

# CONNECTION

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station ♦ Lorton ♦ Clifton

Donna (Marissa Von Ancken), a marriage skeptic, looks on while daughter Sophie (Allie MacDonald) and her fiancé Sky (Aiden Brennan) share a tender moment in Woodson High's performance of "Mamma Mia!"

## 'Mamma Mia!'

PAGE 8

## Never Give Up, No Matter How Bleak

PAGE 10

## Guide to Fairfax City Spotlight

PAGE 4

## Connection Wins Awards

PAGE 6

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS RUSHING

OPINION, PAGE 6 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 17 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18

# HIS TREE DAY

## Puppet Show, Butterfly Tent, History Demos

Fairfax City's HisTree Day is Saturday, April 26.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**B**utterflies, bubbles, hayrides, history demonstrations, baby animals and fun all await visitors to the annual Fairfax HisTree Day. It's slated for Saturday, April 26, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Blenheim Blvd. in Fairfax.

The public is invited to celebrate history and the planet at this free, family-friendly event. It combines living-history presenters with Earth Day via interactive activities, crafts, presentations and tours.

There'll be a full slate of educational and exploratory activities honoring both Fairfax history and nature. Several City departments are participating, and admission is free.

### ❖ Earth Day Events:

Hands-on activities include making an Earth Day-themed quilt square, blowing sustainable bubbles and decorating cookies in Earth Day themes. And new this year will be a butterfly tent. Children can also have some old-fashioned fun climbing on bales of straw, petting farm animals and going on hayrides with their families.

In addition, people may take a guided tour of the Blenheim property or check out the interactive Enviroscape. It's an interactive model demonstrating the impact development and pollution have on the wa-

terways. This hands-on activity will teach people that protecting the environment is a responsibility shared by everyone. Attendees may also learn how today's stormwater-management technology helps protect the planet and will also receive tips about plant and soil care.

### ❖ History Events:

Planned are demonstrations by various tradespeople, such as a weaver, quilter, blacksmith, carpenter, brickmaker, naturalist and photographer. Josh Young will perform as a 19th-century, traveling-show magician, and Michael Mescher will teach popular, 19th-century parlor games and children's games.

Learn African American school teachings from The Lady Time Travelers. Hear GMU's 8th Regiment Green Machine Band and watch them lead the 28th Massachusetts Infantry Co. B.

People may meet an early 19th-century scientist and view his preserved specimens. Also on hand will be Melanie La Force, portraying a Civil War-era nurse named Mary Morris Husband. She was the first nurse to personally visit President Lincoln and plead for clemency for soldiers wrongfully accused of desertion.

Children may also see the Punch and Judy show, a famous puppet play with roots in Maryland.

Food vendors will be at the event, too. Onsite parking is limited to accessible parking only. All other attendees are encouraged to take the free shuttle from Fairfax High School or walk from Daniels Run Elementary School.

For more event details, go to <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events/fairfax-histree-day>.



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Illustrating a mid-19th-century laundry last year are (from left) Anna Lee and Isabelle Schwarz with Lee's twins, (from left) Joey and Charlie.

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# The Economic Outlook

## Sobering Economic Messages for Northern Virginia.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

**O**n April 3, one day after U.S. President Donald J. Trump announced sweeping tariffs on imports from over 60 countries, several Northern Virginia officials gave a pep talk to 75 business leaders who gathered for a breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon and hope.

On April 4, the day of the event, stock market indexes tumbled. “Tariffs Torpedo Markets around the World,” screamed an Associated Press headline.

**“We will have a period of real pain.”**

— Dr. Terry Clower, Director of GMU Center for Regional Analysis

The speakers did not utter the U.S. president’s name, but the changes and proposals, coming largely from the Trump administration hovered like an ominous, gray cloud over the room. Chamber Chair Roberta Tinch said that the new administration in Washington “brought a lot of change.”

Bank of America economist Stephen Juneau warned that these are “difficult, uncertain times.”

**“No better place to be than here in tough times.”**

— Chairman Jeff McKay, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Dr. Terry Clower, Director of George Mason University’s Center for Regional Analysis, predicted, “We will have a period of real pain.”

### Spotlighting the County’s Strengths

One of the event’s sponsors, Kathy Taylor with the Walsh Colucci law firm, touted, “Our com-

munity is strong, dynamic and resilient.”

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay sang the praises of Fairfax County, saying that there is “no better place to be than here in tough times,” that the county has a “strong backbone and a strong economy. I am optimistic about our ability to get through this.”

Listing some pluses, McKay commended the public school system and noted that Fairfax County is home to ten Fortune 500 companies and “a great place for small employers.” Recovering from the Covid pandemic crisis, more people are working and more businesses than ever are operating, he said.

McKay refuted reports that Fairfax County’s population is declining, asserting, “That is completely false.” In 2023-2024 Fairfax County grew by 14,000 people, the highest of all Northern Virginia jurisdictions, he said. “We are in growth mode.”

He singled out plans to redevelop U.S. 1 in Mount Vernon. The stretch between Fort Belvoir and Huntington “is ripe for redevelopment and investment,” and will be an economic driver, like Metro’s Silver line, he said, adding, “Never before has Fairfax County had a \$1 billion infrastructure investment in U.S. 1.”

Alex Iam, Executive Vice President of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (EDA), also spotlighted local assets, citing “world class talent” and strong aerospace, information technology and satellite communications industries. “We have a great aggregation of intelligence resources in the region,” he said, showing a slide reporting 500+ cybersecurity companies in Fairfax County, and noting that Virginia

is the “top state for digital infrastructure.”

Iam reported that some of the largest tenants in the county like Northrop Grumman retained their leased office space over the past two years and some, like Bechtel, expanded.

But Iam tempered his upbeat



MOUNT VERNON SPRINGFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Participants in the 2025 Economic Outlook hosted by Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber and SFDC were Stephen Juneau, Bank of America Securities; Alex Iam, Fairfax County EDA; Roberta Tinch, chair, Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber and CEO of Inova Mount Vernon Hospital; Jeff McKay, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; Dr. Terry Clower, Center for Regional Analysis, GMU.



Dr. Terry Clower, Center for Regional Analysis, GMU, told the audience to prepare for anticipated challenges in the local economy.

SEE SOBERING ECONOMIC, PAGE 9

# ARTS FESTIVAL



The Main Street Community Band Brass Quintet promoting the upcoming festival at Fairfax City Hall.



City of Fairfax Band performing at a previous Spotlight on the Arts Festival.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

## Theater, Dance, Music, Fashion, More

### Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts Festival spans two weekends.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Featuring 45 performances spanning six days, the 40th annual Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts Festival promises entertainment for everyone. Over two weekends, April 25-27, and May 2-4, people can choose from a wide variety of live theater, music and dance performances.

There's even a fashion show, as well as an evening of music from film and television performed by the Mason Community Arts Academy. For the full detailed list of events, including dates, times and places, go to <https://www.fairfaxspotlight.org/events/>.

The opening reception is Friday, April 25, from 7-10 p.m., at the Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd. in Fairfax. Featuring a Stage Door Canteen theme, it'll transport attendees to the cheerful places where U.S. troops during WWII could have some food and coffee and dance the night away with hostesses from the USO.

The reception will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of that war, plus the USO, created to boost the morale of service members at home and abroad. And this year's honorary Spotlight chairperson is former City Councilmember Jennifer Passey, senior director of communications for the USO.

"I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve as this year's honorary chair of the Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts Festival, an event that celebrates the incredible talent and creativity of our greater Fairfax community in cooperation with George Mason University," said Passey. "The arts are such a vital part of who we are – shaping our culture, sparking conversations and bringing us all together."

"This annual festival is also a reminder of the power of creativity," she continued. "I invite everyone to join in and experience the



This year's event logo.

magic of the arts. Let's celebrate, connect and inspire one another."

Among the highlights of the opening reception will be the Spotlight Art Contest. Various artworks will be on display, and each person there will get to vote for their favorite. Then the four winning artists will receive awards ranging from the \$500 Fairfax Art League Student Award to the \$1,500 New York Life Grand Prize Award. All artwork there will also be available for purchase.

Artistry Catering will provide cocktails, light fare, coffee and dessert. A musicale will highlight local performers in a variety of genres – theater, dance and music. They include the City of Fairfax Theatre Co. and Next Reflex Dance Collective, as well as solo piano performances by Ruth Haycock Piano Scholarship Recipients from George Mason University.

Reception tickets are \$50 via <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-spotlight-on-the-arts-festival-opening-reception-art-contest-tickets-1259707853099?aff=oddtcreator>.

Spotlight on the Arts performances and events will be held in venues throughout the City of Fairfax over the two-weekend period. They represent a variety of genres from theater, music, playwriting and fashion to the visual arts, dance, opera and storytelling.

For example, people may go to Old Town Square to hear DC Starlight Orchestra play



GMU Percussion Ensemble will perform at the festival.

the big band hits of the WWII era. Or spend an evening under the stars with the City of Fairfax Theatre Co. at Veterans Amphitheater. Also among the events is Fairfax High's upcoming production of "Hedestown: Teen Edition." (See separate story in this issue). Below are a few more of the nearly four dozen events that'll be offered:

❖ Mason Spring Opera 2025 will perform "27," an opera by American Composer Ricky Ian Gordon – who'll be there in person. It's slated for April 25, at 8 p.m.; April 26, at 2 and 8 p.m.; and April 27, at 3 p.m., at the Harris Theater, 4471 Aquia Creek Lane in Fairfax.

Tickets are \$20, general public; \$15, senior citizens; and \$5, students. For tickets and further information, go to <https://www.fairfaxspotlight.org/event/mason-spring-opera-2025/>.

❖ Fairfax Saxophone Quartet will play "Pops" music, featuring the tunes of Michael Bubl , Guns & Roses, Billy Joel, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Reba McEntire, Righteous Brothers, Stevie Wonder and many more. It's set for May 2, at 7:30 p.m., at the Historic Blenheim Interpretive Center, 3610 Blenheim Blvd. in Fairfax. This is a free event.

❖ City of Fairfax Band will perform "Postcards," April 26, from 7:30-9 p.m., at Katherine Johnson Middle School, 3801

Jermantown Road in Fairfax. The band will take audiences on a musical world tour featuring the music of Valerie Coleman, Percy Grainger, Frank Ticheli and Leonard Bernstein.

Tickets are \$15, adults; \$10, senior citizens. Youth are admitted free. Tickets are at <https://www.fairfaxband.org/product/individual-adult-ticket-for-city-of-fairfax-band-johnson-ms-apr-26-730pm/>.

❖ GMU Tuba Euphonium Ensemble and Percussion Ensemble will perform April 26, at 8 p.m. at the Sherwood Center.

This concert will focus on music from the World War II Era, including Hollywood tunes, instrumental operatic selections, ragtime, swing and patriotic songs. Embark on a journey of the different musical styles played during the war. This is a free event.

#### Scholarships

One of Spotlight's most important missions has been to support and highlight cultural arts events and opportunities in the greater Fairfax community, in cooperation with both GMU and the City of Fairfax. A very important part of that mission is to provide scholarships for students within GMU's College of Visual and Performing Arts. To support these talented students, visit <https://www.fairfax-spotlight.org/donations/>.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

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. Or via email [calendar@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:calendar@connectionnewspapers.com)

# May Is Foster Care Month

Fairfax County Foster Care and Adoption is planning two special events in recognition of National Foster Care Month.

One event is Tuesday, April 29, 5-7 p.m. at the Lorton Library and the second is Tuesday, May 20, 7-8:30 p.m. at the Burke Centre Library, to encourage community involvement in supporting children in foster care.

According to the Virginia Department of Social Services, in February 2025, there were 5,482 children in foster care in the Commonwealth of Virginia, 247 in Fairfax County. These children need the caring support of the community to overcome their challenges.

