting, a Quaker community in the Town of Herndon. Fisher said that for the students' efforts toward peace, they will be gifted the book, "Sweet Fruit from the Bitter Tree: 61 Stories of Creative & Compassionate Ways out of Conflict," donated by

author Mark Andreas and the publisher.

Six years ago, on March 10, 2019, Connolly stood before a crowd of student peacemakers, their loved ones, friends, and others gathered late that Sunday afternoon to celebrate the 2019 Fairfax Student Peace Makers at the Sherwood Community Center. Connolly said in his remarks, as reported by The Connection, "It's not easy to be the peacemaker. Sometimes, it is really hard, especially when you make those around you, even friends, angry when you speak out and stand up for what is right. And sometimes it can be dangerous. But in all instances, being the peacemaker requires courage and commitment."

Among the 27 well-deserved 2025 Peace Awardees are the following students. Their resolve to courageously and compassionately stand up for peace, putting differences aside and taking decisive steps for peace and understanding reflects the actions of all awardees.

* Jayden Lee is a senior at Centreville High School. He established the Centreville High School chapter of Amnesty International, where club members

SEE AWARDS, PAGE 14



FACEBOOK, POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER

FBI and Alexandria Police told Dean Naujoks, Potomac Riverkeeper, he could go out on the river if he stayed away from the crash site. He headed down river toward Alexandria, finding debris fields and parts of the plane in an area most boats don't go or know how to access on the Maryland side. Everything reeked of jet fuel, he said.

Potomac Riverkeeper Collected Air Wreckage Debris

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

On Jan. 29 around 9 p.m., Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks was relaxing at home watching a movie on Netflix when Betsy Nicholas, his organization's vice president called and said, "Turn on the news." The news kept him up all night.

American Airlines flight 5342 from Wichita, Kansas, preparing to land at Reagan National Airport, collided with a southbound Army Black Hawk helicopter over the Potomac River near the airport in 35-degree weather. Both plummeted into the icy waters. Around 11:30 p.m., Naujoks heard that no one had survived. That night, he debated with himself about what he could and should do.

In a Feb. 19 online talk, Naujoks told participants that the next morning at sunrise he decided to try to help. He went to the Daingerfield Island Marina, where his boat is kept, within sight of the airport, and met Alexandria police officers. "It was eerily calm, a quiet, gray, cold day," he recalled. A man who docked his pontoon boat there had found some airplane debris on the river so the police called the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) to retrieve it.

"I was there to help and provide assistance," Naujoks stressed. He got permission from the FBI to go out on the river, as long as he stayed away from the crash site. Having intimate knowledge of the river, Naujoks surmised that based on the outgoing tide and wind direction, debris would likely collect in Oxon Cove and Smoot's Cove two miles down river near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, places where most boaters rarely go.

Navigating in these coves is "tricky," he said. An inexperienced boater could run aground easily in Oxon Cove and a rock jetty in Smoot's Cove "can rip your prop off."

What Did He Find?

There was debris "all over the place," he said. "It was eerie." He collected items like yellow foam from the airplane, a metal

handle that probably came from an emergency exit and a sweater. The largest pieces he snagged were a seat and a window. He found packets of sugar and a shredded landing gear manual. Bags of chips "perfectly intact" were floating in the water. Everything was coated in jet fuel.

Once back at the marina, he put it all in a cart and contacted the Alexandria Police Department who turned it over to the FBI. Later, others also spotted debris near Maryland's National Harbor.

On his experience, he said that "driving the boat, retrieving wreckage and dodging ice floes, it was a hectic day on the river. It was very intense and I was terrified I'd come across something I did not want to see."

On the Sunday after the Wednesday crash, FBI officials called Naujoks because of his knowledge of the river. They wanted to go into Oxon and Smoot's Coves so he guided them there by phone using visual landmarks.

Jet Fuel Everywhere

Everything was covered with jet fuel, Naujoks told listeners. WTOP radio reported that many of the 300 first responders were covered with jet fuel and some developed rashes and lost their sense of taste and smell temporarily from the exposure.

Two days after the crash, people observed a fuel sheen and fish kills near Alexandria's waterfront, Naujoks said. He contacted several academic experts to learn about the fuel's chemical components and the risks of exposure to the fuel. He believes that much of the jet fuel volatilized into the air and some came down on Alexandria rooftops as atmospheric deposition.

He is hoping that a state agency or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will take some water samples, testing that he described as very expensive. And while his network has a water testing program, they do not have the resources to do this kind of testing.

