**Cooking her way through ‘Hell’**

Alexandria native Leigh Orleans describes competing on Gordon Ramsay's reality show

*BY DYLAN JAFFE*

No one would voluntarily choose to walk through the gates of Hell, but for this chef, it was a no brainer.

Personal chef Leigh Orleans, 28, who grew up in the Fairfax County part of Alexandria, was given the opportunity to star in the newest season of “Hell’s Kitchen” – and while some people might be nervous at stepping out of their comfort zone, challenging herself is exactly why Orleans embarked on the adventure in star chef Gordon Ramsay's Las Vegas kitchen.

“I’m the kind of person that if an opportunity is going to come, I’m going to at least feel it out. I would rather do something that kind of freaks me out and get to see where it goes,” Orleans said.

Unlike some of the show’s contestants, Orleans did not always have strong ambitions of becoming a professional chef. She studied business at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in Durham, N.C., and worked at a bank for over a year upon graduation. Her husband, who she met in college, was stationed in the

**APD arrests abduction suspect**

Community continues to decry delayed notification

*BY WAFIR SALIH*

On September 29, the Alexandria Police Department arrested Xavier Cooper in connection with an abduction and robbery that occurred on September 1. He has been charged with “abduction with intent to defile.”

The APD’s decision to delay public notification until September 14 – two weeks after the incident occurred – has ignited controversy, especially on social media, where residents expressed concern over the absence of an alert.

“This is terrifying,” one NextDoor user commented prior to the arrest. “And it’s made even worse by the fact that the city has chosen not to make information regarding a predator on the loose in our neighborhood available to us in a timely manner.”

On the night of the incident, according to the APD Command Report that the Times obtained via a Freedom of Information Act request, a stranger attacked a Black woman at the intersection of S. Washington and Wilkes Streets at around 11:14 p.m. The assailant forcefully dragged the victim into an alley behind Firehook Bakery. Police dispatch

**Leaders downplay PTO downsizing**

City officials contend largest commercial taxpayer minimally impacts finances

*BY CAITLYN MEISNER*

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is downsizing its office space in Carlyle, which has contributed to the building’s owner, LCOR, receiving a Moody’s “junk bond” rating. Alexandria business leaders and city officials nonetheless argue the move will have minimal impact on Alexandria’s economy.

The PTO is downsizing its real estate profile due to the increase in remote work since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. A spokes-

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Sought-after Ballston, this stunning home is approx. 5,700 sq ft on four levels with 6 bedrooms and 5.5 baths and is situated on a quiet cul-de-sac. It is just five blocks to the metro, parks, bike path, shops and dining. Sunlit living and dining rooms with 10-ft ceilings. Open family room with coffered ceilings, stone fireplace, and a gourmet kitchen. The LL has a recreation room, wet bar, gym & guest suite. Beautiful landscaped yard, patio, and 2 car garage with charging station.

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Man charged, released for brandishing firearm

Greco Gomez of Alexandria was charged with two counts of brandishing a firearm before being released on September 5. The Alexandria Police Department said Gomez is a convicted felon and charged him with two counts of brandishing. He legally cannot own firearms after a victim accused Gomez of threatening to shoot and pointing a black pistol at them twice. APD searched Gomez’s residence and did not find any firearms, but found a Byrna SD handheld pistol – which is non-lethal and used mostly for self-defense and purchasers do not need background checks to obtain it. Gomez will appear in court Tuesday.
-ivanpate@alextimes.com

Robbery at North Beauregard

A robbery took place at the 2000 block of North Beauregard Street on September 28, with one victim having minor injuries. The Alexandria Police Department is still investigating the case and sent a moderate police presence to the crime scene. Those with information should call 703-746-4444.
-lvanpate@alextimes.com

Two suspects arrested for stolen vehicle

Two suspects were arrested Saturday for stolen vehicle charges of a silver Kia Optima. The Alexandria Police Department and Virginia State Police investigated the scene and charges against the suspects are pending. Those with information on the crime can call 703-746-4444.
-lvanpate@alextimes.com

Peeping man arrested

The Alexandria Police Department arrested a man accused of peeping through windows on the 700 block of North Howard Street on August 27. According to court records, the suspect had previous peeping charges against him that were dismissed in November 2020. The suspect will appear in court Tuesday.
-lvanpate@alextimes.com

Robbery at South Van Dorn

A robbery took place at the 500 block of South Van Dorn Street Sunday with minor injuries reported. The Alexandria Police Department sent a moderate police presence. Those with information on the crime can call 703-746-4444.
-lvanpate@alextimes.com

Child injured in hit-and-run

A juvenile pedestrian was injured after a hit-and-run crash occurred at the intersection of Montgomery Street and North Patrick Street. The child sustained non-life threatening injuries and a moderate police presence was sent to the scene.
-cmeisner@alextimes.com

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King Street robbery

A robbery took place at the 1900 block of King Street Sunday with a minor injury reported. The Alexandria Police Department is still investigating the crime scene and sent a moderate police presence. Those with information on the crime can call 703-746-4444. -ivanpate@alextimes.com

Robbery near Mark Center

A robbery took place near the Mark Center September 28 and one victim sustained minor injuries. The victim was reportedly attacked inside a parking garage near the Mark Center by two male suspects. The Alexandria Police Department is still investigating the robbery. -ivanpate@alextimes.com

Alexandria Police hire three leaders

The Alexandria Police Department has hired three new leaders to join the force starting this month, including a communications manager and two assistant chiefs. Tracy Walker, the new communications manager, started Monday and will be responsible for the department’s communications and public information. Raul Pedroso, one of the new assistant chiefs, will lead multiple divisions as commander of the criminal investigation bureau. Tina Laguna, the other new assistant chief, will lead the administrative and technology bureaus of APD; Laguna will be responsible for identifying and employing innovative technology that aids in crime deterrence and investigation. Laguna and Pedroso will start October 23. -cmeisner@alextimes.com

King-Callahan-Russell construction

The city will begin construction this month on the King-Callahan-Russell intersection to enhance mobility, access and safety. This project is also intended to improve access to Union Station and the King Street Metrorail Station. Work crews may be present Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Questions about the project can be directed to Project Manager Reginald Arno Reginald.Arno@alexandriava.gov. -cmeisner@alextimes.com

VHC Health opens West Alexandria office

Tuesday marked the grand opening of VHC Health’s opening of their new West Alexandria office on North Beauregard Street. This new facility will include primary care, podiatry, urology and colorectal surgery services. Darryl Ernest, senior vice president at VHC, said the opening of this office and its location was intentional.