Fairfax County Foster Care and Adoption is dedicated to ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in need. Through comprehensive support and community engagement, we strive to provide stable and loving homes for children who are unable to live with their families of origin.

Foster parents play an unmatched role in providing loving, temporary homes for children. There is a need for more dedicated foster parents.

Attend an event and find out about the foster care system, the critical needs, and the life-changing rewards of becoming a foster parent. You'll hear from Fairfax County Foster Care social workers, current foster parents, and community partners eager to share ways to get involved.

Whether you are simply curious about what foster care is like or you are seriously considering becoming a foster parent, these meetings are the perfect chance to get your questions answered, find out steps to become a foster parent and how to get involved.

Drop in or register online to let us know that you are planning to come.

For general questions, call 703-324-7639 or visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/children-youth/foster-care-adoption>

## VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

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

## SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax) or [www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html](http://www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html). The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers' Support

Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact Jack Tarr at [jtarr5@verizon.net](mailto:jtarr5@verizon.net) or 703-821-6838.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, [www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org) or [havenofnova@verizon.net](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net). Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30-3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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](mailto:info@alnv.org), or visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org).

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at [Ibrahim.Khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Ibrahim.Khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov) or 703-324-4547.

Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia based 501(c)(3) organization seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See [www.ophrescue.org](http://www.ophrescue.org) for information and all volunteer opportunities.

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

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# Semiquincentennial!

## Fairfax County Kicks off 250th Celebrations with George Washington's Mount Vernon.

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK

I am thrilled to invite you to join the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association and the Fairfax 250th Commission as we kick off the Nation's Semiquincentennial Celebrations here in Fairfax County! Sunday, May 4, is the 250th anniversary of the day George Washington departed his beloved Mount Vernon to attend the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, where he was ultimately appointed commander in chief of the newly created Continental Army.

For the duration of the war, he only briefly returned to his estate for a day or so in September 1781, prior to the Yorktown campaign and ultimate victory.

At 1:30 p.m. on May 4, as part of Revolutionary War Weekend at George Washington's Mount Vernon we will be recognizing this moment with remarks from "George Washington," as well as myself and Mount Vernon President & CEO Doug Bradburn. US Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll and Fairfax County Chairman Jeff McKay have also been invited.

Following the remarks, a ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at the Patriots Path, Mount Vernon's brand-new installation of a military encampment for guests to visit year-round. George Washington, along with musicians and reenactors will march down the Patriots Path and out the front gates to "head to Philadelphia."

This rich visual display is befitting the ceremonial kick off of the Fairfax 250th Celebrations which will include hundreds of events throughout the County over the next two years.

This significant anniversary is a celebration of not only how our country began, but also the first steps of the journey we have been making over the last 250 years. This is not only just a celebration of our history, but of our movement toward greater justice and equity, and the journey to fulfill the promise of the Declaration of Independence that all people "are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is a time to commemorate what defines us as a nation and the values that we hold



PHOTO COURTESY OF MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION

George Washington.

most dearly. We have come far, but we have more work to do to ensure these values for all Americans.

I am proud to be a leader in the County's Semiquincentennial planning, starting in 2020 with the unanimous support of my Board colleagues, by directing the Fairfax

250 Commission be established to create and host appropriate events and celebrations. We look forward to you joining us on May 4 and throughout the next two years.

To learn more about the Fairfax 250th Celebrations, visit: <https://www.fxva.com/fairfax250/>.

## Connection Papers Win Awards

Each year the Virginia Press Association (VPA) holds a competition to select the best published material from newspapers and news sites from across the state. This is one of the largest competitions in the country and judged by journalists from outside the commonwealth.

We are proud to announce that the Connection and Gazette newspapers received thirteen awards for their work in 2024. They were announced at an awards dinner at the Omni Richmond on April 12 where they "celebrated the talent, dedication, and impact of those shaping the media landscape."

### In the Alexandria Gazette Packet

Jeanne Theismann, Third Place for Column Writing, "Legends of Alexandria" Judge's comment: "An extremely elegant way to present spotlight stories. Each story was

informative and well presented. Good solid writing by Jeanne Theismann highlighting a lifetime of achievements by each individual."

Jeanne Theis-

SEE AWARDS, PAGE 7



Bonnie Hobbs



Eden Brown



Glenda Booth



Jeanne Theismann



Shirley Ruhe



Susan Laume

## Library: Freedom to Learn

Dear editor at Fairfax Connection, I visit my library every week. It's full of people using the resources there. The meeting rooms are booked for community meetings, children are there with their parents picking out books, people are working on their own laptops using the WIFI, and people use the library's computers because they don't have their own. In general there is a lot of life in the library. I save money by checking out books rather than buying them. I've made friends there by volunteering my time to keep library services running. We need libraries because they help support people of all ages and backgrounds. A library is central to a well informed public. We need to protect the library and what it stands for. The freedom to learn is priceless!

Karen Moore  
Fairfax Station, 22039

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## CONNECTION

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# Connection Papers Win Awards

FROM PAGE 5

mann, Third Place for Education Writing.

## In the Arlington Connection

Eden Brown & Shirley Ruhe, First Place for Headline Writing. Judge's comment: "Cutely conveys the squirrel's success, with a nod to the A-team. Love it."

Eden Brown & Giovanni Flores, Second Place for Combination Picture and Story, "Memorial Day." Judge's comment: "Wonderful photos and variety of quotes that hit hard. Very well done coverage for an annual event."

Shirley Ruhe, Second Place, Personality or Portrait Photo, "Way Too Long." Judge's comment: "The musician in the foreground and background each bring a different feeling to the photo."

Shirley Ruhe, Second Place, Feature Series or Continuing Story, "Food Insecurity Series." Judge's comment: "Lovely writing on an important subject that focused on issues affecting so many communities in the country beset by widening levels of poverty in what we think of as a land of opportunity."

## In the Fairfax County North Connection

Bonnie Hobbs, Second Place, Feature Writing Portfolio. Judges comment "Your writing and interviews were so thorough. I appreciated the perspective you gathered for the Chantilly High job fair in particular and your coverage of Maj. Jane Russell's career was clear and informative."

Bonnie Hobbs, Second Place, In-depth or Investigative Reporting, "Senior Housing Approval" Judge's comment "Lots of deep

diving here on airport issues re: noise and how it could affect a senior housing project. I liked the "side bar" story on the misrepresentation of a sub-committee's decision. Thank you!

## In the Fairfax County South Connection

Bonnie Hobbs, Third Place, Investigative-Government. Judge's comment "Thorough recap and coverage of unusual decision by local city to part ways with city manager. Reporter hit bases with all sides told and what is possibly next as new council prepares to take office shortly after outgoing council left them with no city leader."

## In the Mount Vernon Gazette

Susan Laume, Third Place, Picture Story or Essay, "Washington's Birthday"

Judge commented there were several events submitted in this category but this rose to the top for the variety of angles and events depicted. "I really liked the smoke rising over the costumed soldiers. Good work!"

Susan Laume, Third Place, Health, Science & Environmental Writing

Glenda Booth, Second Place, Feature Series or Continuing Story. Judge's comment: "It's a tough assignment to tackle stories of critical importance but with an overarching theme that in less competent hands might be overlooked. In this case each story was well researched and written and succeeded in holding the reader's attention."

Glenda Booth, Second Place, Health, Science & Environmental Writing



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# HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL



Sophie (Allie MacDonald) gazes upon her three potential fathers. From left, they are Peter Gardner (Harry), Graham Bickford (Sam) and Silas Blocker (Bill).



Donna (Marissa Von Ancken), a marriage skeptic, looks on while daughter Sophie (Allie MacDonald) and her fiancé Sky (Aiden Brennan) share a tender moment.

PHOTOS  
COURTESY OF  
CHRIS RUSHING

## Funny, Joyful Show Aims to Bring Happiness

### Woodson High presents the musical, 'Mamma Mia!'

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Sophie wants her father to walk her down the aisle at her wedding on a small Greek island. Trouble is, she doesn't know who he is – and neither does her mother. After reading her mother's diary, she discovers there are three possibilities. So unbeknownst to her mother, she invites them all.

That's the premise of Woodson High's rollicking spring musical, "Mamma Mia!" The curtain rises Friday, May 2 and May 9, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, May 3 and May 10, at 1 and 7 p.m. Tickets are "pay what you can," from \$10-\$25, at the door and via <https://www.etix.com/ticket/v/15608/woodson-high-school-theatre>. Details about a \$50 Mother's Day (May 11) special are also on the Website.

The musical features a cast and crew of 105, including a 30-member ensemble, and Director Chris Rushing said this musical's characters fit his actors perfectly. "This is a super-fun show, which we all need right now," he said. "And we've got a ton of fabulous dancers and great choreography. I'm really proud of the cast; their Covid years were in middle and elementary school, and this show celebrates how far they've come in their acting and musical-theater abilities."

Scenes take place at the Greek taverna owned by Sophie's mother and on the island's beach. Audiences will also see a beautiful, marble fountain, and 40-inch paper lanterns will hang from the lights. "We hope to whisk people away to a romantic island," said Rushing. "My goal is to bring people together for an escape and a couple hours of happiness."

He said the show's message is that "Hard

times are temporary, and we should always rely on our friends and family – and we've got to take care of each other. These themes are universal. It'll also appeal to everyone because the music's timeless and the dancing is energetic. Anyone who comes here is going to leave tapping their feet and humming the songs."

Playing Sophie is sophomore Allie MacDonald. "She's complicated," said MacDonald. "Sophie feels like she has a hole in her personality because she doesn't know who her father is. She's still confident, fun and happy, but feels like she's missing something. But she's also a little naïve, because she doesn't think about how inviting the three, possible dads will affect her fiancé and her mom. But Sophie eventually realizes she doesn't need to know who's her actual dad to be a real person."

"Although she's 20, she's a little clueless," continued MacDonald. "And as human beings, both Sophie and I make mistakes sometimes. I like her journey of self-discovery, and I'm so honored to be playing such an important role. I'm in chorus, and I also enjoy singing and I like her songs a lot."

Her favorite number is "Under Attack," which Sophie sings during her nightmare while other people depict it through dance. "It's a crazy number with really cool choreography, including lots of lifts," said MacDonald.

She said the audience will like the show's dramatic moments, plus "the elements of shock and surprise, as well as the funny lines. And all the tech elements are awesome; our set even has a fountain, a 'Juliet' balcony and special lighting."

Sophie's mom, Donna, is portrayed by senior Marissa Von Ancken. "In the show, she's described as the 'icon of female independence,' but she's also a very loving and caring mother," said Von Ancken. "She's a strong person who worked hard to get where she is, and I really like playing her. I grew up watching this movie and hoped to play Donna someday."

"I really loved her style of dress, especially her overalls, and I admired her spunk and personality. It's an honor to play a lead role, and I'm thankful that I get to. It's a lot of fun. My favorite song is 'Slipping Through My Fingers' because it was always special to me and my mother. Donna's singing it to her daughter while helping Sophie get ready for her wedding. There's one part where they sing together, and my mom and I always sang it together. It's a sweet memory I have with her."

Von Ancken said people will like "the story's fun chaos because there are so many different things happening in the story at the same time. And certain people know things that others don't. They'll also enjoy the theme of family and friends. There's the family bond Donna and Sophie have, plus the friendships between Donna and her two friends, Sophie and her friends, and even between the dads – who also grow close during the show."

Senior Peter Gardner plays dad, Harry Bright. "He's from England, so I talk with a British accent," said Bright. "He's a rich businessman and a little nervous – always rocking on his feet. He's also a queer character which, as a queer person, is exciting for me to play. He's probably the least likely to be Sophie's father; yet, like the other two dads, he believes he's the real one."

Since the actors portraying those other dads are Gardner's real-life best friends, he said, "It's nice to be comedic partners with people I love working with. I also like that Harry's the most sensitive of the three dads and, of them all, cares the most about being an actual father to Sophie, taking care of her and making sure she has what she needs."