"No one knows how far south the jet fuel went," he said. To be safe, PRKN cancelled their annual "polar bear plunge" at National Harbor the weekend after the crash.



US COAST GUARD

A temporary safety restriction zone depicted here was established due to possible contamination from fuel and other chemicals after the Jan. 29 plane crash.



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

National Airport's control tower and terminals, view from an arriving airplane.

Asked if it is safe to eat fish caught in the Potomac, he recommended following the states' fish advisories. He does not know the true impact of the fuel on fish. Long-term exposures to pollutants are typically more dangerous than pollution from a one-time event, he maintained.

"I would never tell anyone to stay away from this amazing river," he said, and summarized, "I was grateful for the opportunity to help and to experience what was happening in the river. You serve as a witness to what's happening to the river, the good, bad and ugly. We are the watchdog and defender."

The Collision

The collision was the deadliest airplane crash in the country since 2001, many media outlets reported, when a jet slammed into a New York City neighborhood after take-off, killing all 260 people on board and five more on the ground. A region-wide alert for the Jan. 29 Potomac River collision brought

in 300 first responders from the District, Virginia and Maryland, as far away as Baltimore and the Eastern Shore.

"It was a horrible tragedy, one of the saddest days on the Potomac River ever," Naujoks said.

The Potomac Riverkeeper Network's mission is "to protect the right to clean water for all communities and all those who live in and rely upon the Potomac and Shenandoah watersheds by stopping pollution, making drinking water safe, protecting healthy river habitats and enhancing use and enjoyment for all." Visit www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org/

If You See Debris

If you see suspected debris from the collision, do not touch it, Naujoks advises. Call 911. Photographs of visual evidence and GPS coordinates are helpful to authorities. The network's hotline is 336-809-6041 or www.waterreporter.org/.

NEWS

Restoring a Stream, Removing an Eyesore on U.S. 1

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

To most people whizzing by the desolate-looking property at 8800 Richmond Highway (U.S. 1) largely devoid of life, with a gravel parking lot and an empty roadside sign frame looming, it's a mystery. There's a ramshackle collection of buildings, some behind a dark green mesh screen stretched across a chain link fence and miscellaneous discarded odds and ends, including a power mower, black plastic bags stuffed with something, rubber tires and a hand-sprayed "No Parking" sign.

It's hard to picture this as a park, but some day it could be, according to Fairfax County officials.

In a March 3 release, the county announced that in part thanks to a \$2.8 million state grant, the county will acquire 7.9 acres, eliminate development and impervious surfaces, reforest the land and generally restore it, including part of the adjoining Dogue Creek on the south side which flows east under the highway. Much of the property is in the 100-year floodplain and in a Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area, laws that add a layer of conservation considerations generally designed to prevent flooding and enhance water quality.

"This important acquisition marks a significant step in our ongoing efforts to protect and restore our local natural resources," said Jeff McKay, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck lauded the effort to preserve environmentally sensitive lands and said that "open access to the beautiful Dogue Creek and potential future park land is a huge win for our residents."

"Future actions for the site will include documenting that the area is to be maintained as an open space in perpetuity and coordination with VDOT on right of way and easement needs for the Richmond Highway expansion project, as well as coordination with other stakeholders," the announcement explained.

<cl>A Long Time Coming

The county's news release called the land "a prime candidate for redevelopment," noting that since 2017 the county has received "multiple proposals to redevelop this site for residential or mixed use." For example, in 2018, the then-owners sought some exceptions to current laws to build 43 townhomes on the land.

Opponents then argued that the county should not sanction development in a floodplain or in an environmental quality corridor and that if restored, the property could be part of a conservation corridor since it connects to Pole Road Park and Dogue Creek flows into the Potomac River.

They pointed out that the Embark Richmond Highway plan states that 38 additional acres of park are needed in a part of Fairfax County that has a parks deficit. Embark Richmond Highway is the county's revitalization project along a 7.5-mile stretch of the Richmond Highway Corridor. Embark envisions a series of mixed-used centers and a bus rapid transit system, plus roadway, pedestrian and bicycle changes and ultimately an extension of the Metrorail yellow line to Hybla Valley. County documents also say that the Embark project will have "enhanced open space



A green mesh screen is spread across a chain link fence with rubber tires and other odds and ends about 8800 Richmond Highway.



A sign once in this now-empty sign frame apparently identified the business at 8800 Richmond Highway.



The site at 8800 Richmond Highway has seemingly been abandoned, with derelict buildings and a handmade "No Parking" sign.