“We wanted to move into an area with more visibility, one that was busier and was a highly visible location,” Ernst said. “This is a byproduct of community need and asks to develop this new site.”

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The following assessment criteria will be taken into account when considering public dissemination of police incidents:

1. Is the incident at a City facility or involve a city employee?
2. Does it involve Alexandria City Public Schools?
3. Has a command page been issued?
4. Does the incident involve serious injury?
5. Should the public be notified for safety reasons?
6. Is there community interest due to a crime trend?
7. Is a helicopter in use for a police incident?
8. Does this jeopardize the case by releasing investigative information?

APD Directive 10.21.K, which lists criteria to be considered when notifying the public. A command page was issued for this incident and the suspect was still at large.

PUBLIC ALERTS

calls indicated that a passerby intervened and alerted the police. Several officers, including a K-9 unit from Fairfax County, responded swiftly.

However, no public alert was issued on the night of nor in the days ahead. APD continues to maintain that an alert was not necessary, despite the fact the assailant evaded capture that night.

A review of APD’s policies on the police chief’s page revealed a key discrepancy. While the page for the public information office does not list “abduction” as a crime noteworthy enough for public notification, it did highlight “any robbery with serious injury.” This is at odds with the Department’s current Police Directives, specifically Directive 10.21, section M.1., which lists “robbery” without mention of injuries as a reason for an alert to be released through Facebook, Twitter, eNews and the Police Department’s website.

Councilwoman Alyia Gaskins brought up this discrepancy to APD Chief Don Hayes during the September 26 City Council legislative meeting.

“In Section M, it says the public should be notified when there’s a robbery, but it doesn’t say anything about there needing to be an injury,” Gaskins said. “Given our policies, how was this missed?”

Hayes declined to answer the Councilmember’s question.

On February 17, an APD alert read, “Notification: There is a moderate police presence in the 3500 block King Street. This is in response to a larceny from persons. No injuries reported in connection with this incident. APD is investigating.”

Likewise, on August 17, an APD alert read, “Notification: In response to an attempted robbery there is a moderate police presence in the 3200 block of Duke Street. No injuries were reported and one arrest was made in connection with this incident. APD is on the scene and investigating.”

A former APD senior commander who now lives out of state agreed to speak with the Times under a condition of anonymity. The former senior commander was critical of Hayes’ response and comments.

“What the chief of police should have done is say that, ‘We dropped the ball and we should have promptly put out a press release on this incident because of its serious nature.’ All those things he said during the City Council meeting – I watched his testimonies – that’s smoke and mirrors,” the former law enforcement official said. “This was clearly a robbery, clearly an abduction under the Virginia state code. And – as per the department’s written policies – should have warranted a press release.”

The former commander also said the policy listed about “any robbery with serious injury” under the public information office is not consistent with the department’s actual directives, echoing Gaskins’ line of questioning.

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It fell through the cracks ... No one likes to say that and no one likes to admit their mistakes, even though we all do them.”

– Amy Jackson, Vice Mayor

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“They don’t even have the policies right. That contradicts what directive 10.21 says: Robbery, period,” they said.

Gaskins followed up her initial question at the September 26 meeting by asking why crimes like abduction and kidnapping are not on the list of crimes that warrant public notification. The chief again didn’t answer her question, but instead attempted to explain why the incident was not a kidnapping.

“The abduction just meant that the person wasn’t free to leave at that time. It doesn’t mean that the person was kidnapped,” Hayes said. “They weren’t kidnapped. A lot of things that are on social media did not happen from our investigation standpoint.”

However, the APD police report 23-082086* on the city’s crime database lists the crime as “KIDNAPPING/ABDUCTION” in capital letters, with kidnapping listed first.

Vice Mayor Amy Jackson, in an interview with the Times, shared her concerns on the lack of an alert.

“I’m not going to say this worked out well for the victim, but it could have been a lot worse. It really could have been,” Jackson said. “That is what I’m haunted with, what if.”

Jackson provided an analogy on the situation to highlight why releasing an alert that night was essential.

“Think of it as a child at a bus stop. … If someone tried to come up in a car and take the child and the child ran away, wouldn’t everybody want to know what car are we looking for? What was the license plate? What does the person look like? What was the color of the car?” she said.

The Times also reached out to Gaskins for further comment, but she declined to be interviewed for this story. The Times also requested interviews with Hayes and Public Information Officer Marcel Bassett and sent them a list of questions about the delayed response, but they did not respond prior to our print deadline.*

During the September 26 Council meeting, City Manager James Parajon asserted APD must have had a reason for not alerting the public about the incident.

“The officers and the leadership in the police department have the authority and the responsibility that if there is an imminent danger to our public that they will take those actions of notification or other actions to do that,” Parajon said. “And when they don’t, there’s a very specific reason why they don’t. I think that’s hard to explain because we can’t go into some of those details, but I know that’s how they operate.”

Hayes echoed Parajon’s comments, but did not elaborate further on why an alert wasn’t issued.

“If there was a danger, believe me, we would have put it out there, but we don’t want to put things out there that’s not true,” Hayes said.

The former APD senior commander we spoke with pushed back against the notion that the department could not release an alert due to an ongoing investigation.

“You have to keep the public advised in a timely manner of what’s going on without jeopardizing any ongoing investigations or potential prosecutions,” the commander said. “There is an easy way to do that. We’ve been doing it for decades. On this one occasion, they dropped the ball.”

The commander said they believe APD should take accountability for making a mistake in this incident to further
PUBLIC ALERTS

the large goal of effective community policing.

“One of the whole benchmarks of community policing is cooperation and partnership. And the timely exchange of important information is an essential element of that partnership,” they said. “I’m not saying the department fails in this regard. I’m saying this was a fumble. This was a single incidence of a fumble, and what they should’ve done was stood up and admitted that and corrected their processes. You take accountability, you take responsibility. With leadership, you have both the authority and the responsibility to do these things.”

When asked what could explain an alert not being released, the commander provided a few hypotheticals.