Gardner especially likes the song, "SOS," because the duet between dad Sam and Donna is "really beautiful and also very catchy." A close second, he said, is "Voulez-Vous" because "the dance number is so much fun to do. It's a full-cast number, so it's full of energy and life. Everyone's singing and dancing together."

Regarding the show, he said audiences will be laughing because the show's so funny. "We also have some very talented vocalists that they'll enjoy. And our costume crew is so dedicated and put so much thought and effort into their creations. Every character's costume symbolizes a Greek god or goddess that reflects their particular personality."

Senior Millie Manos is understudying for Rosie, one of Donna's friends. "She's quirky, confident, knows who she is, and doesn't follow typical, feminine stereotypes," said Manos. "For example, she likes fishing and is unapologetically herself. She's also a great friend, always looking out for Donna."

Manos enjoys playing Rosie because, she said, "I see myself in her. It's my first acting role here – I've been in chorus all four years – and I really like the community. Everyone is so kind. And I love her song, 'Take a Chance on Me,' because it's so fun to perform – I get to crawl on a table. And I like that she's so self-confident. She's speaking for herself and what she wants and telling someone, 'Hey, take a chance on me.'"

She said this show should be a big hit with audiences because "everyone's been working their hardest on it and has put in so much dedication. The music is fantastic. There are so many talented actors in both the main and understudy casts that people should really see both. And the costumes are incredible. It's just a great time."

# Sobering Economic Messages for Northern Virginia



Roberta Tinch, chamber chair and President of Inova Mount Vernon Hospital, facilitated questions and answers between the audience and the panel.



Stephen Juneau, Bank of America Securities, discussed recent developments with interest rates and the national anticipated forecast for inflation.

FROM PAGE 3

report by acknowledging that the federal government has a big presence with 80,000 federal employees in Fairfax County. “Federal contracting is huge,” he observed, totaling \$41 billion in federal procurement in 2024.

There are six major federal headquarters in Fairfax County, including the Transportation Security Association and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Current actions to shrink the federal government through workforce cuts, contract cancellations and real estate space reductions is a “very serious situation,” he soberly asserted.

EDA seeks to help displaced federal employees and contractors, with steps like job fairs and encouraging retraining.

### Adjusting to Economic Shifts

“The federal government will still be big, but it will be smaller,” Clower predicted. He estimated that 125,000 federal workers

“will be lost” and said that federal spending is typically “worth another 1.4 jobs, so in the next few years, we could see 250,000 jobs gone. It’s sobering,” he said.

Clower said that Northern Virginia’s economy is “shifting, ... changing into a data driven economy.”

“We must rethink the way we are doing things,” he challenged. If the federal government abandons office space, public-private partnerships could step in. “We have a basis to compete for new industries,” he said.

Clower expressed optimism that the region could retain former federal employees, capitalizing on “the sheer brain power in this region. Get them to stay while we restructure,” he urged.

He stressed that the region needs “to be more open to development,” to incentivize businesses to come to the area, by speeding up permitting, for example.

On population trends, he attributed the county’s growth to

net international migration, contending that domestic migration is “negative” because people ages 30 to 40 cannot afford a house here. “The housing stock is still a real challenge,” he said.

Evan Kaufman, the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation’s

Executive Director, said, “We must be nimble and turn this negative into a positive.”

Tinch closed by urging attendees to be positive and innovative “in a changing environment. ... Be ready for uncertainty,” she advised. “We are a resilient county.”

The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce and the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation hosted the event at the Belle Haven Country Club. Sponsors were Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley and Walsh; IMEG; and Bean, Kinney and Korman.

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# HIGH SCHOOL THEATER

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



From left, Hermes (Nate Smith) advises Orpheus (Tristan Farmer) while Eurydice (Kathryn Whitis) is stared at by Hades (Nikolai Crowl).



Eurydice (Kathryn Whitis) and Orpheus (Tristan Farmer) share a tender moment. Looking on from behind are (from left) Mauro Manganello, Jordan Brooks, Libby Hansen and Naomi Bautista.

## Against All Odds, Hoping for a Better World

### Welcome to 'Hadestown: Teen Edition' by Fairfax High.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

The dramatic musical, "Hadestown: Teen Edition," reimagines the Greek myth of young lovers Orpheus and Eurydice, mingling their story with that of the King of the Underworld, Hades, and his wife, Persephone. The show stresses the power of human connection, and urges people to never give up, no matter how bleak their circumstances.

"It's my favorite musical because it's a story about community, human resilience, doing the right thing and having hope when, basically, all the world is hopeless," said Director Chris Whitney. "It's very relevant to now. There's even a song called, 'Why We Build the Wall,' about separating people with power from those who do not."

Show times are Friday, April 25, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, April 26, at 2 and 7 p.m.; Thursday-Friday, May 1-2, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, May 3, at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15, adults; \$12, students and senior citizens, at the door or via [www.fxplayers.org](http://www.fxplayers.org).

With a cast and crew of about 80, this version of the story takes place in the Dust Bowl era of 1930s New Orleans. So, said Whitney, "The set will look like the French Quarter, with balconies and bars, but will feel like a speakeasy. There's also a turntable the actors will dance on while it's rotating."

The show will feature a live orchestra, with the musicians onstage with the actors. Regarding costumes, workers in the underworld will be dressed like coal miners. People aboveground will look like farmhands, in jackets and flannels.

In the story, the only seasons are summer and winter. Whenever Persephone is around, it's really hot; but whenever she leaves, it's super cold – and she's always late to return aboveground from Hades. "So Orpheus is writing a song to repair the strained relationship of Hades and Persephone, thereby fixing the seasons so there'll also be spring and fall," explained Whitney.

"Meanwhile, Eurydice makes a deal with

Hades to go to the underworld because she's starving," he continued. "But then she learns it means she's in hell, so Orpheus has to travel there to bring her back. Because of the subject matter, it's a mentally and emotionally draining show for the singers, dancers and actors. But working with them is therapeutic.

"They surprise me every day and make me smile because of their talent. Audiences will be amazed with the voices we have; the choreography by students Nate Smith, Naomi Bautista and Libby Hansen; and the overall talent they'll see onstage. The show's message is of human resilience. At the beginning, someone says, 'This is a sad song, but we're gonna sing it anyway,' because they've got to keep trying."

Portraying Orpheus is junior Tristan Farmer. "He's an orphan and a poet," said Farmer. "He's naïve and optimistic and sees the world through rose-colored glasses and the way it should be. He's a glass-half-full person, as well as boyish, creative and deep, and he romanticizes everything."

Farmer enjoys playing a lead and showing his character's depth, plus "his arc going from a happy person to having to come to terms with the fact that the world isn't great, at all. He also has the responsibility of writing the song. So literally, the fate of the world is on his shoulders while, simultaneously, he has to travel to Hadestown – hell – to save the woman he loves. He was so focused on writing the song, he didn't know Eurydice was starving."

His favorite number is "If It's True," which he sings. "It's my character's breaking point – the moment he realizes he's lost everything," said Farmer. "It's politically relevant to modern day. But at the same time, it's also uplifting with a message that, if we come together, we can fix things."

He said audiences will love this show because "the set is gorgeous, the performances are beautiful and we have a really talented cast. And it's a heart-wrenching, happy and loving story that goes through all the emotions. People unite to try to make a change

and, even when they fail, they try again."

Senior Kathryn Whitis plays Eurydice. "She's always been on her own, so she's self-reliant and has a strong mindset about the way the world is and that it's not going to change," said Whitis. "She's the opposite of Orpheus and is the cup half empty. She's wary of others and – because the fates are always sabotaging her plans – nothing ever goes right for her."

Whitis loves portraying Eurydice because "this is a new show and she's a really cool character. I get to play a darker person with more depth to her and portray the hurt she's felt. And because I'm a senior playing a leading role, I can go out with a bang."

She especially likes the song, "Promises," which she sings with Farmer, with the workers in the background. "Orpheus tells Eurydice he can't offer her a ring or fair skies, but he'll always be there to support her," said Whitis. "It's a beautiful piece and a promise to her, and also to the workers, that they'll finally get to leave Hadestown."

She said the "incredible" set will wow audiences, as will the talents of Farmer, and Olive Webster as Persephone. "The actors tell most of the story through song, and it's so impactful – with Eurydice's and Orpheus's different views of the world – the audience will get chills," said Whitis. "Despite their circumstances, there's still so much hope for a better world. It's a beautiful story."

Playing Hermes, the messenger god, is junior Nate Smith. "He's part of the story and also narrates it," said Smith. "He's a mentor to Orpheus and like the father he never had. He teaches Orpheus how to navigate his way through love and helps the audience understand what's going on, on a deeper level – the show's underlying meaning. He's wise, but still playful and fun, and cares deeply about the story he's telling onstage. He tells it again and again because it's such an important lesson."

Smith enjoys his role because it's written so each actor gets to put his or her own stamp on it. "My version is slightly younger and more playful," he said. "And because I'm

also a dancer, Hermes gets to be in several of the dance numbers."

As one of the show's choreographers, he worked on more than 13 songs. "It was a fun challenge focusing on the difference between the actors' movements when they're in the underworld vs. aboveground," he said. "In Hadestown, they make strong angles and sharp, taxing movements. But aboveground, their movements are free, fun, more relaxed and flowing."

"I particularly worked with the three fates – other storytellers – and their movement is more upbeat, inspired by samba and salsa. They're really cool, with fast-paced, smooth moves, and it was fun collaborating with them." Smith's favorite number is "When the Chips Are Down," which he choreographed alone. "The fates dance while telling a story, and I love their high-speed, crisp moves," he said. "It's fun watching them and shows their cool dynamic."

Junior Nikolai Crowl portrays Hades. "He's an industrialist and a king and rules the underworld," said Crowl. "He's compulsive, powerful, knows what he wants and is going to get it, no matter the fallout. He tries to provide for his wife, but she doesn't like the lengths he goes to to please her. So he feels like he's given up everything for her, but she's rejecting it all. They really love each other, but their relationship has drifted."

Crowl said it's sometimes difficult to get into Hades's headspace. "It's a human instinct to want things to go your way, but what he does to make that happen isn't what I'd do," he explained. "He controls people beyond their willingness. But I'm grateful I got the role; it's a great experience."

Crowl especially likes the song, "Wait for Me." It's sung during Orpheus's journey into the underworld, among the workers. "Hermes is guiding him, and when Orpheus sings this song, it opens the walls of Hadestown," said Crowl. "It's his plea to Eurydice that he's coming for her."

He said audiences will like "the energy we all bring to the stage. The show is authentic and down-to-earth. And there are so many high points that'll make the audience happy, they won't be able to help but smile."

# Hayfield High Gym Was Big Enough for Big Names

In the 1970s, celebrity events were common at Hayfield.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

There was a time in the early 1970s where Hayfield High School had one of the biggest gymnasiums around so they used it for all kinds of things, like a country music concert featuring Dolly Parton.