County plans call for restoring Dogue Creek on the south side of 8800 Richmond Highway and enhancing a conservation corridor.

and park systems."

Pre-interstate highways, U.S. Route 1 was a major national artery that connected Maine with Key West, Florida. On 8800's history, Storck said "This site has a rich history dating back to colonial times, including the Dogue Indians, George Washington and a piece of Americana as Route 1 became a travel corridor with roadside attractions like the amusement park once here." Now, some day, the roadside attraction may be the beauty and healing power of nature.

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Every winter, volunteers conduct a waterfowl count on the Potomac River.



Sunrise over the Potomac River. Dyke Marsh in the foreground.



The Potomac River looking south from Riverside Park

What's the Impact of This Winter's Snow?

Drought persists in some areas.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

In this 2024-2025 winter season, the Washington region as of mid-February had received 14.8 inches of snow, the snowiest season in several years and an amount nearly double last winter's snow. How has this winter's snow impacted the region's water supply?

Occoquan Reservoir

The 2,100-acre Occoquan Reservoir between Fairfax and Prince William Counties holds 8.5 billion gallons of water and provides drinking water to over one million residents of southern Fairfax County, eastern Prince William County, Fort Belvoir, Dale City and Alexandria.

"The recent snow and rain have helped add to the water supply in terms of quantity," says Susan Miller, Fairfax Water's Communications Director. "The reservoir is at full pool, meaning that the water level in a reservoir has reached its maximum designed capacity, and stream flows in the region are normal." Fairfax Water is the official water authority that manages the reservoir and provides potable water.

Potomac River

The Potomac River provides drinking water to around five million people in the basin. "The water supply has benefited from the recent snow and rain," said Renee Bourassa, Communications Director, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. "The drought monitoring map has improved immensely over the past few weeks, with much of the southwestern part no longer dry." The Potomac River basin or watershed drains 14,670 square miles and stretches across four states: Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

Bourassa cautioned, "Despite the recent rain and snow, the basin still carries a precipitation deficit of 1.3 inches over the past three months and 3.4 inches over the past six months." The commission will have updated data in April.

Groundwater

Around 15,000 Fairfax County residences and businesses get water from wells that withdraw groundwater, according to Fairfax County's Environmental Quality Advisory Council's latest report.

State studies have found that groundwater withdrawals from the Potomac aquifer in the Eastern Groundwater Management area are occurring at an unsustainable rate, stressing the water supply. On recent snowfalls, William Cloe, manager of the state's Office of Water Supply, said, "Statewide, the snow has helped the groundwater supply, but Northern Virginia groundwater wells have not responded as fast, and we are still advising a drought watch for all Northern Virginia jurisdictions."

Despite improvements in soil moisture and increased stream flows in much of the state, "pockets of low soil moisture and lingering groundwater deficits continue to be observed in the northern and northeastern portions of the state," stated their Feb. 24 press release.

The state lifted the drought advisories for 28 Virginia localities, but the drought watch advisory continues for Northern Virginia and portions of the Northern Coastal Plain and Shenandoah and Eastern Shore regions, according to the state's Feb. 24 drought advisory update.

Be Salt Smart

Fairfax Water officials report that "salinity levels have increased in local waterways. The utility cannot remove salt using traditional drinking water and wastewater treatment processes, which are designed to treat fresh water only, not salty water. "Removing salt from drinking water would require adding expensive, energy-intensive treatment processes," says Miller.

And she offers, "Chloride levels in the Occoquan Reservoir increased about 39 percent over the last quarter century (1999-2024)." The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin has a similar conclusion: "Chloride concentrations in the Potomac River have risen substantially in recent decades."

On salt's harm, see our Jan. 8 article at <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2025/jan/08/when-snow-and-ice-come-be-salt-smart/>.

More Winter?

The crocuses may be popping up, but the Feb. 25 Washington Post had this prediction about March's forthcoming weather: "At present, weather modeling signals that new wintry threats appear to grow as the early month progresses."