“There’s several possible answers,” they said. “I think the most possible answer is, like I said, somebody screwed up. ‘I thought you were going to do it. You thought I was going to do it. I knew it was my job, but I had a bad cold. I was taking heavy cold pills, and damn it, I fell back asleep till 8 o’clock the next morning. But I still should have got up and said, Hey, I didn’t put anything out about this last night. I need to do it today.”

The former APD commander contrasted his approach to accountability with that of Hayes.

“One of my tenets that I was led by was [that] the victories are the property of my officers. The defeats are my property,” the commander said. “If we screw up, I’m the one that’s responsible. If we did something fantastic, the officers are the ones that are responsible.”

Jackson agreed the lack of notification was likely a mistake by APD.

“It fell through the cracks,” Jackson said. “No one likes to say that and no one likes to admit their mistakes, even though we all do them.”

Jackson offered a kind assessment of APD and said the police department will do better in the future.

“Going forward, I think they understand what happened,” Jackson said. “And that’s why as a partner in creating that policy with us, they will be right there lockstep so that things like this do not happen again. And the public is aware of what we are all trying to do, which is keep our community safe.”

--elwafir.s@gmail.com

"Here are the questions the Times sent the APD that we did not receive a response to in time for publication:

1. Regarding the non-issuance of an alert on the night of September 1, the APD cited the incident’s classification as a robbery without serious injuries as the reason why an alert wasn’t issued. However, according to directive 10.21 in the Police Department’s directives, ‘robberies’ are mentioned as a type of crime that warrants a public alert, without any specification regarding the severity of injuries. Could you clarify this discrepancy?

2. Why did Chief Hayes not order a public notice be issued once he reviewed the command report on either 9/2 or 9/3, which detailed the 9/1 incident? Given that the abduction on 9/1 was documented in the report, what was the reason for not alerting the public promptly? Furthermore, it seems substantial action was taken only after the social media attention the incident garnered two weeks later. Could you provide insight into APD’s response timeline?

3. Members of the City Council at the 9/26 meeting expressed concern that “abduction” was not on APD’s list of offenses warranting public notification in the directives published on the city’s website. Do you plan to add that to the list? If not, why not?

4. Since a suspect was arrested and charged with abduction with intent to defile, this indicates the victim and/or good Samaritan characterized the attack in these terms from the start. Additionally, it’s understood that the security video, which was made available to APD within one day, confirmed the nature of the attack. This case clearly qualified for public notification as a stranger sexual assault. Why wasn’t one issued?

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army in Savannah, Georgia, leading the couple to move. As a result, Orleans quit her bank job and looked to continue her career in finance in Savannah. The lack of bank jobs in her new city led Orleans to look elsewhere for a career, which landed her at Savannah Culinary Institute. Halfway through her two-year culinary school education, her professors helped her kick-start her career as a private chef, which is when she was approached by a Hell’s Kitchen casting recruiter on Instagram.

“I was like, ‘Well, if you’re going to ask, [I] might as well,’” Orleans said. “Then I graduated culinary school, and two weeks later, I flew to Los Angeles.”

The opportunity came with months of auditioning and tests revolving around emotional and physical capability. According to Orleans, there were “several rounds” of personality and psychological interviews and a medical screening to make sure she was physically capable of performing the required tasks.

“Hell’s Kitchen,” a reality TV cooking show, premiered on FOX in 2005. It’s known for Ramsay’s fiery explosions of anger toward contestants - which makes for good theater - but also for a potentially damaged psyche.

There are two teams of chefs, typically based on gender, that compete on “Hell’s Kitchen.”

Ann Buckley Woelflein, 90, of Alexandria, died peacefully on September 24.

Ann was born on July 2, 1933, in Andover, Mass. She earned a bachelor of science in chemistry from Regis College and went on to earn a master of library science from Drexel University. She married Kevin G. Woelflein in 1957.

Ann was a loyal friend who formed deep friendships with many people throughout her life. She was a voracious reader, an avid downhill skier and tennis player. She enjoyed ikebana. She loved dogs, particularly her English cocker spaniels, and was proud when one of them won Best of Breed at Westminster. She greatly enjoyed her 40-year tenure on the Women’s Board of the American Heart Association. She loved classical music, ballet and opera. Ann poured her passion for music into more than 30 years as a board member of the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society. She was a member of the Sulgrave Club.


Ann loved her family dearly and sought ways to help her children be their best selves throughout their lives. She adored her grandchildren and relished the time she spent with them.

Ann is survived by her husband of 66 years, Kevin, son Karl, daughter Luise and husband Daniel Bogan, son Andrew and wife Virginia, son Peter and wife Erica and three grandchildren.

Contributions in Ann’s memory may be made to the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society or the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria.

A memorial service is being planned for later this year.

**Obituary**

**Ann Buckley Woelflein**

7/2/1933 – 9/24/2023

Ann Buckley Woelflein, 90, of Alexandria, died peacefully on September 24.

Ann was born on July 2, 1933, in Andover, Mass. She earned a bachelor of science in chemistry from Regis College and went on to earn a master of library science from Drexel University. She married Kevin G. Woelflein in 1957.

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**Hell’s Kitchen**

FROM | 1

Leigh competed on the red team with the other female chefs on the show.

**HELL’S KITCHEN**

SEE **HELL’S KITCHEN** | 12

Alexandria native Leigh Orleans competing on the set of Gordon Ramsay’s ‘Hell’s Kitchen’ airing tonight on FOX.
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pete for a job as head chef at a restaurant of the show’s choosing by working in the show kitchen with live guests each night. There are elimination rounds and individual challenges as well.

Though the competition that’s currently being aired took place last year, all participants are strictly sworn to secrecy and Orleans is not allowed to reveal the outcome.

Much of what Orleans encountered on “Hell’s Kitchen” was new to her. Prior to this adventure, she would work for herself and manage her own time while cooking. During the show, Orleans learned to value the importance of communication and the high stakes of cooking for customers in a restaurant.

“In a professional kitchen, you have to be able to communicate to the people, you know, in front of you like, ‘I need four more minutes, how long do you need,’ because everything needs to come up at the exact same time and that was a huge learning curve for me,” Orleans said.