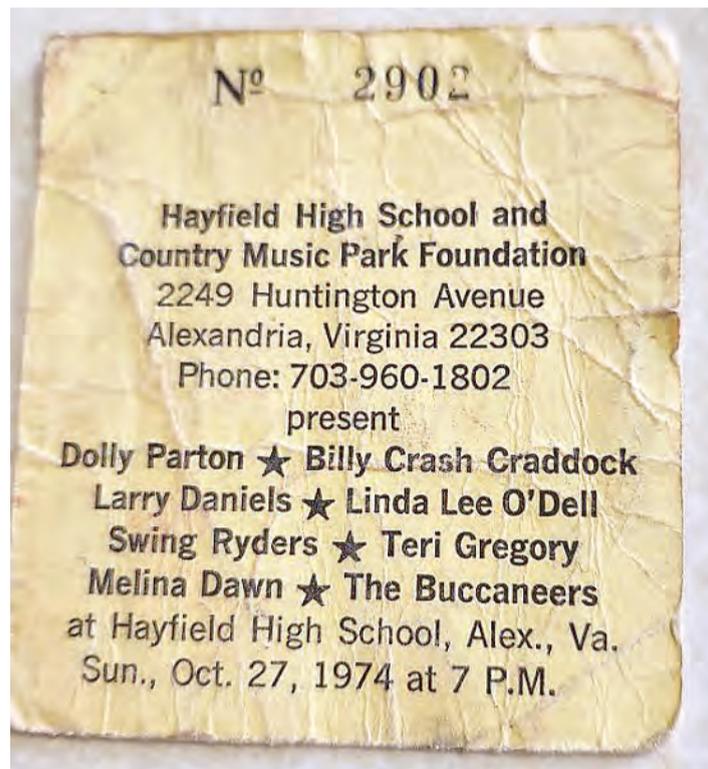
She wasn't quite the name she is now, but the country music crowd knew her, and there she was on the stage in the gym at Hayfield alongside other country musicians such as Billy Crash Craddock, Larry Daniels, Linda Lee O'Dell, Swing Ryders, Teri Gregory, Melina Dawn, and The Buccaneers.

Hayfield resident Patti Derflinger remembers being a 9-year-old at the show and somehow got in the autograph line afterwards where she got many of the performers to sign. Dolly seemed to have a short show, Derflinger remembers. Recently she was digging into some old family papers when she found the ticket stub and autographs, bringing back the memories. "When they were doing autographs, I remember I just kind of got in the line and dug the stub out of my pocket for them to sign," she said.

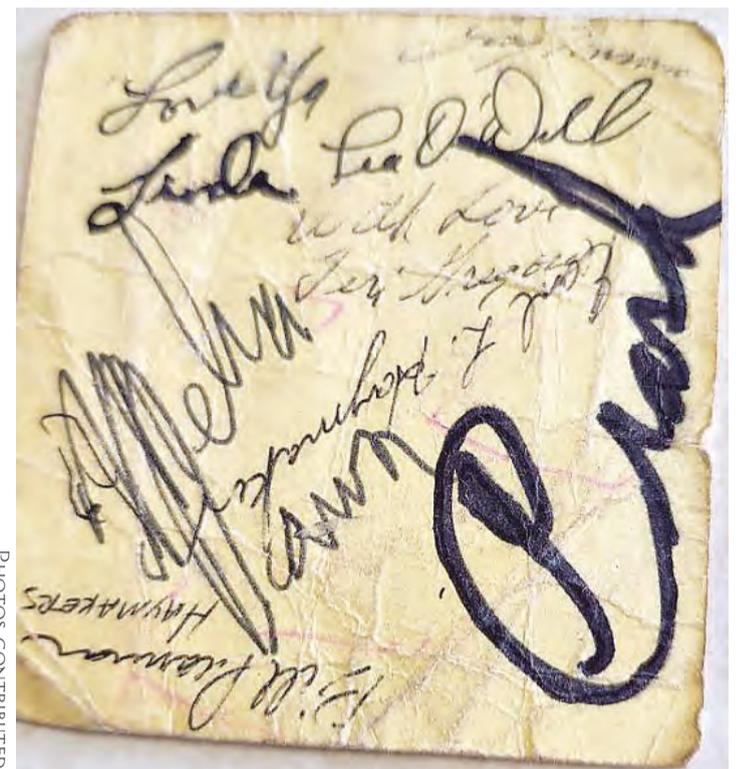
It was a big deal for the little community of Hayfield Farm.

The area was more "country," then it is now. Kingstowne was a bunch of dirt bike trails, the 7-11 was the only store around, and Nixon just resigned.

Billy Crash Craddock was a country star



If ticket stubs could talk.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Country music stars of the 1970s signed autographs at Hayfield.

**“When they were doing autographs, I remember I just kind of got in the line and dug the stub out of my pocket for them to sign.”**

— Patti Derflinger remembers being a 9-year-old at the show

with all sorts of top tunes for that time and when he was on stage at Hayfield, his big hit was “Rub It In”, a top 20 pop hit. At the time, he was signed with ABC Records. Craddock did a cover of the Tony Orlando and Dawn pop hit “Knock Three Times” in 1971. Crad-

dock was inducted into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame in 2011. Country star Linda Lee O'Dell played a few times at Hayfield.

One of her shows in 1975, a ticket was \$5 in advance or \$6 at the door.

## Big Gym of Big Names

Other well-known celebrity events at Hayfield included a pro wrestling match featuring “Haystack Calhoun,” a celebrity on that circuit, and a Jerry Lewis muscular dystrophy event reportedly featuring Jerry himself, though he never appeared on stage, disappointing audience members. After the then-named Washington Redskins appeared in their first Super Bowl in the early 1970s against the Miami Dolphins, stars from both teams were in a basketball game at Hayfield, as were the Harlem Globetrotters. Also on the courts, the Washington then-named Bullets played against the 76ers in an exhibition NBA game at Hayfield.

## SENIOR LIVING

# Virginia Ranks 14th State for Older Workers

A new study shows Virginia is the No. 14 best state for older workers based on the criteria chosen. Seniorly released the study on the Best States for Older Workers after analyzing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau, and Federation of Tax Administrators.

Metrics included labor force participation, business growth rate, and age-related workplace discrimination. Six factors specific to seniors in each state were analyzed: median income, income tax, remote work, labor force participation, business growth rate, and age-related workplace discrimination. Cost of living was apparently not considered.

Among the findings, Virginia has a median household income of \$64,938 for seniors (No. 10), 18.4% of older workers are working from home (No. 14) and 32.3%

of older adults are in the labor force (tied for 15th). Maryland ranked No. 4. DC ranked No. 1.

A record 11.2 million seniors continue working in the U.S., Seniorly says, and 14.8 million seniors are projected to be in the workforce by 2033. As healthcare and living costs continue to rise, a growing number of seniors cannot afford to retire, while others opt to work, encouraged by better health, longevity and the flexibility of remote work.

The 10 best states for older workers are Washington, New Hampshire, Alaska, Maryland, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, South Dakota, Utah, and Vermont.

<https://www.seniorly.com/resource-center/seniorly-news/best-states-for-older-workers-2025>

Washington	1	Utah	9
New Hampshire	2	Vermont	10
Alaska	3	New Jersey	11
Maryland	4	Wyoming	12
Colorado	5	Idaho	13
Connecticut	6	Virginia	14
Massachusetts	7	Arizona	15
South Dakota	8	Hawaii	16
Texas	17		

# Going Solar

Gain energy self-sufficiency and cost protections.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

**H**ave you ever considered going into the energy business? Starting your own production facility and selling energy through a contracted broker? In today's clean energy reality, it no longer requires sitting on a fossil fuel deposit and an oil derrick. Producing your own energy for sale, albeit on a small scale, is possible in Virginia. Or it's possible merely to produce all your own energy for personal use, and virtually eliminate your electricity bill. Solar energy production, without reliance on the grid, is now within many homeowners' reach. If your goal is only to protect the planet by lessening the impact of fossil fuel use and carbon release, going solar is an achievable residential project.

Do you recall the extended period of power outage after the Derecho storm in June 2012? It was multiple days without electricity for large numbers of us. When food in the refrigerator was in danger of spoiling and summer's high temperatures drove us all to wonder how long the power would be out.

Anticipation of more frequent and stronger storms in years to come due to climate change motivated me to look into possible temporary power solutions including whole home generators and solar energy. Back then, siting and the required monthly testing protocol of a large generator, though less costly, seemed too intimidating to me. And being in a modest-sized single family home, heated with natural gas, with a low electricity usage history, I was not considered a prime candidate for solar energy by most potential installers. At that time, a single solar battery would not handle all of my house systems; a further drawback to making a major change and investment.

## INCENTIVES TO GOING SOLAR

Fast forward, now ten plus years to conditions today. While Dominion rates had remained fairly constant since 1992, the utility recently asked state regulators for an increase in their fuel and base rates. That would raise customer power bills by about 15 percent over the next two years, beginning in July 2025 for the fuel rate, and

January 2026 for the base rates. Higher temperatures and more violent storms are commonplace. Added are fears that high energy users, such as data centers, could overburden Dominion's systems, leading to rolling energy blackouts.

On the plus side, home solar energy has gotten less expensive; down about 31 percent, according to Energy Sage, a marketplace link between potential solar energy users and vetted installers. Federal tax credits of 30 percent are in place for solar equipment and Fairfax County offers property tax exemptions for solar. Another improvement: solar back-up batteries have evolved with improved efficiency to handle more home systems. Virginia has banned most HOA solar panel restrictions, codified residential net metering, and selling Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs) is easy, though moderately profitable. Self-sufficiency provides protection from utility rate increases. And, a big motivator for me, reducing my carbon footprint, remains possible. I was ready to reconsider solar energy.

I began researching system information and gathering estimates in July 2024. My system was installed in late February 2025. March became my first month of total self-sufficiency, with no electricity usage from the grid. I'm able to anticipate my first sales from sending my excess power back into the grid system. In March, my 5.8kW system with 14 solar panels, sized at 136 percent of my historic usage, produced 577 kWh, 722kWh YTD, and reduced CO2 emissions 923.1 lbs; the equivalent offset of seven trees.

Make no mistake — this is still a time consuming and expensive change to make. The cost of home systems in Virginia averages just over \$37K, according to Energy Sage; or about \$2.84 per watt. The size of your system of course impacts the cost. The cost of the solar panels themselves is only about a third of the total cost. Other component costs to add in include solar inverters, racking equipment, electrical wiring, and design and installation labor. Further, to become fully energy self-sufficient, though net metering helps, requires a back-up battery to store energy for periods when the sun is not shining. A single back-up bat-



Solar energy panels are a more accepted aesthetic than their clunky predecessors, as on the front roof of this Springfield home

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Solar panels have become smaller, lighter, and more efficient, easily maneuvered onto racking rail equipment



Installer adds a recommended "critter guard" to prevent small mammals from chewing wires, or birds from nesting

tery costs around \$13,500 on average, according to Solar.com; significantly adding to the total cost of the system.

Finally, Dominion Energy's agreement with Virginia to allow net metering, has a capacity cap. "A Net Metering Customer shall be allowed to install a Renewable Fuel Generator, which is capable of generating no more than 150 percent of the Net Metering Customer's previous 12 months of usage history." (<https://www.dominionenergy.com/-/media/pdfs/virginia/terms-and-conditions/vatc25ra.pdf>)

Prospective system owners must apply to Dominion Energy for system design approval to assure limit compliance. Net metering can assist Dominion by helping them avoid facility upgrades as energy demands increase. The State-wide net metering allowance for Dominion is six percent of their peak load from the prior year. Home solar systems will help Dominion meet its requirement under Virginia's 2020 Clean Economy Act to

## What Is Net Metering?

Net metering is a policy that allows homeowners with solar energy systems to receive credit on their electric bills for excess energy they generate and feed back into the grid. In Virginia, regulated under VA Code §56-594. Capacity limit for residential: up to 25kW, with no more than 150% of customer's previous 12 month usage history. Homeowners now are credited at the full retail rate for the solar energy they send to the grid. Utilities have proposed to decrease the credit rate.

supply 30 percent of power from renewables by 2045, but without toppling Dominion's place as the public utility provider.

Solar is viewed as a home upgrade. Just like other home improvements, such as kitchen or bath remodels, owners are unlikely to achieve a 1:1 increase in home resale value. As solar panels have improved in efficiency and become smaller and more lightweight, their aesthetic appeal has improved and is considered more attractive to buyers than when initially available. Real estate professionals estimate an \$8-10K increase in home value with solar, depending on home location and visibility of roof placement. Installation expenses typically may take

7 to 20 years to recoup in electricity savings. Installers typically offer financing plans.