More Information

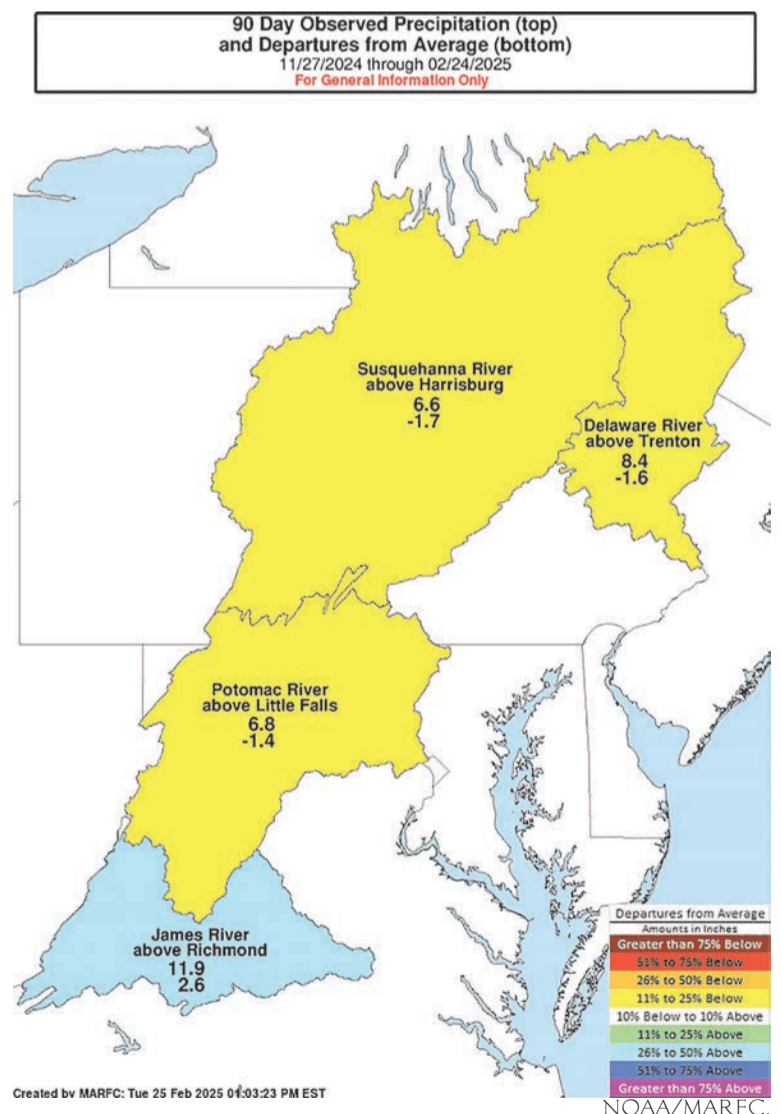
Washington region drought and water supply reports, www.mwcog.org/
Fairfax Water, www.fairfaxwater.org
Salt Tips, www.novaregion.org/1495/Snow-and-Ice-Maintenance-Tips-for-Reside



Snow on holly leaves.



Salt spread on pavement in front of the Hybla Valley Home Depot.



PROVIDED BY THE INTERSTATE COMMISSION ON THE POTOMAC RIVER BASIN
Precipitation in the Potomac River above Little Falls is 1.4 inches below average for the past 90 days.

ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU APRIL 6

Artist Jeff Bohlander. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Through the language of mixed-media, collage, assemblage, and found objects, Jeff's narrative reflects our collective journey through the complexities of our time — from climate change and social constructs to migration and technological advancements.

NOW THRU MARCH 31

Woodlawn Needlework Show. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, Alexandria. Join in a special tour for a history of Woodlawn while discovering the stories behind pieces of the Needlework Show. Offered Fridays and Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. Throughout the month of March, enjoy free live needlework demonstrations. Tentative schedule will be available in mid-February.

MARCH 7-29

"Fairy Tales Around the World" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features artwork inspired by stories of faraway lands, perilous journeys with magical characters and fantastic creatures. Join them for the Opening Reception on Friday, March 7, 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

MARCH 7, 8, 9

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Presented by MVCCT: Mount Vernon Community and Children's Theater. At Heritage Presbyterian Church, 8503 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria.

FRIDAY/MARCH 7

Official Unveiling of the Dr. Gladys West Mobile Exhibit. 11 a.m. At New Virginia Tech Innovation Campus, 3625 Potomac Ave., Alexandria. Mayor Gaskins of Alexandria has proclaimed March 7th Dr. Gladys West day in honor of her world-changing impact as a mother of GPS (Global Positioning System). After two years of dedicated designing and fundraising, this exhibit, underwritten by Trimbel, will honor Dr. Gladys West, whose pioneering work in mathematical modeling made GPS technology possible. The exhibit, which is free and open to the public, invites attendees to explore Dr. West's contributions through interactive displays.