She also said working in a high-stress environment affected her mentally. In many instances, Ramsay doubted her abilities of working ‘on the line,’ or with a team of chefs, and running a kitchen.

She turned to relaxation tactics such as meditation and yoga flow to mentally prepare to be “thrown off” – as many challenges in the show purposefully challenged the contestants to see how they react under intense pressure.

Orleans’ realist mindset also helped her get through the challenges. She kept reminding herself the set of the show is not the real world and this was not her actual job. The only stakes were that she might not win.

“I knew that this was going to be as much of a mental competition as it was a culinary test,” Orleans said.

Orleans’ mother, Bonnie Orleans, expressed pride in her daughter for following her
This was the hardest thing I’ve ever done by such a longshot that every other challenge I have faced since then seems very manageable.”

– Leigh Orleans, Hell’s Kitchen contestant

Charlotte E. Olson

February 1922 – September 2023 (2/22/22)

Charlotte Elizabeth Olson, 101, of Alexandria, passed away in the early morning hours on Sept. 16, 2023, while in hospice care at Alexandria Inova Hospital. She was born to Ruth Theresa Yetterdahl Olson and Sophus Olson on Feb. 22, 1922, at the height of a raging winter blizzard in Jamestown, N.D. Her physician made a timely arrival at the hospital in a horse-drawn buggy.

Charlotte was preceded in death by her parents, her older brother, John Sophus Olson, his wife, Wanda Lurene Askew, and Charlotte’s nephew, Jeffery Lynn Olson.

For information about the new Hell’s Kitchen season, what she has learned and what dishes she’s currently making, see Orleans’ Instagram account @chefleigh.

New episodes of Hell’s Kitchen can be found on FOX Thursday nights.

–djaffe@alextimes.com

With the freedom of retirement, Charlotte expanded on her desire to travel and took family members to Norway, the Caribbean, Alaska, Costa Rica, and river cruises in Europe.

On her 100th birthday, Charlotte planned and hosted a celebration at Gadsby’s Tavern in Alexandria. It was catered by another good friend, Sharon Reilly, and attended by many of Charlotte’s friends and family. The Mayor of Alexandria attended and provided Charlotte with an official proclamation from the city.

Charlotte loved to share a glass of prosecco and St. Andre cheese and crackers with anyone who dropped by in the late afternoon. Going out for crab cakes and soft-shell crab in season and Creme Brule were predictable choices at restaurants. She supported The American Indian Museum, the Smithsonian, Sons of Norway and many other causes.

Charlotte did not want a formal funeral service but chose cremation and asked that her ashes be sprinkled at her parent’s graves in Jamestown, N.D. and Big Pine Key.

She is survived by her niece, Linda Ruth Davis and husband, Ron; her nephew, Kelly Olson and wife, Linda Faye; Rosemary Olson and collectively, their 8 children and 15 grandchildren and nephews.

Memorials in Charlotte’s name may be given to support “Senior Services of Alexandria.”

Orleans is a contestant on Hell’s Kitchen and is competing for the top spot at a restaurant.
Wendy Santantonio
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520 JOHN CARLYLE ST #116
ALEXANDRIA | SOLD FOR $699,900

905 ORONOCO ST
ALEXANDRIA | RENTED FOR $3,700/MO

1101 BELLE VIEW BLVD C1
ALEXANDRIA | RENTED FOR $2,195/MO

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From work to dating during the pandemic to a wedding celebration, Lacy and Nate King have made meaningful connections foundational for their marriage.

From work to dating during the pandemic to a wedding celebration, Lacy and Nate King have made meaningful connections foundational for their marriage.

For Alexandria couple Lacy and Nate King, doing the work you love with the one you love is the most rewarding.

“Our shared values of faith, desire to be good global citizens and supporters of justice led us respectively to the nonprofit, International Justice Mission,” Nate said. “IJM is a global organization supporting efforts to protect vulnerable populations dealing with difficult issues such as abuse and human trafficking.”

The couple met in 2017 while working for IJM in Washington, D.C.

Lacy worked on the fundraising team while Nate was on the advocacy and government relations side. They didn’t work

By Kaitlin Murphy

Times Living

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directly together, but Lacy recalls, “Nate had to walk by my desk every day.”

Their work addressed heavy topics, so friendly greetings and supportive values at the office created an environment of congenial colleagues. Knowing the level of importance the mission was to both of them, starting a relationship seemed like it had a solid foundation.

“Nate had a crush on me for a few years. I knew he was a nice guy so when he asked me out in March, I was excited to see where this would go,” Lacy admitted.

Their first date happened in 2020 at Le Diplomat.

“Nate asked me to dinner Friday, March 13, to celebrate my birthday that had just passed and then the world shut down the next day as the pandemic hit,” Lacy sighed.

Due to the pandemic, they no longer saw one another at the office on a daily basis. Lacy and Nate both had roommates at the time, so they all had to navigate being socially distant while in the early stage of their relationship.

“We had virtual dates, Face-time calls, lots of texting and calls and Nate sent me handwritten letters in the mail,” Lacy said.

As their relationship became more serious, other pandemic obstacles got in the way. When Nate tried to meet Lacy’s family in July, the trip had to be canceled. They were able to visit Nate’s parents in Colorado and fairly quickly, Lacy realized, “This was something; this was it.”

Nate started looking at rings in 2021 after being together a year. Coming up with engagement plans was tricky. The nonprofit was still on a telework mandate and people were still being socially distant and not traveling.

“I really wanted to speak to Lacy’s parents in person to ask for their blessing to marry her. There was no easy way to tell her that I had to be out of town without her getting suspicious,” Nate recalled. “So I told her I had some errands to run.”

Lacy laughed sarcastically at his admittal.

“I was not suspicious at all,” she said. “When he got back 24 hours later I asked, ‘How were those errands?’”

Nate tried to avoid her suspicion and upped his proposal plans for Lacy. He planned a weekend doing their favorite things as a misdirection.

“Saturday morning was a walk through one of our favorite places – the Bishop’s Garden at the National Cathedral – and I thought this would be a lovely place for a proposal. But there was no proposal,” Lacy said.

They had tickets to a Nationals game in the afternoon, so they made a last-minute decision to go to the game instead. Lacy wasn’t surprised when Nate proposed during the game.

Alexandria is home for Lacy and Nate King as they start out as a married couple.
marking the first baseball game they ever went to together followed by dinner.