## PREP AND GETTING STARTED ON YOUR PROJECT

Before you take any major steps, you can use a solar generation calculator to check your home's site position and energy generation potential, given shading and sunlight hours. A south facing orientation is best, but east and west-facing can also work. To see your roof's potential, see: <https://sunroof.withgoogle.com/>; <https://pvwatts.nrel.gov/index.php>; Northern Virginia Solar Map <https://www.novasolarmap.com/>; or Maps in satellite view to check for shading and obstructions.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Back-up batteries to hold energy when the sun is not shining have also improved



An installer electrician connects a back-up battery adjacent to the installed solar panel controller



System control panels can be mounted outside, or in a garage with recommended bollard protection

Before you start your solar project, experts recommend you check the condition of your roof. You don't want to need to remove your new solar panels to replace your roof anytime soon. You might need to consider roof replacement.

Trimming or removing trees can help optimize solar collection. Selective panel placement on the available roof surface is another optimization strategy. Your electric systems panel must be at least 200 amperes or might require upgrading or supplementing. Your installer will inspect the roof for structural integrity and your electric panel capacity as part of their virtual and on-site inspections before the system design is finalized. Solar panels have a life expectancy of 25 - 30 years.

#### SELECTING AN INSTALLER

Likely your most important decision will be one of your first, selection of your installer. Your contractor can handle most of the steps in the project for you, including equipment purchase and permit applications; even filing for county tax exemptions. An internet search will identify dozens of experienced installers servicing northern Virginia. Determine if you need a contractor who installs panels alone or who also installs backup batteries. As you collect multiple estimates, you can expect to see a variety of possible designs for panels on your available roof space, with varying size and wattage of the panels; along with varying panel and battery brands. Installers typically work with their preferred equipment manufacturers. Solar energy interest groups and federal and county governments provide information to help you make sense of all the options, putting you in a better position to evaluate potential contractor suggestions and make your installer selection. See <https://solarunitedneighbors.org/locations/virginia/>; and [www.connectionnewspapers.com](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com)

<https://switchtogether.com/en/solar/fairfaxcounty/info/how-does-it-work-acceptation>; and [https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-going-solar?nrg\\_redirect=364432](https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-going-solar?nrg_redirect=364432)

The industry suggests planning on a six-month project period. After selecting your installer and working together on the design elements, much of which can be done virtually, your contractor will seek the utility's initial approval of the design. Before actual work begins, you'll need a county building permit, followed later by their installation inspection. Then you'll need final okay from your energy provider before you are allowed to turn on and begin operation of the system. The installer will require a percentage payment of the total system cost at stages along the process. A few things extended the time for completion of my project to seven months: the multiple permission requirements, with their extended process times, plus my intention to keep installers off my steep roof in summer's very high temperatures, a battery equipment supply interruption, and multiple icy weather reschedulings.

#### SOLAR RENEWABLE ENERGY CERTIFICATE

A state-supported incentive program provides an additional way to get paid for going solar. A Solar Renewable Energy Certificate provides proof of how much renewable energy is produced by a system. System owners work with an aggregator or broker to trade the value of their renewable energy production commodity.

SRECs are sold separately from electricity and may be bought by energy suppliers to meet their requirements to secure a portion of their electricity from solar generators.

One SREC is equal to 1,000 kilowatt-hours. Virginia's SREC market price over the last six months

was about \$40. A 10kW system is estimated to produce about 12 SRECS annually.

#### HELP AVAILABLE FROM COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Fairfax County has two initiatives to assist residents in going solar: Switch Together and Solarize Virginia. See <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/more-opportunities-fairfax-county>

ty-residents-go-solar These programs include free assessments, bulk discounts, and access to the winning installer of a reverse auction process. Registrants can compare the group discounts available to other individual installer estimates. Current registration for Switch Together ends June 4th; and for Solarize Virginia ends July 15th.

The county's Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination,

OEEC, indicates Solarize Virginia, now in its eleventh year, has supported 450 installations in the county since 2014; 23 installations in 2024. According to the Department of Tax Administration, there are currently 1,057 property owners in Fairfax County taking advantage of the real property tax credit. This is a five-year tax exemption [based on the installation cost] so

SEE GOING SOLAR, PAGE 18



## Public Notice

### Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
WYTHE	19757	681	BRUSHY MOUNTAIN ROAD	BR REED CREEK	3/25/2025
FRANKLIN	7914	703	AYERS ROAD 703	POPLAR CAMP CREEK	3/19/2025
ALBEMARLE	746	680	BROWNS GAP TURNPIKE	LICKINGHOLE CREEK	3/13/2025
SCOTT	23815	812	RED STONE DRIVE	STREAM	3/11/2025
DINWIDDIE	6037	619	COURTHOUSE ROAD	HORSEPEN BRANCH	3/10/2025
FLOYD	7503	221	FLOYD HWY SOUTH221	BRANCH HOWELL CREEK	3/7/2025

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

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

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

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

# Extend Express Lanes on the Beltway?

After public meetings, deadline for public comment is April 21.

**Preserving Space for Future Metrorail**

- Alternatives under consideration incorporate rail preservation across the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge through:
  - » Retaining existing, unoccupied space, or
  - » Incorporating a commitment to convert necessary space to rail transit in the future
- Rail preservation commitment would be incorporated as part of environmental (NEPA) process, which must receive federal approval.
- Terms within any potential contract or concessionaire agreement would incorporate a requirement for conversion to rail transit in the future.

I-495: Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge  
\*Should future transit (i.e., rail) be provided by others

Public Information Meeting April 2025

A VDOT poster indicates that “rail preservation would be incorporated.”

**Typical Sections for 1 and 2 Express Lanes Alternatives**

**1 Express Lane Alternative**

Virginia (I-95 to Eisenhower Ave.) Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge

Virginia (I-95 to Eisenhower Ave.) Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge

**2 Express Lanes Alternative**

Public Information Meeting April 2025

This poster shows the two express lane build options.



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

At recent public meetings, attendees visited VDOT stations and discussed the proposal with VDOT staffers. April 1 at West Potomac High School.



VDOT's Michelle Shropshire chaired the meeting at West Potomac High School on April 1.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Stop-and-go traffic congestion on the Beltway/I-495 approaching the Woodrow Wilson Bridge from vehicles traveling both the east and west is a frequent, frustrating headache for many drivers, especially daily commuters.

The Virginia Department of Transportation has a possible solution – 11 additional miles of express toll lanes.

At public meetings on April 1, 2, 7 and 9, VDOT officials presented the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study, which started in 2022 and focuses on the stretch of the Beltway from the Springfield interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) to the route 210 interchange in Maryland near National Harbor.

On April 1 at West Potomac High School, Michelle Shropshire predicted, “Traffic conditions will get much worse,” citing modeling from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Shropshire is the VDOT Megaprojects Director for VDOT’s Northern Virginia District. VDOT’s analyses predict that under the “no build” alternative (existing conditions) by 2050, on westbound lanes, morning travel times could more than double, from 16 to 52 minutes; on east-

bound lanes in the afternoons and evenings, from 21 to 54 minutes.

They presented three options: no build; one express lane in each direction from Van Dorn Street to the Maryland 210 interchange; and two express lanes in each direction from Van Dorn Street to the I-295 interchange.

There would be no loss of existing lanes. “We would use the space we now have,” said Shropshire. Describing the current 94 miles of express or “managed lanes” in Northern Virginia as “a robust system,” these plans would fill a gap, the last segment without express lanes.

The VDOT officials’ justifications for the project’s needs are providing continuity in the current system; offering more travel choices; reducing congestion; improving safety; and providing consistency with local and regional plans.

Today, over 200,000 vehicles travel on Interstate 495 between the Springfield interchange and Interstate 295 on average each day. During peak hours, by 2050, adding one lane could move 1,600 more people, VDOT contends. Adding two lanes could move 2,400 more people. They said that currently 50 percent of vehicles going east exit at route 210 or In-

SEE AFTER PUBLIC MEETINGS, PAGE 15

## Schedule:

**April 21, deadline for public comments**

June, public hearing on the preferred alternative

Mid- to late-2025, regional transportation planning board decision

Late 2025, public hearing on the final environmental assessment

Early 2026, federal decision

**Information, public comment form:**

<https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/projects/northern-virginia-district/i-495-southside-express-lanes-study/>

# After Public Meetings, Deadline For Public Comment is April 21

FROM PAGE 14

terstate 295 in Maryland.

Access points to and from the toll lanes would be at Van Dorn Street, U.S. 1 and interstate 295 and route 210 in Maryland. The footprint of the current interchange at U.S. 1 will not change, they said.

Officials cited a VDOT commissioner's letter and federal commitments to preserve the option for Metrorail on this stretch of the highway. "Rail preservation commitment would be incorporated as part of the environmental (NEPA) process, which must receive federal approval," states VDOT's document and continues, "Terms with in any potential contract with or concessionaire [a private partner] would incorporate a requirement for conversion to rail transit in the future." The Wilson Bridge's design left space for transit or express lanes. Shropshire said, adding, "Both build alternatives have rail preservation when the region deems it appropriate."

The project also includes possible new bicycle and pedestrian trails.

Holly Dougherty, President of the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce welcomed the study and offered, "We are hopeful that extending the express lanes will be another component of a robust transportation system that benefits economic growth."

## Doubts and Questions

At the April 1 hearing, attendees raised questions about costs, financing and traffic predictions. Mount Vernonite Greg Crider who attended the meeting said, "It seems that nobody attending the meetings are for the express lanes, except VDOT. Perhaps VDOT should shut down the study and spend its resources elsewhere."

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, has multiple concerns. "From the outset this has been a biased study that starts with their conclusions-first 'purpose and need' statement to 'extend and provide continuity of the Express Lanes system,'" he emailed, "which effectively excludes other alternatives like transit with transit-oriented development from satisfying their self-defined purpose."

Many studies on highway widening projects show that the expanded I-495 would generate more traffic, Schwartz emphasizes, a phenomenon called "induced demand," build it and they will come.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



495 Express Lanes Proposed Project.

VDOT



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Residents talk with VDOT representatives about the toll lane proposal. On April 1 at West Potomac High School.

More driving cancels out any congestion reduction within five to ten years, Coalition for Smarter Growth maintains.

Schwartz also argues that this expansion could block future rail. "The bridge was explicitly designed to hold the weight of Metrorail. Metrorail was a top goal of the public and the city of Alexan-

dria and Prince George's County when the lawsuits were settled over the Woodrow Wilson Bridge," he said. "VDOT is not providing documentation and legally binding assurances that the toll lanes will be removed to place Metrorail on the bridge."

He also charges that the study fails to analyze the traffic impacts on

connecting roads like U.S. 1, Telegraph Road and Van Dorn Street.

At the April 1 meeting, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck urged people to share their concerns. "I'd like to stress the importance of your engagement. This is not a done deal for the Mount Vernon community. You should get your concerns addressed. There

will be more opportunities. We need to hear from you," he said.

[https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/media/vdotvirginia.gov/projects/northern-virginia/i-495-southside-express-lanes-study/495-Southside-April-2025-Public-Information-Meetings-Presentation\\_acc03312025\\_PM.pdf](https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/media/vdotvirginia.gov/projects/northern-virginia/i-495-southside-express-lanes-study/495-Southside-April-2025-Public-Information-Meetings-Presentation_acc03312025_PM.pdf)

# ENTERTAINMENT

## GARDEN TOURS

Visitors can plan self-guided tours of the region's most splendid gardens, including these not-to-miss sites (check with the individual gardens for hours of operation):

**Meadowlark Botanical Gardens**, a 90-acre oasis featuring more than 100 cherry trees surrounding a lovely lake, plus an extensive shade garden, native wildflowers, gazebos, birds, butterflies, seasonal blooms and the very unique Korean Bell Garden.

**Green Spring Gardens**, an outdoor classroom, national historic site, and museum featuring a wooded stream, a valley with ponds, a native plant garden, over 20 thematic demonstration gardens, and a greenhouse filled with tropical plants.