March 7: Fundraising Celebration Lunch – Women Start Your Engines! Directly following the exhibit unveiling, at 12:30 p.m., NCWI is sponsoring a fundraising celebration lunch at Royal Nepal (3807 Mt. Vernon Ave, Alexandria). This special luncheon will feature the announcement of NCWI's Women Driving Change programs, spotlighting engineer Christina Lam, the first Asian American woman racer, who competes in endurance races through IMSA. NCWI's logo appears on her race car and racing suit, inspiring young girls to discover their place in STEM both at the racetrack and in their careers.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Write Like a Woman Networking Workshop. 1 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Founder and Facilitator, KaNikki Jakarta, welcomes



The Woodlawn Needlework Show will be held March 1-31, 2025 at Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House in Alexandria.

you to year 10 of the Write Like a Woman Networking Workshop. This popular workshop invites amateur and professional women writers of all genres ages 18-100. Each workshop centers on uplifting and inspiring through writing and allows participants to enhance their writing styles through writing prompts and encouragement. Space is limited, RSVP to greatpublishing@yahoo.com

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

International Women's Day Art Open House with Nina Tisara who will sponsor an Open House at her gallery (6408 Hayfields Place, Alexandria, VA) featuring her latest mosaics. 20% of all sales during March will go to NCWI.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Transformations: Celebrate, Support, and Be Inspired. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Serenity Gallery, 6408 Hayfield Place, Alexandria. Come feast your eyes on inspiring artwork -- and take home a piece that brings energy and creativity to your space -- while making a difference! Visit the Open House featuring the mosaics of Alexandria artist Nina Tisara and creative art photography of Steven Halperson. Tisara is the founder of Living Legends of Alexandria. The work captures the transformative spirit of life, making this event a perfect way to celebrate and support women's achievements. Plus, 20% of all March sales will be donated to the National Center of Women's Innovations, helping to uplift and recognize women innovators.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Plant Swap - Houseplants, Cuttings and Containers. 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (16-Adult) Join Green Spring Gardens' fourth annual Plant Swap. Bring your unwanted houseplants, cuttings and containers to swap with others or simply give away. A lecture will be included. Leave with new plants, containers, garden friends and expert advice. \$15 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes>

[fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 1AT.8DO5.

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Intro to Tree and Shrub Pruning. 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (16-Adult) Did your hydrangea fail to bloom? Nervous about shaping your specimen tree? Green Spring Gardens staff will teach you about timing, tools and techniques for pruning common woody plants to keep them healthy and looking their best. Dress for the weather. \$23 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 7CT.FY4M

SATURDAY/MARCH 8

Garden Exploration - Migration or Hibernation. 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. (5-Adult) Discover how the animals of Green Spring survive the cold of winter by either hibernating or migrating. Join one of our educators for a walk around the park as we search for signs of spring. All attendees, including parents, must be registered for the program. \$8 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 4YM.LHE8

FRIDAY/MARCH 14

Women's Leadership Forum. 7:45-10:30 a.m. At The Westin Alexandria Old Town, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria. Sponsored by The Chamber ALX. The forum will bring together women (and men) at all stages of their careers for an interactive, "straight talk" panel discussion filled with inspiration and insight. Cost is \$80 for Members | \$105 for Prospective Members.

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

Garden Talk - Winning Plants for Containers. 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (16-Adult) Whether its flowerpots, hanging baskets or window boxes, container gardens are beautiful, easy and rewarding for winter



The "Fairy Tales Around the World" exhibit will be held March 7-29, 2025 at Del Ray Artisans Gallery in Alexandria.

gardening. Learn how to create a dazzling display with eye-catching colors of perennials and annuals. Join Extension Master Gardener docents to gain information and inspiration for your container. \$12 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code DOC.DWRB

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

Special Garden Tour - Witch Hazels. 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (16-Adult) An Extension Master Gardener docent showcases our nationally accredited witch hazel collection, featuring over 200 specimens. Fragrant, willowy blooms glow red, yellow, purple and copper throughout the gardens from fall through March. \$18 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code U52.MYVT

SATURDAY/MARCH 15

Watercolor Workshop – Eyes of March. 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. (16-Adult) Learn to draw and paint eyes in watercolor. You will study the beautiful shapes, colors and reflections that can be seen in a close up eye with the direction of artist and instructor Marni Maree. A supply list will be emailed before class. Bring a lunch. \$107 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 2EZ.KOMA

SUNDAY/MARCH 16

11th Annual Nowruz Festival. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. At Hilton Washington Dulles Airport. Join in a vibrant celebration of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, and the arrival of spring! This event is free and open to the public, so bring your friends and family for a day of fun, culture, and community. What to Expect: Live music and dance performances by talented local artists DJ music to keep the energy flowing all day long

Fun and exciting kids' activities A grand Nowruz Bazaar featuring amazing art & craft vendors, delicious sweets, and a variety of services to explore

SUNDAY/MARCH 16

New Strings. 2 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Original Works for Guitar Solo and Violin-Guitar Duet by Oscar Somersalo and Neal Learner. String-instrument lovers are invited to enjoy a unique recital of new works for guitar solo and violin-guitar duet by composers Oscar Somersalo (guitar) and Neal Learner (violin). The event promises something for everyone with virtuosic playing and delightful compositions that span musical genres from classical and jazz to pop and rock.