“At the end of dinner, I told her we will be doing more things tomorrow, but don’t get excited,” Nate said.

Lacy remembers thinking, “What was this weekend then? Maybe he will keep doing sweet things like this.”

Two weekends later, she was completely unprepared for the proposal.

Nate had coordinated with both sets of parents, as well as Lacy’s sister and her husband, to be in Washington, D.C. for the ask. On April 30, 2021, he proposed to Lacy in his backyard in Northwest D.C., where they planned to meet before going out to dinner.

“It was just the two of us so it was very sweet and special. Nate had set up candles and notes from our relationship and a friend was there to take photos,” Lacy said.

Their moment was even more special when they arrived at dinner at Iron Gate to celebrate and their loved ones were there as well.

“I had a fun District of Columbia weekend planned for everyone after all the time apart and we enjoyed making new memories to kick off our engagement,” Nate said.

Planning the wedding was very organized, as Lacy’s mother got the ball rolling and booked the church the day Nate asked for her hand.

“As soon as Nate asked my parents, my mom called the church to get some dates since so many events were backed up due to the pandemic. Our wedding was set for April 30, 2022, which was exactly a year to the day we got engaged,” Lacy said.

“My father-in-law said this was super smart as we would have one date to remember two big anniversaries,” Nate laughed.

The ceremony was held in Lacy’s hometown of Charlotte, N.C., so Lacy’s mother handled a lot of the ceremony and reception logistics as the engaged couple planned out their first season of marriage in the Metro area.

“We decided to make Old Town Alexandria our home once we were married,” Lacy said. “We love the city since there is so much to do and we have fun walking along the waterfront. It was fitting that we took our engagement photos in Old Town.”

Since working for an international nonprofit can prove challenging at times, Lacy does watercolor painting, calligraphy and wedding invitations in her free time.

“It is good to have a creative outlet when the topic of work is heavy,” Lacy said. “I turned
this into a bit of a side business around the time of my sister’s wedding in 2019. I did her invitations and I loved how the details were very personalized.”

Lacy made their wedding invitations and included as much personalization as she could. Her wedding dress had a vine detail flowing down the skirt, so she used watercolor vines on the invitation. The wedding ceremony even included a scripture reading about the vine.

In addition to the invitations, Lacy reused the flowers Nate had given her throughout their relationship.

“Nobody knew this but I saved all the flowers he gave me, dried them, and then pressed them into wax seals on the dinner reception menus,” she said.

Also featured on the reception tables were block-printed napkins made in India.

“These napkins were meaningful to us since they were printed by survivors of traffickers who work for Mended, a company founded by a former colleague. This is another example of how our work and relationships intersect,” Nate said.

“We support each other in our work and our work supports vulnerable populations around the world. It was special to be able to share that side with our guests,” Lacy said.

Following in her family’s tradition, Lacy and Nate were married in the same church where her parents married in 1989 and her sister married in 2019. Charlotte Country Club was the reception venue.
which also shared in the tradition. Around 200 guests were in attendance with 10 bridesmaids, eight groomsmen and three flower girls. People came from all across the country to celebrate the couple.

“It had been years between weddings and other celebrations, so it was really fun to all be together,” Nate remembered.

Their reception was traditional with a twist. There was a cocktail hour, seated dinner, cake, a live band and, as a surprise to Nate, Lacy added a bourbon bar knowing he’s a self-proclaimed whiskey fanatic.

“The fun kept going and we had late-night snacks including sliders and hummers, which are boozy milkshakes that my family likes,” Lacy said.

Since the wedding, Lacy and Nate have continued to blend their lives in many special and meaningful ways. They set down roots in Old Town North and both work from home. While Lacy now works for Redeem International, a nonprofit spin-off of IJM, they continue their shop talk supporting their related work efforts. They each travel for work to India and Uganda respectively and cross paths with each other’s colleagues.

“This is a fun community for us to share with so many personal connections,” Lacy said. “We feel supported professionally and as a couple.”

Closer to home, Lacy and Nate have an eight-month-old golden retriever puppy.

“We named the dog Poppy, short for Popcorn, because Nate loves baseball and concession snacks like popcorn. It was only fitting that we found another way to highlight our personalities,” Lacy laughed.

Lacy and Nate King met in 2017 working at the same nonprofit in Washington, D.C.
Wedding elegance captured through the lens of ‘lyfeinfocus’

A local photographer captures life’s most precious moments with his Canon

BY WAFIR SALIH

While nearly everyone today has access to high-quality cameras through their smartphones, the art that is professional wedding photography remains unmatched.

Good photography transcends documentation: it’s about capturing the essence of those fleeting moments and raw emotions. Ever since the invention of the camera in the 19th century, people have sought to preserve moments that would otherwise fade away into the recesses of memory.

Abdullah Shahzad – known to many as ‘lyfeinfocus’ on social media – is a testament to this spirit of photography, boasting a wide-ranging portfolio of photoshoots from the city of Alexandria to cobblestones of Occoquan. For Shahzad, his role extends beyond just capturing those special moments at weddings; it’s also about navigating the unpredictable ebb and flow of the ceremonies.

“A lot of times there’s things that come up in the middle,” Shahzad said. “Sometimes they plan a cake cutting and they forget to cut it. I have had a couple events where people start dancing and they don’t stop.”

Shahzad said he’s witnessed firsthand how some couples will plan their entire wedding ceremony around achieving the perfect photographs.

“So [some couples] give photography a priority,” he said. “A lot of time people would walk slowly to enter [the wedding hall] just because they want to get the perfect shot. It makes my job easier and makes the photos look good.”

For many photographers, the equipment they use plays a crucial role in their workflow. Shahzad said he’s particularly a big fan of Canon cameras.

“I feel like Canon photos are easier to edit, and the skin tones look nice,” he said. “What I’m using right now is a Canon EOS R6. And that’s my main camera because it has lower megapixels, so the photos are not huge.”

Due to how hectic weddings can sometimes be, Shahzad tries to keep his setup as simple as possible in order to maximize efficiency on the special day.

“I’ve gotten used to just having a good flow of getting stuff done early, getting the setup done early so I can get like the detail shots as I walk in,” he said. “I don’t try to bring too much equipment, too much lighting to set up. I try to keep it simple.”