**River Farm**, a historic 25-acre site on the banks of the Potomac River that was once part of George Washington's original five farms and is now the headquarters of the American Horticultural Society.

**George Washington's Mount Vernon**, the home to America's first president, features four bountiful gardens to explore and enjoy. In addition, experience wide-open spaces, wooded landscapes, and a quarter-mile-long forest trail – not to mention the vast educational resources available on site.

## SOFTBALL PLAYERS WANTED!

**The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players.**

Women over 40 and all skill levels welcome. They play most Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna from May-July and September-October. For more information, visit [goldengirls.org](http://goldengirls.org).

## PLANT A TREE

**The McLean Trees Foundation, Neighborhood Trees Program, wants to help you plant a native tree in your yard.** Don't know how to plant a tree but want to support the environmental health of your community? Want your family to have the experience of planting a tree? If you live in McLean, Virginia, the McLean Trees Foundation (MTF) (a local nonprofit) will help you select an appropriate native tree for your property, deliver the tree to your yard, help you plant it, provide information on maintenance, and even check back with you a few months after planting to see how your tree is doing. If you are interested in participating in this terrific program to boost our native tree canopy in McLean, please visit our website at <https://www.mcleantreesfoundation.org/neighborhood-tree-program> and submit your application! A modest fee of \$100 is assessed to cover the costs of the program (limit one 6-7 foot tree in 15 gallon container per household). We have a separate program for those who are interested in spearheading a community tree planting campaign in their neighborhood. MTF's Tree Champion program makes it easy to help your neighbors plant more trees! For more information, visit the website at <https://www.mcleantreesfoundation.org/tree-champions-program>.

## NOW THRU MAY 3

**Investigating Identity – A Student Exhibit.** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Work-



**A Life in Art Exhibit by Sandra Dovberg can be seen now through April 27, 2025 at Reston Art Gallery.**

house Way, Lorton. What happens when young artists turn the mirror inward? Investigating Identity invites you into a deeply personal and powerful exhibition of work from emerging artists at George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College. From painting and mixed media to sculpture and photography, the exhibition reflects the complexity of identity in today's world—touching on themes of race, gender, belief, and belonging, while also exploring personal journeys of artistic growth and transformation. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/investigating-identity-exhibition>

## NOW THRU APRIL 27

**A Life in Art Exhibit by Sandra Dovberg.** At Reston Art Gallery, 11400 Washington Plaza W # B, Reston. From realistic paintings to abstract compositions, sculptures, ceramics, three-dimensional wall hangings, art objects, and one-of-a-kind handmade jewelry designs, Sandra Dovberg has done it all. Her exhibit, A Life In Art, is currently on display at the Reston Art Gallery through April 27. Visitors are invited to a special "Meet the Artist" event on April 27, where art lovers can connect with Sandra, explore her work, and hear about her prolific life dedicated to the arts. Visit [www.sandraccovbergart.com](http://www.sandraccovbergart.com)

## NOW THRU JUNE 9

**Required Reading: A Visual Poetry Exhibition on Language & Silence.** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. "What happens when words are rearranged, erased, or transformed into something new? Required Reading is an exhibition that challenges the limits of language, bringing together eight artists who break traditional communication structures and invite the viewer into an unexpected dialogue. Visit the website <https://www.workhousearts.org/required-reading-exhibit>

## NOW THRU MAY 3

**Exhibition: Appearance.** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Muse Gallery, Building W-16, Lorton. Reception: April 12, 6-8 p.m. What does it mean to appear? A fleeting reflection in the mirror, the way we present ourselves to the world, or

something more mysterious—an idea surfacing, an object taking new form, a presence felt but unseen? Visit the website:

<https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/appearance-exhibition>

## THURSDAY/APRIL 17

**"The SpongeBob Musical: Live On Stage!"** 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. SpongeBob fans young and old, join the spring break fun at Bikini Bottom! Catchy songs and fun characters create a theatrical party full of heart and humor, where the power of optimism really can save the world. Rated TV-G, runtime 114 minutes. Family friendly. Specially designed for families with young children.

## APRIL 18 TO MAY 4

**"Decision Height."** 8 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. This award-winning show explores the essential role that Women Army Service Pilots (WASP) played in World War II and the camaraderie they shared. Show times are 8 p.m. on the following Fridays and Saturdays: April 18-19, April 25-26 and May 2-3. Matinee performances begin at 2 p.m. on Sundays, April 27 and May 4. Tickets may be purchased online at [www.viennava.gov/webtrac](http://www.viennava.gov/webtrac) or in person at Vienna Community Center.

## FRIDAY/APRIL 18

**Learning at Lunch: Workhouse to ARC.** 12-1 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. How Did the Workhouse Become ARC? A Lunchtime Look at Arts, Community & Transformation in the DMV. Join them for an engaging session discussing the transition from Workhouse to ARC. Learn about the transformative journey, gain valuable insights, and connect with like-minded individuals. Visit <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/learning-at-lunch-workhouse-to-arc>

## SATURDAY/APRIL 19

**Spring Community Parking Lot Sale.** 9 a.m.–1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Shoppers will find bargains galore at this community sale of more than 50 sellers, including a limited number of commercial vendors and flea market dealers. The sale offers a



**Learning at Lunch: Workhouse to ARC can be seen on Friday, April 18, 2025 at Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.**

wide variety of new and gently used household goods, electronics, furniture, clothes, appliances, "attic treasures" and other items suitable for every budget. Check out the Kids' Corner, a special area of the sale where children ages 3-15 can increase their math and entrepreneurial skills while selling toys, clothes, games and other items.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 19

**Patriot's Day Event.** 12 noon. At the grounds of Freeman House, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna. The Fairfax Resolves Chapter of the Virginia Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (VASSAR) and the Fairfax County Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) are co-hosting the annual Patriot's Day event. There will be a color guard and readings of accounts from both British and colonist sources of the skirmish at Lexington and Concord, MA that occurred exactly 250 years ago.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 19

**Easter at The Perch.** At Capital One Center, Tysons. Guests can enjoy the ultimate Easter Egg Hunt with 3,000 eggs at The Perch – a 3 acre sky park 11 stories in the sky with sweeping views of Tysons. Event activities will include a petting zoo with alpacas, bunnies and baby goats, a meet and greet with the Easter Bunny, and special experiences from Capital One Center partners — including free manicures from Nothing in Between, a pop-up of Flore Cafe serving festive hot chocolate, coffee, and artisan gelato, and Capital One Hall's pop-up box office offering fee-free tickets.

## WEDNESDAY/APRIL 23

**Senior Safety Summit.** 10 a.m.–Noon. McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave, McLean. Join the McLean Citizens Association, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, and the Fairfax County Police Department to learn about public safety. Topics will include community risk reduction, search and rescue, financial crimes against senior citizens, crime prevention and safety, emergency preparedness, and the Silver Shield Anti-Scam Campaign. No registration needed.

## WEDNESDAY/APRIL 23

**Ageless Wisdom — Timeless Purpose: How Senior Sages Can Access and Use Your Life & Soul**

**Wisdom.** 7-8 p.m. At Reston Library, Reston. Led by Patty Hagan, CEO of Lighthouse Coaching. Learn to see aging as a superpower, reclaim your right to dream, and step into your role as Wisdom Keeper. Visit Ageless Wisdom – Timeless Purpose: How Senior Sages Can Access and Use Your Life & Soul Wisdom - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home

## APRIL 23 TO 27

**George Mason Friends Book Sale.** At George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Preview sale, Wednesday, 5-8 p.m. Entry fee \$20/adult. General sale, Thursday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., free. Browse a wide variety of used books, CDs, and DVDs. For more details, visit [georgemasonfriends.blogspot.com](http://georgemasonfriends.blogspot.com) or call 703-813-6616.

## WEDNESDAY/APRIL 23

**The Hot Lanes.** 7 p.m. At Centreville High School, Centreville. Join The Hot Lanes at the Centreville Jazz Ensemble concert.

## WEDNESDAY/APRIL 23

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

## THURSDAY/APRIL 24

**Green Expo.** 7-9 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. More than three dozen local exhibitors will be on hand to offer resources and information on everything from sustainable landscaping, composting, recycling, and water conservation to raising chickens, bee keeping, and more. Favorites returning include an outdoor exhibit of sheep and lambs sponsored by Lamb Mowers, and wildlife experts from the nonprofit volunteer group Secret Garden Birds & Bees who will show live birds of prey, such as owls and hawks. Visit [www.viennava.gov/GreenExpo](http://www.viennava.gov/GreenExpo).

## FRIDAY/APRIL 25

**Family Fun Bingo.** 7-9:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Due to construction at the Old Firehouse, this event will be held at MCC. Join in an evening of fun and excitement! Everyone can enjoy free

[www.connectionnewspapers.com](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com)

# ENTERTAINMENT



**Vienna's Green Expo takes place on Thursday, April 24, 2025 at the Vienna Community Center.**

popcorn, and winners will take their pick of prizes! Preregistration is recommended.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**Town of Clifton's 123rd Birthday Celebration.** 4-9 p.m. At The Red Barn, Clifton. Good eats and good times around the fire pit; cornhole, wiffle ball and games for the kids; acoustic guitar music provided by Dave Nemetz.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**RA's Community Yard Sale.** 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. At 12010 Sunrise Valley Drive (Near the Reston Wegmans).

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**Park Clean-Up.** 10 a.m. – noon. At Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Join MCC's youth board members and Youth Ambassadors for a cleanup at Lewinsville Park. Whether you're looking to earn volunteer hours or simply want to give back to your community, this is the perfect chance to help. Meet up on the porch of the house at the back of the park. Follow the main path from the parking lot to the tennis courts. Presidential Volunteer service hours will be available.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**DEA Prescription Drug Take Back Initiative.** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Vienna Police Department, 215 Center Street, South, Vienna. The Vienna Police Department will have a collection site for old, expired, unused, or unwanted medications. Prescription medications, controlled or non-controlled substances, and over-the-counter drugs may be turned in anonymously at the collection point in front of the Vienna Police Department.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**Sensory Day.** 1-4 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Due to construction at the Old Firehouse, this event will be held at MCC.

Challenge your senses! This unique and fun event, supporting Autism Awareness Month, will provide ALL who attend a sensory exploration through taste, smell, sound, sight and touch.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**Free Books for All.** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Lorton Community Center, 9520 Richmond Hwy., Lorton. Reading opens the World Book Drive and Family Literacy Fair. Some 30,000

free books for families and educators. Books are available on a first come, first served basis.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**Lorton Spring Fling.** 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. The outdoor festival features a handcrafted marketplace, food trucks, and kid's carnival of games and activities. There will be live entertainment sponsored by Potomac Music and local police and fire departments and the National Guard will have their vehicles and trucks on display. Trademasters Home Services will host a complimentary 'Fishpond' for kids. In addition to the handcraft vendors for shopping, there will be several food trucks, on hand. Go to [www.southcountypsto.org](http://www.southcountypsto.org) for more information. Questions about the event can be emailed to [SCHCraft-show@gmail.com](mailto:SCHCraft-show@gmail.com).

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**Earth Day Fairfax.** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Here's just a few topics you can expect at this year's Earth Day Festival: Strategies to grow bigger, better plants Information for identifying and getting rid of invasive plants Ways insects help the environment Effect of erosion on archaeology How to use a historic corn grinder History through activities Composting With live music, outdoor ice skating, the popular touch-a-truck exhibit and more, this is a learning experience you don't want to miss. Admission to the event is free, but there is a parking fee of \$10 per vehicle.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**RA's Community Yard Sale.** 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. At 12010 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston (near the Reston Wegmans). Vendor space is sold out.

## **SATURDAY/APRIL 26**

**RA's Community Yard Sale.** 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. At 12010 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston (near Reston Wegmans).