SUNDAY/MARCH 16

Fairest of Them All. 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Adult) This Women's History Month, learn about the not-so-pretty history of beauty pageants. Explore their origins and culture and the growing controversy surrounding them. Hear about recent steps towards inclusion and empowerment and consider how such contests must adapt to survive. \$42 (lecture + tea); \$18 (lecture only).

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 19

Senior Services Event. 10 a.m. At Beth El Hebrew Congregation, 3830 Seminary Road, Alexandria. Senior Services of Alexandria (SSA) will take its weekly newsletter "SSA Connection" live at a fun event. The program will follow the newsletter format including: a "Ted Talk;" fitness segment; cooking demonstration; local happenings and a fun "sing-along." The event is free, but rsvp by emailing events@seniorservicesalex.org or call 703-836-4414, ext. 110.

FRIDAY/MARCH 21

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. 7:30 p.m. At St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 228 South Pitt Street,

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 15

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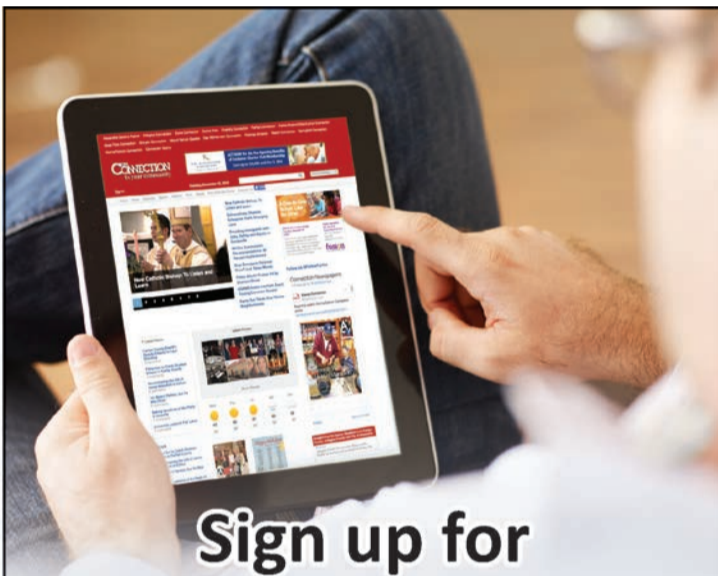


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LETTER

FROM PAGE 6

ance. The proposed budget for the coming year includes plans to eliminate the CERT program, with a vote scheduled by the Board of Supervisors on May 13, 2025. Last year alone, over 500 CERT volunteers dedicated nearly 20,000 service hours, providing over \$1M in value to aid the county's residents and first responders. The elimination of CERT would create a significant void in community preparedness and support.

Community members are urged to act and help save this vital program. By contacting the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeffrey McKay at chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-2321, residents can express their support for retaining the CERT program. Fairfax County residents should also reach out to their district supervisors with the same request. If you are unsure of your district supervisor, you can find out by entering your address at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/myneighborhood/>.

Let's come together to ensure that CERT continues to be a beacon of resilience and service in Fairfax County.

Ray Katona
Secretary,

Fairfax CERT Association

Student Peace Awards

FROM PAGE 9

learn about and advocate for human rights. As the president of the school's UNICEF club, Jayden organized the "Water Walk," to promote awareness of the needs of impoverished children. Local "students walked about two miles carrying a gallon of water, raising money for UNICEF while helping people concretely understand some of the challenges faced by children who have to walk long distances to obtain water for household needs."

* Jahnvi Nandanavanam, a South Lakes High School senior, is part of a 250-person Indian Classical Symphony joined by 600 dancers. "We were celebrating the unity of humans and showing how we can overcome conflict through sharing our culture and artistic diversity. A worldwide audience sees that peace can begin through cultural exchange and understanding," Nandanavanam says.