Shahzad expressed a preference for outdoor weddings when it came to getting the best shots.

“If it’s outdoors, it becomes a lot simpler. Especially if it’s outdoors in the evening time,” he said. “I did an engagement party shoot and during that time, it was perfect lighting, so I didn’t have to do much in terms of setting up or getting stressed about lighting.”

When it comes to the ideal season for wedding photography, Shahzad did not mince words.

“Fall, definitely fall. Definitely this season right now is a lot different. A lot of people do try to do events outdoors and if it’s the right weather, it turns out great,” Shahzad said.

Discover more of Shahzad’s photography and book him for your special day by visiting lyfeinfocus.com. He is also available on Facebook and Instagram at @lyfeinfocus.

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The Unity Sculpture - crafted in Kenya.
Preparing for disaster

**Ensure your pets are taken care of in any situation**

BY KIM JONES GILLIAM

On the heels of National Preparedness Month in September, it’s important to remember October is considered the heart of hurricane season and has historically yielded extremely dangerous storms up and down the East Coast. Who could forget Hurricane Sandy’s effect on our region in 2012?

Natural disasters and other emergencies can happen at any time. Hopefully your family has plans in place if disaster strikes, but did you remember to include your pets in those plans? Unfortunately, animals are affected by disasters too.

It is impossible to be prepared for everything; knowing which natural disasters are most likely to affect your area can help you plan for as many of them as possible, whether it’s wildfires, tornadoes or hurricanes. Once you understand the types of situations that can happen, it’s easier to know what supplies to keep on hand.

Fortunately, you can minimize the effects and repercussions of disasters by being prepared. Here are some ideas for how best to prepare for the worst.

- **Stay in the know.** Ready.gov shares a few tips for staying in the know, e.g. keep a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio set to your local emergency station. You can also receive severe weather alerts from the National Weather Service via the Federal Emergency Management Agency mobile app. Always bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster.
- **Designate an emergency caregiver.** What if you can’t make it home to your pet? Develop a buddy system with neighbors, friends and relatives to make sure someone is available to care for your pets if you are unable to do so.
- **Check your pet’s I.D.** Make sure your pet’s collar is securely fastened and its identification tag is legible and attached. Check their microchip enrollment record to confirm your contact info is current. Consider adding an out-of-state alternate contact in case your local phone lines are down or jammed.
- **Register your pet with AKC Reunite.** AKC Reunite is a nationwide pet recovery service. Add their number in your contacts so you can quickly report your pet missing and receive their calls: 800-252-7894.
- **Keep digital records.** Make sure you have your pet’s vaccination records, current pictures – including one of you and your pet together – to easily be able to identify them after a disaster if they are separated from you and your family.
- **Create a pet emergency kit.** This should include a few days of your pet’s food, water, dishes, first aid supplies, any medications, carrier/leash and bedding. If local officials require you to evacuate, that means your pet should evacuate too. Pets left behind may end up lost, injured or dead.
- **Pet alerts.** What if a fire threatens your home: How will responders know you have pets inside? Or what if you are away from home and something happens to you: Who will care for your pets? Place a pet alert at each home entry detailing the number and type of pets inside.

If you have a plan in place for both you and your pets, you will likely encounter less difficulty, stress and worry when you need to make a decision during an emergency. For more ideas, check out the AKC Emergency Planning Guide available online at akcreunite.org

The writer co-owns Frolick Dogs, a canine sports club in Alexandria.

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**A pet emergency kit should include a few days of your pet’s food, water, dishes, first aid supplies, any medications, carrier/leash and bedding.**

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**Make sure your pet’s collar is securely fastened and its identification tag is legible and attached.**

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Three ways to improve your home’s indoor air quality

By Family Features

The average American spends 90% of his or her time indoors, where clean, pure air can be taken for granted. While some people check the weather forecast for smog and pollen count to find out the status of outdoor air, many homeowners haven’t thought about air quality inside their homes.

People have, however, gotten more concerned about indoor air quality since the pandemic. According to Shelton Group Pulse research, 37% of survey respondents are more concerned about indoor air quality now compared to before the pandemic. In fact, the concentration of certain pollutants can be between two to 5% worse indoors than outdoors, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Common pollutants include dust mites, mold spores, pet dander and chemicals of concern like volatile organic compounds. Allergy triggers like pollen, smoke and ozone can leak indoors from outside.

However, there’s one major culprit impacting indoor air quality many may not suspect: humans. People are sometimes responsible for bringing allergens and pollutants unknowingly into their own homes. For example, pollen may be brought inside on shoes or clothes, and products may be unknowingly purchased that contribute to poor indoor air quality by slowly releasing toxic chemicals into the air.

While all homes will have some degree of infiltration, you can take steps to reduce indoor allergens, such as these three strategies from the EPA, which when used together, can help you breathe easier in your own home.

Increase ventilation

Ventilating your home regularly makes it less likely allergens can accumulate and cause harm. Let fresh air into your home regularly by opening the windows. You can also use mechanical ventilation – like electric or ceiling fans – to increase air circulation in your home, especially when you don’t want to open windows or in addition to opening windows.

Additionally, if you need to paint an item, do it outside whenever possible. Also keep windows open when using harsh cleaning products.

Source control

Source control is the most effective way to reduce indoor allergens in your home, according to the EPA. To reduce indoor allergens at the source, choose flooring that contributes to better indoor air quality for your whole family and contains as few chemicals of concern as possible.

Clean the air

Air purifiers are a simple way to filter indoor air without much extra effort. These devices combine an internal filter and fan to capture airborne particles from pet dander, pollen and dust, circulating purified air back into the room.