## **APRIL 26-27**

**Two Day Weekend HO Scale Model Train Show.** 12-4 p.m. Saturday and 1-4 p.m. Sunday. At the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Potomac Module Crew will hold a two day week-



**Vienna's Walk on the Hill takes place on Sunday, April 27, 2025 along Windover Avenue in Vienna.**

end HO Scale Model Train Show. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5, \$6 for special events. Seniors, \$4; Military (active and retired) \$4. <http://www.fairfax-station.org>, <http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR>, 703-425-9225.

## **SUNDAY/APRIL 27**

**Tutti Frutti Productions: "Underneath a Magical Moon."** 4 p.m. at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Through her open window, Wendy Darling normally gazes out at the night sky dreaming of blue lagoons, magical moons and the imagined stories she can tell. But tonight, like no other, has magic in the air... underneath a Magical Moon set in the backyard where Wendy and her brothers are camping out. There's a full moon and Wendy just can't get to sleep so she begins to tell her brothers a story.

## **SUNDAY/APRIL 27**

**Walk on the Hill.** 2-5 p.m. The event along Windover Avenue between Lewis Street and Lawyers Road, Vienna, is free and is presented by the Town of Vienna in partnership with Historic Vienna, Inc., and the Windover Heights Historic District. Some of the town's most beautiful historic properties and colorful lawns and gardens will be featured during this leisurely, "at-your-own-pace" walking event. Since 1974, residents and visitors have made the lovely pilgrimage to this historic neighborhood to participate in self-guided tours through dozens of participating yards and gardens offering inspiring views of glorious spring flowers, budding trees, live entertainment, exhibits and refreshments. Visit [www.viennava.gov/walkonthehill](http://www.viennava.gov/walkonthehill) or call 703-255-6360.

## **SUNDAY/APRIL 27**

**Planet Virginia.** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Wilkins Plaza on the campus of George Mason University, Fairfax. Co-sponsored by Sodexo, this family-friendly festival will bring together 5,000 attendees exploring how plant-based choices improve human health, combat climate change, and save animal lives. With nearly 50 vendors, insightful speaker sessions, and a Planet Play Zone for kids, Planet Virginia promises a full day of education,

inspiration, and entertainment. Attendees will enjoy delicious plant-based food, discover sustainable products, and hear from experts and advocates on the benefits of shifting toward a plant-forward future as well as an appearance by Virginia Congressman Suhas Subramanyam.

## **SUNDAY/APRIL 27**

**Planet Virginia: A Plant-Based Lifestyle Expo.** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. At George Mason University, Wilkins Plaza. Co-sponsored by Sodexo, this family-friendly festival will bring together 5,000 attendees to explore how plant-based choices can improve human health, combat climate change, and save the lives of animals. With nearly 50 vendors, insightful speaker sessions, and a Planet Play Zone for kids, Planet Virginia promises a full day of education, inspiration, and entertainment.

## **SUNDAY/APRIL 27**

**Britain on the Green.** 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Gunston Hall, 10706 Gunston Road, Lorton. The 27th Britain on the Green show will feature over 200 British cars and motorcycles, music, food trucks, and admission to historic Gunston Hall and grounds. Participant's Choice honors will be awarded in 25 or more classes of British cars and motorcycles. Additionally, the Nation's Capital Jaguar Owners Club will again hold their Concours d'Elegance during Britain on the Green. Visit the website: <https://www.britainonthegreen.org/>

## **TUESDAY/APRIL 29**

**Golf Tournament and Luncheon Fundraiser.** At Westfields Golf Club, Clifton. Hosted by the Assistance League of Northern Virginia. Includes a continental breakfast, 18 holes of golf and a hot lunch buffet. There will also be raffle prizes and silent auction items available. All proceeds will help support ALNV's mission to assist area children in Title 1 elementary schools with food, clothing, books and other necessities. Contact at: [sponsor@alnv.org](mailto:sponsor@alnv.org) for information about sponsorship options. Visit the website: [alnv.org](http://alnv.org)

## **WEDNESDAY/APRIL 30**

**Scam Jam 2025.** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Northern Virginia Community College - Annandale, 8430

Center Drive, Annandale. Take part in Scam Jam 2025: Prevention, Protection and Prosecution. This event is dedicated to fraud prevention and the protection of older adults. Free event! Registration is required. Complimentary lunch. Watch HOAP: Heroes of Adult Protection, a short film from The Clowder Group, showcasing resilience of abuse victims and dedicated efforts of Adult Protective Services employees. Explore resource fair with exhibitors from local government agencies and non-profit organizations dedicated to fraud prevention and elder protection. Visit the website: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/fairfax-county-silver-shield-anti-scam-campaign/scam-jam>

## **MAY 1-2**

### **The Music Man and Circus Olympus.**

7 p.m. At Capital Baptist Church, 3504 Gallows Road, Annandale. Two plays: The Music Man, Jr. by Meredith Willson. Get ready for a toe-tapping, heart-thumping good time with this 6-time Tony Award-winning musical that's been making audiences smile since 1957! It's a musical, it's a comedy, and its pure fun from start to finish! Circus Olympus by Lindsay Price. Step right up, folks! The circus has rolled into town! Meet the Greek Geeks, and boy, do they have a wild ride in store as they dive into a re-telling of some of their favorite Greek Myths.

## **MAY 1-10**

**"Anything Goes."** 7:30 p.m. At George C. Marshall High School, 7731 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. "Anything Goes is set aboard the ocean liner S. S. American, where nightclub singer/evangelist Reno Sweeney (Saniya Desai) is en route from New York to England. Her pal Billy Crocker (Jacob Lee) has stowed away to be near his love, Hope Harcourt (Dena Talebnejad/Evie Richardson), but the problem is Hope is engaged to the wealthy Lord Evelyn Oakleigh (Joan Alfarro/Shahrad Valizadeh).

Performances are:  
Thursday May 1st, 2025 at 7:30pm  
Friday May 2nd, 2025 at 7:30pm  
Thursday May 8th, 2025 at 7:30pm  
Friday May 9th, 2025 at 7:30pm  
Saturday May 10th, 2025 at 2pm  
Saturday May 10th, 2025 at 7:30pm (Senior Night)

## **MAY 2-4**

**Spring Book Sale.** At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville. Fiction and nonfiction for all ages, DVDs, audiobooks and more.

Friday, May 2, 1-5 p.m.  
Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sunday, May 4, 1-4 p.m.  
Bag sale on Sunday. Fill a grocery bag with books and DVDs for \$10.

## **MAY 2 TO MAY 4**

**Friends of Centreville Regional Library Spring Book Sale.** Friday, May 2, 1-5 p.m., Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday, May 4, 1-4 p.m. At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville. Shop fiction and nonfiction for all ages, DVDS, audiobooks, and more! No electronic scanners allowed. On Sunday, fill a grocery bag for just \$10!

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 19

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**CALENDAR**

4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**Announcements**

**The Murder of RFK**  
by Michael Calder  
Barnes&Noble-Amazon-jfkvsia.com

**Obituary**

**Obituary**



**Margaret Marron Norton** of Springfield, VA (from Windber, PA) was called home to the Lord on April 6, 2025 after her battle with cancer and cardiac failure. She was born in Windber, PA, to Hugh and Stella (Delehunt) Marron on February 8, 1950. Margaret was the first born of three children. She is survived by her sisters, Mary Bartek and Louise Dugan, her husband of 50 years, Daniel Norton Sr, son, Daniel Norton Jr, and twin daughters Kathryn Norton and Kristine Riegner. She joins her parents and oldest daughter, Mary Norton, inside the gates of heaven.

"Espirit de Corps" – defines Margaret's Army experience. In the early years they were each other's family with the strong bond that connects members of the military. She took a great deal of pride in serving in the US Army Nurse Corps from 1970-1986. Margaret received the Meritorious Service Medal; Army Good Conduct Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Army Service Ribbon; and, Army Overseas Service Ribbon. Her pride in serving her country was only overshadowed by her love of family, friends, and her dedication to the Catholic Church. While in the military she met her husband, Dan (Sr), and had four wonderful children, Mary, Dan (Jr), Kat, and Kris. Shortly following the birth of her twin girls and moving from Hawaii to Northern Virginia, she began having heart trouble where she was close to leaving this world. She was medically retired from the military after managing a road to recovery with the help of a pacemaker. She referred to all of the years following that time of her life as precious bonus years. Margaret's faith was always a foundation in her life. She was active in the church and had a strong core group of friends whom she cherished. Volunteering at ECHO, playing bunco with friends, dining out, traveling, and spending time with her children and grandchildren kept her busy and fulfilled. She lived a life true to self and service. She is greatly missed by her family and friends.

The family will receive friends for visitation at 3-7pm Thursday, 10 April 2025, at Jefferson Funeral Chapel, 5755 Castlewellan Dr, Alexandria, VA. A funeral mass will be held at Saint Raymond of Penafort Catholic Church, 8750 Pohick Rd, Springfield, VA, on 10 April 2025, 11am to celebrate Margaret's life. Committal at a future date at Arlington Cemetery.

Online condolences may be posted at <https://www.jeffersonfuneralchapel.com/obituaries/>

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# Going Solar

FROM PAGE 13

these thousand-plus systems were placed in service over the past five years. The value of the current solar credits equates to \$36.7 million in assessed value.

"We are pleased to see an increasing number of residents installing solar energy on their homes," said OEEC director, John Morrill. "Every new solar installation helps lower a resident's utility costs, eases the strain on the electricity grid, and brings our community closer to achieving our goal of a carbon-neutral Fairfax County by 2050."

Fairfax County residents can learn more about the benefits of solar, including the tax exemptions on solar equipment, by visiting Going Solar in Fairfax County.

Once your system is up and running, apps for the components allow you to easily track production, storage, and usage, allowing you to become more conscious of your home energy use. The apps allow you to control the system from your cell phone or computer. Those with battery back-up can use the system to set the amount of energy returned to the grid versus stored, thus preparing for rainy days and possible storm-related grid outages.

If you are motivated to find energy savings without the expense of going solar, visit the county's new Sustain Fairfax Challenge. The online site suggests many actions to become more sustainable and save money. The site outlines easy actions and provides helpful resources, including rebates and how-to guides. Visit [sustainchallenge.fairfaxcounty.gov](https://sustainchallenge.fairfaxcounty.gov).

Those going solar take advantage of the pioneering work of immigrant Hungarian-American Maria Telkes, dubbed the "Sun Queen." Telkes gained entry into the National Inventors Hall of Fame for her groundbreaking work in solar heating, ovens, and use of solar power in water distillation. She built the first solar powered house in the 1940s, called the Dover Sun House. While we think of solar technology as a relatively new science, it has, in fact, been around longer than most are aware.

*Note: This article describes the author's personal journey into going solar. The writer is a homeowner, not a solar energy expert. Not affiliated with the renewable energy industry beyond described residential net metering and SREC sales, she often writes on environmental subjects.*

FROM PAGE 17

## SATURDAY/MAY 3

### Free Community Document

**Shredding Event.** 9-11 a.m. (or until truck is full). At The Fairfax Community Center, 9140 Belvoir Woods Parkway, Fort Belvoir (located by the corner of Telegraph Road and Route 1, not on base). Sponsored by the Army Retirement Residence Foundation – Potomac. Max five boxes per person. Remove any plastic. For more information, call 703-781-2460 or email [contactus@aarfp.org](mailto:contactus@aarfp.org)

## SATURDAY/MAY 3

**Forest Bathing.** 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, 9000 Richmond Hwy., Alexandria. Forest Bathing is a slow, mindful immersion in Nature. This practice is deeply grounding and has many health benefits. The total distance traveled is often less than a mile. Visit the website: <https://www.woodlawnpopeleighey.org/upcomingevents>

## SATURDAY/MAY 3

**Feed Fairfax 5K.** At Greenbriar Town Center, Chantilly. Looking for a family-friendly way to support Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM) weekend meal programs for students in Fairfax County Public Schools? Registration is now open for the Feed Fairfax 5K set for Saturday, May 3, at the Greenbriar Town Center in Chantilly. All proceeds from the race entry fees and donations will support WFCM's and Food for Others' weekend meal programs for students. For more information and to register, go to [feedfairfax.com](http://feedfairfax.com).