* Ava Saunders and Grace Varghese are the co-presidents of the Hayfield chapter of Students Demand Action. The nonpartisan organization works to end gun

SEE AWARDS, PAGE 15

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LETTER

Menhaden Study Fails to Advance in Virginia Budget

SUBMITTED BY THE
CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Despite mounting troubling signs about the health of the Chesapeake Bay's menhaden population, this legislative session Virginia lawmakers failed to approve three separate efforts to fund a study intended to answer long-standing questions about the Bay's menhaden.

The Commonwealth's long wait for the necessary science into the Commonwealth's largest fishery and most important fish in the Bay persists.

Atlantic menhaden are the target of Virginia's largest commercial fishery, run by a company called Omega Protein, and its affiliates. Typically turned into fishmeal and fish oil products in a process known as "reduction fishing," the small schooling fish also are a key food for iconic predators like striped bass, bluefish and ospreys.

All other states have banned the practice of reduction fishing.

After thousands of menhaden and gamefish washed up on Virginia shores during high-profile fish spills by Omega Protein, the General Assembly passed legislation in 2023 requiring plans for studying menhaden populations in Virginia waters. This was backed

by Omega Protein. But in early 2024, Virginia lawmakers failed to pass a bill that would have funded this necessary research.

This year, Del. Paul Milde spearheaded one effort for the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to complete the \$3 million three-year study of the ecology, fishery impacts, and economic importance of the menhaden population in Virginia. That House Bill 2713 and the accompanying budget amendment Item 148 #4h failed to advance from the House.

Another effort by Delegate Betsy Carr slotted the first year of funding for the study in the state budget to VIMS, but this measure was killed during budget negotiations.

The study would address critical data gaps, including the menhaden population within the Bay and the impacts of reduction fishing.

In large part due to reduction fishing, more than 70 percent of all commercial menhaden harvest lands in Virginia. But menhaden management continues to rely on coastwide data that doesn't paint a full picture of how the fishery affects fish in Virginia. A lack of Bay-specific data hinders effective management decisions and jeopardizes the health of this keystone species and renowned estuary.

Robust menhaden populations are essential to Virginia's \$980 million recreational

fishing economy, supporting valuable sportfish like striped bass. Yet troubling signs continue to mount, including starving osprey in areas of the Bay where they depend on menhaden for food.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation Virginia Executive Director Chris Moore released the following statement:

"This is not just bad news for fishermen, but bad news for a Chesapeake Bay ecosystem that continues to scream warnings about menhaden. For years, we've lacked the baseline knowledge we need to establish robust and lasting sustainability for menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately, one foreign-owned entity continues to stand in the way of good science — Omega Protein, the largest harvester of menhaden on the Atlantic Coast."

"We are deeply disappointed that once again Omega Protein and their lobbyists have thwarted the good faith efforts to develop the necessary science for the Chesapeake Bay. Perhaps even more frustrating is the fact they twice previously supported the proposed approach to studying many of the most pressing questions related to the Commonwealth's menhaden resource. This delay will not be received well by the public, who has long supported better menhaden science for the region."

Not About The Beatles



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

It was not 20 years ago today (it was only 16), and there was no Sgt. Pepper teaching a band how to play (only an oncologist to share a very unexpected initial non-small cell lung cancer diagnosis), and certainly there was no Billy Shears to introduce and/or sing (only Team Lourie to absorb the devastating news. Moreover, the oncologist had said in his presentation to us that he could treat me, but that he couldn't cure me. It seemed simple enough to hear but oddly enough, it was puzzling in a way). It was, as we realized a few minutes later, a "terminal" diagnosis. And a "terminal" diagnosis/prognosis like that kind of takes the bounce out of your step. It may not keep you from singing; well, maybe the infused chemotherapy does a little bit physically, and emotionally, the hills are not exactly "alive with the sound of music." Remembering some of those early, heavy-duty chemotherapy days, getting out of bed and onto the living room couch was as much as I could muster. And singing? Maybe in the shower if I could ever gather the strength to get there - which I rarely could. And when I did manage to get in the shower, I barely felt like standing, let alone singing. That was then. This is the next paragraph:

Now there's a Beatles channel on Sirius XM Radio and televisions in the Infusion Center. In addition, my chemotherapy these days is "targeted" and treated at home where I take five pills a day. Also, a few years ago my cancer diagnosis was changed from non-small cell lung cancer to papillary thyroid cancer, a much better scenario, generally. Unfortunately, when all my things are considered however, not so much. Instead of quarterly CT Scans, I'm now getting a PET Scan every four months or so. (A PET Scan provides more/accurate detail of what's happening in my lungs.) And most importantly, I have a new oncologist who I see at a different facility. One that I hadn't ever been to all those previous years dating back to Feb. '09 when this cancer business first began.