The EPA recommends air purifiers with a high-efficiency particulate air filter. Look for certified asthma- and allergy-friendly air purifiers to help minimize triggers of asthma and allergy. Remember to change filters regularly for best performance.
HOME OF THE WEEK

Welcome to 2 Swifts Alley, an exquisite piece of Alexandria’s history beautifully melded with modern luxury. This distinguished 4-bedroom, 4.5-bathroom home offers a unique blend of character, history, privacy and contemporary comforts, making it a true gem in the heart of Old Town. This remarkable property – circa 1780 – was once a tobacco warehouse. Its rich heritage is evident in the original wood beams that grace the home’s interior. The historic character is seamlessly combined with modern amenities to provide a comfortable and elegant living experience. With over 5,300 square feet of finished living space, this home offers ample room for both relaxation and entertainment. Hardwood floors, recessed lighting and multiple fireplaces enhance the ambiance, while the oversized windows and 12-foot-high ceilings infuse each room with natural light. The recently renovated kitchen, from 2019, is a culinary enthusiast’s dream, while the renovated primary bath – also renovated in 2019 – and guest bathroom provide a touch of contemporary luxury. A reconfigured third level is perfect for guests or families with two additional bedrooms, renovated bath and large upper-level family room. The breakfast room, with its expansive windows, offers a delightful space to start your day with a view of the lush gardens. The lower level unveils versatile spaces including a large recreation room with grand fireplace and stone floors, a dedicated gym area and lower-level pantry that can be reimagined into your dream wine cellar. Nestled on a 5,750 square foot lot, this property presents a large yard perfect for outdoor gatherings and recreational activities. Imagine hosting summer barbecues, playing fetch with the family dog or enjoying a leisurely game of croquet in this serene space. Convenience is key, with just one block separating you from the charming shops and restaurants of Old Town Alexandria, City Hall and the Saturday Farmer’s Market.

HOMES ADVERTORIAL
Weather fluctuations are the norm these days, and cold winter weather is on the horizon. This winter, don’t get caught out in the cold when it comes to heating costs. There are things you can do now to help save money by reducing your energy consumption. Consider these tips from experts to help you reduce usage and home heating costs this season.

1. One of the easiest ways to save on your heating bill is turning the heat down to the lowest setting you are comfortable with. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, turning the temperature down an additional 10 to 15 degrees Fahrenheit while you are sleeping or away can help save about 10% a year on energy costs.

2. Installing a programmable thermostat can make turning down the heat automatic. Depending on the model, you can set different temperatures for when you are home, away or asleep. Better yet, a WiFi-connected smart thermostat can make automatic adjustments and is controllable remotely using a smartphone.

3. Keep up with regular maintenance of your home heating system so it runs efficiently. Change your filter as recommended by the manufacturer and have a professional conduct an inspection and tune-up before the weather gets cold and appointments become harder to get. A dirty or clogged furnace filter can cause your furnace to work harder than needed and waste energy in the process. Regular, routine maintenance and cleaning can help your furnace run more efficiently and potentially extend its life.

4. The average life of a furnace is between 15 to 20 years, so be prepared when it comes time to replace. Oftentimes, people wait to buy a new furnace until their current system breaks down and have to resort to buying what’s in stock. Planning ahead lets you shop for a system that’s right for your home and preferences. Right now may be a good time to consider replacing your aging furnace with available manufacturer promotions, energy company incentives and tax credits associated with the Inflation Reduction Act.

5. If you replace your furnace, consider switching to a high efficiency model. They offer a higher level of comfort and energy cost savings. Many homeowners are opting for higher efficiency heat pumps, units that handle both heating and cooling. They are powered by electricity and a growing choice for consumers who want to use less fossil fuels.

6. Check for drafts around doors, windows and other openings. Seal with caulk or weatherstripping. Also ensure your home is insulated properly. Some utility companies offer to check your home’s insulation for free. Having less cold air to heat can yield considerable cost savings.
PTO

FROM | 1

The Carlyle neighborhood and Eisenhower Avenue – both of which border the PTO office complex – have developed greatly. The office consolidated from 18 buildings in Arlington to a complex of five buildings in Alexandria.

In Carlyle, several projects that had been underway for years have recently opened, including hundreds of residential units, retail stores, grocery stores and parking garages. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Virginia headquarters also moved into the neighborhood in 2005.

Elizabeth Bolton, vice president of strategic communications of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, said new businesses continue to move to the area surrounding the PTO complex. She noted Wegmans, Five Guys and Atlas Brew Works as just a few new tenants since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Stephanie Landrum, president and CEO of AEDP, said AEDP is working with the city to fill the space with new tenants in the coming years.

“The continued commercial and residential growth in Carlyle and Eisenhower speak to how successful bringing the Patent Office to Alexandria has been and how vibrant the neighborhood will continue to be,” Landrum said in a statement to the Times. “The quality of the buildings and their location on top of transit are what the post-COVID market demands.”

Bolton said AEDP has an entire team dedicated to finding new tenants for the vacant PTO buildings.

“There’s a lot of options for the building and it’s ultimately up to the owner who they want inside of it,” Bolton said. “They’re going to be the drivers in what happens to this building.”

The owners of the buildings that comprise the PTO campus, LCOR Alexandria LLC, a subsidiary of LCOR, is the largest commercial taxpayer in the city, according to the Washington Business Journal. LCOR is a real estate investment and development firm with properties from Florida to Massachusetts.

Joseph Haggerty, CEO of Alexandria’s chamber of commerce, said he was not too concerned with the PTO’s downsizing. He said local businesses – mainly nearby restaurants – have been impacted, but that is also due to the pandemic.

“The lease will mostly impact (LCOR Alexandria),” Haggerty said. “The amount of business has dropped significantly [since the pandemic] and it hasn’t come back since.”

Haggerty said it was unclear whether businesses have moved out since 2020 because most do so without announcement.

Bolton said businesses obviously have struggled since March 2020, but that many have been incredibly resilient in the wake of the government-ordered shutdowns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. She added the convenience of the King Street Metro station makes the neighborhood desirable and its businesses accessible.

“I don’t want to discount what we were all going through in 2020, but we’re three years out from PTO going home and I think we feel pretty good about the growth in the neighborhoods surrounding it and the foot traffic that continues to support the smaller businesses that are over there,” Bolton said.

Moody’s Investors Services downgraded LCOR’s $60.2 million bonds, which are now considered at a “junk bond” status. If PTO does not further renew their lease in the coming decades or further downsizes, debt repayment and restructuring becomes unlikely.

Kendel Taylor, director of finance for the city, said with the city’s $900 million operating budget, LCOR Alexandria will not have much of an impact.

“No single taxpayer impacts [the city],” Taylor said. “We have a very diverse revenue basis.”

Taylor also said the taxes will be paid if LCOR Alexandria leaves the city and she does not anticipate any impact on the city. She said taxes are paid in full and are paid at this time.