## SATURDAY/MAY 3

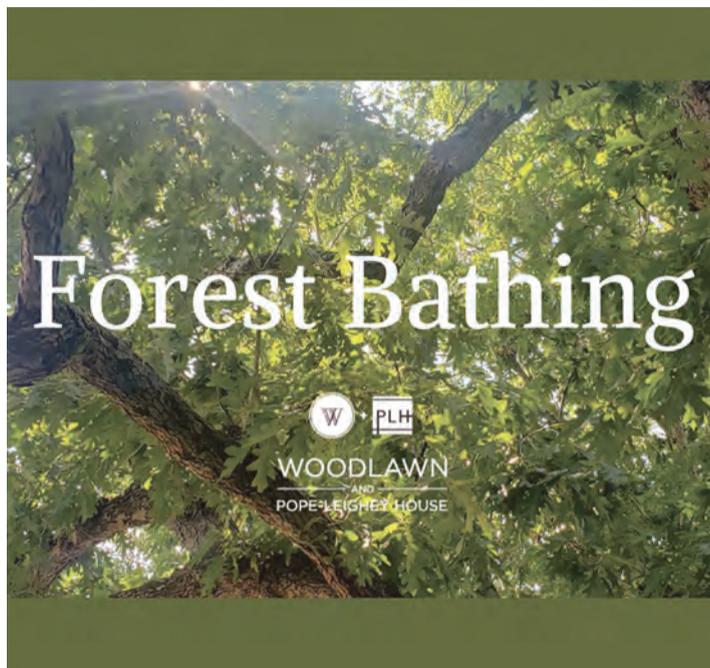
**Community Shred.** 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Antioch Baptist Church, 6525-B Little Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Lambda Kappa Omega Chapter will partner with Antioch Baptist Church to host a Community Shred celebrating Earth Day. Plastics (no bottles) can also be brought for NextTrex recycling. Contact Denni Cravins (202-361-0571) for additional information.

## SATURDAY/MAY 3

**Taste of Tysons Corner.** 1 p.m. Indulge in 40-plus delicious bites from top eateries, sip on beer and wine, and enjoy live music and cooking demonstrations. The General Admission portion of this event is FREE to attend. Please RSVP and let us know you're attending! VIP tickets are on sale now. VIP Tickets include seating and access to the VIP tent, one alcoholic beverage, and exclusive lux tastings from Earls, Seasons 52, Barrel & Bushel, and Nordstrom Cafe: <https://tasteoftysonscorner.com>

## MAY 3-4

**Virginia Opera: Loving v. Virginia.** At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Saturday, May 3 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, May 4 at 2 p.m. Virginia Opera and Richmond Symphony present the highly anticipated world premiere of *Loving v. Virginia*. A young



Forest Bathing will be offered on Saturday, May 3, 2025 at Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House in Alexandria.

couple's interracial marriage in 1958 sparks a case that leads to the Supreme Court and a victory for civil rights in the United States. This operatic retelling is based on the true story of Mildred and Richard Loving.

## MAY 3-4

**Great Falls Studios Spring Art-fest.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At The Grange, 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Sandy Buffie, a very creative Great Falls jeweler and artist will be displaying her eclectic jewelry.

## SUNDAY/MAY 4

**Tiny Music Festival on Main.** Noon to 5 p.m. At The Shoppes at Main Parking Lot, 10409 Main Street, Fairfax. Mark your calendars for The Tiny Music Fest on Main, a free outdoor concert series happening every first Sunday from May through September, Noon – 5 p.m. Enjoy incredible live acoustic performances while sipping on craft beer from High Side and munching on delicious pizza from Old Dominion Pizza. Seating is limited, so bring your own chairs and get ready for good vibes!

## SUNDAY/MAY 4

**Tour de Hunter Mill bike ride.** It's a community bike ride for people of all ages and abilities, including families. Explore the scenic, bike friendly areas in Hunter Mill District. Register now: <https://tinyurl.com/tdhmride>

## WEDNESDAY/MAY 7

**Lifetime Learning Institute of Northern Virginia Forum.** 10-11 a.m. Little River United Church of Christ, 8410 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Guest Speaker John Lechelt, Professor of Political Science, Northern Virginia Community College, will address the subject of Guns in America: A Complex National Dilemma. This program is free and open to the public without registration. Email any questions to [admin@lilnova.org](mailto:admin@lilnova.org).

## THURSDAY/MAY 8

**MPA Spring Benefit.** 7:30-9:30 p.m. At the McLean home of

Reggie and Dharini Aggarwal. Sponsored by McLean Project for the Arts, which relies on the funds raised at Spring Benefit to further its mission to educate and inspire the community through contemporary visual arts exhibitions and arts education programs. Those include MPA ArtReach, which extends these exhibitions into the community through gallery tours and workshops for FCPS Title I elementary schools and other underserved groups. Co-chaired by Cindy Green and Christine Wang, the May 8 sunset party will feature festive fare from Windows Catering, music, and much more. Visit [www.mpaart.org](http://www.mpaart.org) or call 703-790-1953.

## SATURDAY/MAY 10

**Annual Spring Faire.** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Craft and Vendor Show. Proceeds benefit the Bethany House.

## SATURDAY/MAY 10

**44th Annual Spring Civil War Mosby Bus Tour, "Mosby and the End of the War."** Sponsored by the Stuart - Mosby Historical Society. Tour Leaders will be Kevin Pawlak and Rob Orrison. Follow Mosby's Rangers during the closing acts of the Civil War, from the final fights to the disbandment at Salem. Cost is \$80 members of the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society \$90 for non-members. Tour does not include lunch. To sign up contact Rob Orrison at 703-431-2869 or email [mosbytours@gmail.com](mailto:mosbytours@gmail.com) or send your check to Rob Orrison (make checks payable to Rob) at 102 Melody Lane Stafford, VA 22554. Venmo: @Robert-Orrison. No refunds after May 1, 2025.

## MONDAY/MAY 12

**Our Man in Moscow – In-Person.** 1-2:30 p.m. At Reston Library, Reston. International trade lawyer Steve Creskoff shares some amusing and revealing experiences he had while working on a project for the World Bank in Moscow in the early 2000s,

along with insight into today's US-Russia relations. Visit Our Man in Moscow - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home

## THURSDAY/MAY 15

**Bike to Work Day 2025.** More than 100 Pit Stops Located Across the Metropolitan Washington Region. Join thousands of area commuters for the free 24th annual event celebrating bicycling as a fun, low-cost, healthy, and environmentally friendly way to get around. Riders can find Bike to Work Day pit stops around the metropolitan region in DC, Suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. The first 18,000 to register and attend one of the pit stops will receive a free commemorative red Bike to Work Day T-shirt. Pit Stop information is available at <https://www.biketoworkmetrodc.org/find-your-pit-stop>  
Website: <https://www.biketoworkmetrodc.org/>  
Registration: <https://www.tfaforms.com/4886950>

## FRIDAY/MAY 16

**Clifton Homes Tour.** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton. CCWC's 48th Homes Tour for charity. Four homes and Cloverleaf Equine Center will be open. Clifton Presbyterian Church will have a Vendor Fair, Silent Auction, etc. Tickets \$35 in advance. Website: <https://cliftoncwc.org/>

## SATURDAY/MAY 17

**Photography Exhibition.** 12-4 p.m. At St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 6320 Hanover Ave., Springfield. Photography Exhibition by Veterans Behind the Lens Collective and a Juried Show of Fairfax County High School Students. Donations and proceeds from sales benefit FACETS (<https://facetscares.org/>).

## SATURDAY/MAY 17

**Spring Civil War & Militaria Show & Sale.** 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Arlington-Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Featuring books, relics and memorabilia from all wars. Admission: \$5 per person. All vendors are welcome! For additional information contact Don Hakenson at [dhakenson@verizon.net](mailto:dhakenson@verizon.net), or call 703-785-5294 or contact Bud Mayo at [mayo5304@cox.net](mailto:mayo5304@cox.net) or call 703-389-1505.

## SUNDAY/MAY 18

**Asian Festival.** 12-6 p.m. In Historic Old Town Fairfax, Fairfax City. Sponsored by the Old Town Fairfax Business Association, this year celebrates the "Year of the Snake" and is shaping up to be one of their biggest and best events to date. This fun, free, family-friendly event features a full line up of live entertainment and cultural performances, 60+ Asian food vendors and food trucks, 60+ non-food vendors and exhibitions, kids activities, cosplay contest, beer garden and karaoke. The Choy Wun Lion Dance Troupe, with its crowd-favorite Lion Dance, will return to celebrate the Lunar Year of the Snake. Visit the website: [asianfestivalonmain.com](http://asianfestivalonmain.com).

## Doggone It



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Well, that wasn't much fun at all. What fun that wasn't was those 45 minutes when Burton, our adolescent, two-and-a-half-year-old golden retriever went missing, his first such unsupervised and very unapproved sojourn off-leash this morning. (It might have been fun for him, but it was anything but for us.) Though he has his identification/who to call on his dog tags, as well as a chip embedded (with his owner's name and contact information on it); as any dog/pet owner knows, one of the least guaranteed outcomes in dog ownership is that your dog will return home on his own, some good Samaritan will act amazingly on your behalf and actually call you or that your dog will survive the ordeal (or that you will).

As it happened, Burton was out for his morning walk (his first since his last outing before bedtime) with his mother/my wife Dina as per usual (she does first-thing-in-the-mornings, I do the rest of the day). Typically, Burton's morning walk occurs in the miles of woods directly behind our house ("Belly Acres," I call our house). Never off leash despite the privacy (our house is also at the end of a dead-end street); still, sometimes (how about all the time) Burton likes to play tug of war. And if one isn't careful/doesn't have a secure hold of his leash, he may squirm away and off he'll go. Which is exactly what happened this morning between Dina and Burton. It has likewise happened to me.

What happened after Burton got loose is that I, as co-owner/father received a frantic phone call from Dina (co-owner/mother). Actually, there were multiple calls (I was in the shower at the time and didn't hear a ring). When I finally answered the phone, Dina said those words that dog owners everywhere dread hearing. For me it was: "Burton's gone." I asked her what had happened. After learning the circumstances and timeline, I said I was still wrapped in a towel, but I'd be outside as soon as possible.

Within 10 minutes or so, I was outside looking and listening for Dina. When I heard her yelling Burton's name, I walked in the opposite direction (to cover more ground). We live on two acres as do most of our neighbors. With woods all around us and a four-lane state road a quarter mile away, the places for Burton to go to get lost or hurt are numerous. Not finding him in the usual acreage, I got in my car and drove north up our street to the state road (shaking all the way fearing the worst that he might have been hit/killed by a car on it) and with the windows down, I started calling his name and looking all around. Fortunately, when I reached the state road, there was no sign of Burton (thank God, if you know what I mean?) so I turned right and a drove a few hundred yards ahead and turned down the next road which sort of borders our property thinking Burton might have wandered through the woods attracted to the sounds of cars. Again, no luck so I drove the minute or two back home.

Just before I was to turn left onto our street, my cell phone rings, and when I answer, I hear the words that all pet owners in a similarly panicked state hope to hear: "I got him," said Dina. Can you say sigh of relief with an exhale to match and of course a verbal: "Thank God" by me. A dog on the loose with woods that go on for miles protecting above-ground power lines and a below-ground gas pipeline), animals everywhere, flowers blooming, people dirt biking and some locals even shooting guns and the potential for dog distractions with sounds and scents is everywhere, and the sooner we find Burton the better. Well, we did find him, or rather he found us. We were lucky. Heck, he was lucky - and smart. He knew where he lived, and we hoped we knew where he might be. Sure enough, he was coming home at the same time we were out looking for him.

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



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