It would be naïve to say one is happy to see their oncologist. Because if one is seeing an oncologist, it's not what you'd call "a pleasure trip," as the late, great, Henny Youngman joked repeatedly, about "taking his mother-in-law to the airport." It likely means there's a cancer diagnosis that needs treating. And cancer is the medical version of a four-letter word and likewise one you'd rather not hear said in your direction. Nevertheless, the oncologist we're now seeing/being treated by has made a difference in our lives. And to invoke "Forrest, Forrest Gump," "That's all I want to say about that."

My perspective has also changed. When I was first diagnosed, my future was behind me, sort of. All I had was the present. Statistically, according to what my oncologist had said, my best days were behind me. He said there was a two-percent chance I'd survive beyond five years. Hardly was I the kind of horse you'd bet to win. Probably not one you'd bet on at all. No doubt I was a longshot. But here I type, 16+ years later. Now that's something to sing about. But since I rarely sing, I'm left to toot my own horn (and I don't even play any instruments).

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

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

Alexandria. Bach has inspired across four centuries. His music is universal, his humanity eternal. In the splendor of St. Paul's Episcopal, James Ross leads the strings of the Alexandria Symphony in Dmitry Sitkovetsky's arrangement of Bach's Goldberg Variations.

SATURDAY/MARCH 22

Bishop Ireton High School 60th Anniversary Gala. 6 p.m. to Late. At Westin Alexandria Old town. Reception dinner and dancing. Cocktail/formal attire

SATURDAY/APRIL 5

Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market

paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional> for information on other days and times for the library's ongoing book sale.

APRIL 11-12

2025 Spring Garden Market. At River Farm, 7931 E. Boulevard Dr., Alexandria. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Presented by American Horticultural Society, celebrate the start of gardening season with the Spring Garden Market at River Farm, headquarters of the American Horticultural Society. This much-anticipated annual event brings together plant, seed and garden accessory retailers, nature-focused artists and authors, gardening experts, food vendors, and fun activities for the whole family to enjoy. Proceeds benefit the operations, beautification and preservation of River Farm, part of George Washington's original farmland and the centerpiece where the AHS promotes the art, science, and joy of growing plants. Entry

fee is \$5 per individual (walkers, cyclists) or \$20 per car which includes parking and entry for all passengers. Restrictions and exceptions apply. Tickets to attend Spring Garden Market will be available to purchase online at the beginning of March at www.ahsgardening.org/spring-garden-market-2025. Call (703) 768-5700 ext. 114.

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.

MARCH

Wed. 5: Robin Trower \$55.00 SOLD OUT!
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Fri. 7: The High Kings & Mary Black \$89.50 SOLD OUT!

2025 Fairfax Student Peace Awards

FROM PAGE 9

violence by advocating for common-sense firearm legislation, promoting safe and secure firearm storage, and endorsing political candidates based on their gun policies rather than on party affiliation. They went to Richmond for Students Demand Action's advocacy day and received a standing ovation as they discussed that guns are the number-one cause of adolescent deaths and that students should feel safe at school.

* The Muslim Student Association at Justice High School fosters a community for Muslims and educates their fellow students about Islam and Islamic culture. The association organized a school-approved demonstration to spread awareness about Palestine that was attended by a few hundred Muslims.
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lim and non-Muslim students. A video of the event received some hostile comments online, but club members did not respond in kind. Club President Dania Eldirdiri says, "Instead of meeting hostility with hostility, we wanted to have a conversation. We took time to respond to comments with the message that Islam is a religion of peace."

❖ Jonathan "JJ" Johnston is a senior at Quander Road School. He finds inner peace in his artistic work, which positively influences all aspects of his life and the people around him. School staff reports "that his positive leadership has resulted in his ability to calm down students and help his classmates understand that avenues other than anger can help them get out of negative situations."

❖ Mia Martin-Escandarani, a senior at Edison High School, works to counter antisemitism through dialog and education. She participates in conversations in the Jewish Community Relations Council Student-to-Student program, allowing space for "respect, curiosity, and empathy between groups," and in the StandWithUs Kenneth Leventhal High School Internship program. Exchanges with people who disagree with her can be challenging, but Mia has learned to remain calm. "Silence allows evil to take place. None of us can be bystanders. We must do something," Mia says.

Video link to the 2025 Student Peace Awards ceremony

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5M0FgCVZeg>

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