Bolton said AEDP is not worried about this issue, as it does not signal the “end of the world.” She said more information will become available in five years when the lease is up for renewal, but for now, this is normal in real estate.

“Our tax base is very heavily residential,” Bolton said. “There are other commercial users who are propping up the tax base in a way that the federal government doesn’t because it doesn’t pay the same kinds of taxes. There’s property taxes on the building LCOR pays. It’s still going to be the biggest lease in Alexandria for the next few years.”

She also said the move to remote work is not strictly localized to Alexandria, but an adjustment for the entire nation. Bolton said since the city has diversified its economy and not relied on the federal government, the city is in good shape.

“Every jurisdiction everywhere in the country is facing lower than usual office numbers and office renewals, and it’s going to be a couple of years until that kind of shakes out,” Bolton said. “We’re not shying away from that reality, but we are so strong … and lucky in this region.”

Bolton added that it would be noticeable if the city was in danger, particularly if residents were fleeing the city or businesses were leaving in droves. She said to combat this, it’s important for the city to transition empty office spaces into residential uses.

“Our vacancy rate of buildings is going to stay stable because we’re going to adjust the supply of offices here too, which then continues to help the Carlyle neighborhood,” Bolton said.

- cmeisner@alextimes.com

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Editorial
Just own it

The worst thing about a mistake is not usually the error itself, as everyone and every organization occasionally gets things wrong. What’s unacceptable is when the person or entity continues to deny a mistake when incontrovertible evidence stare them in the face.

We are referencing the reaction of the Alexandria Police Department to the violent attack on a woman in Old Town on the night of September 1. APD – and Chief Don Hayes in particular – have refused to admit that they erred in not notifying the public that the attack took place, and that the attacker was at large.

The department continues to insist that APD protocols were followed “to the letter,” as Hayes told City Council at the September 26 legislative meeting. He has repeatedly blamed social media and other media for “inaccuracies” – despite being given multiple opportunities by the Times to provide clarity – while totally absolving APD.

Really? Let’s parse the different pieces of proven information about this incident, because they clearly indicate that APD should have notified the public by early morning on September 2.

Here are the facts about the September 1 incident:

1. The dispatch calls from the police scanner initially referred to the incident as an “assault.” In the second call labeling it an assault an ambulance was requested because the victim suffered an injury to her face. A police officer is then heard saying the incident was being relabeled as a “robery.”

2. The Commander’s Daily Watch Log from September 1, which the Times obtained in a Freedom of Information Act request, refers to the incident as “Abduction/Attempt Robbery.” It also says the victim, a Black female, was “grabbed and pulled a short distance away by the suspect.” A Fairfax K-9 unit was called and CSI was notified. The report says the APD public information officer was notified and a “Command page sent” – meaning Hayes and other top officials were notified via text message that a notable incident had occurred.

A source familiar with APD operations told the Times this report should have gone to Hayes and other top APD officials within an hour of the incident.

3. The city’s crime report database lists two entries for this incident, the first is case 23-082086 and refers to the incident as a “robbery.” The second case number is 23-082086 and lists the crime as “KIDNAPPING/ABDUCTION” in capital letters.

4. The APD’s directives, which are posted on the City of Alexandria’s website, state in 10.21 that the following situations will be taken into account when notifying the public of an incident:
   - Has a command page been issued? It was.
   - “Should the public be notified for safety reasons?” The assailant was still on the loose.
   - “Is there a community interest due to a crime trend?” There is.

   The directive later says that the public should be notified “through Facebook, Twitter, eNews, and the Police Department’s website” for: “Stranger Sexual Assaults,” When the suspect was apprehended last week, he was charged with abduction with intent to defile.

   “Robberies.” The incident was labeled as a robbery from the start.

   Not immediately alerting the public that this violent abduction and robbery took place was a violation of APD’s published directives.

   Security video that captured the incident was available by September 3, yet the owner of the video told the Times that police did not reach out to them asking to see the video until September 14.

   Many questions remain about this incident. Why did Hayes not direct his PIO to check with a couple – no business associations were made aware prior to the closing. Yet, it wasn’t inevitable and it may be a real loss for Alexandria’s small businesses.

For it to just disappear – and some of its functions taken over by AEDP, a public-private partnership with no transparency – should be concerning to us all. I used the SBDC 20 years ago to help my business and took their “Next Level Business Development” class, which was a great help to me starting out.

Small businesses are the backbone of every community. They

Letters
Farewell, but not forgotten

To the editor:
Alexandria’s Small Business Development Center has closed, and its services moved to George Mason University, a minimum of a half hour drive into Fairfax County. This closing is understandable given the departure of its founder, Bill Reagan, and the death of his long-time assistant Gloria Flanagan, who were essential to its success.

According to the Alexandria Times article, the decision to close the SBDC was largely made by the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership without any public notice, input or chance to weigh in. As far as I know – and I checked with a couple – no business associations were made aware prior to the closing. Yet, it wasn’t inevitable and it may be a real loss for Alexandria’s small businesses.

For it to just disappear – and some of its functions taken over by AEDP, a public-private partnership with no transparency – should be concerning to us all. I used the SBDC 20 years ago to help my business and took their “Next Level Business Development” class, which was a great help to me starting out.

Small businesses are the backbone of every community. They
Letters

The SBDC made a difference

To the editor:

In case you are keeping count, please add my name to the list of people saddened by the closure of the Alexandria Small Business Development Center. The services Bill Reagan and the late Gloria Flanagan provided over the years were intelligent, personal and often critically important to a great many of us small business owners. Bill has been a great promoter and defender of small business, and the Alexandria SBDC was his legacy. This loss may or may not be measurable economically, but the personal contact and guidance that we had will surely be missed.

-Sandra Levy, massage therapist, Alexandria

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give our city its distinctive flavor, from restaurants to shops that you will find nowhere else. You could see the business plan of a success story like Cheesetique in Del Ray, a website company, or whatever you were looking for. The SBDC was always friendly and welcoming.

Therefore, I hope there is a full report called for by the City Council on how this change transpired and how AEDP plans to fill the gap. It has always seemed to me as an outside observer that the SBDC and AEDP served different purposes; AEDP has always seemed to me as an outside observer that the SBDC and AEDP served different purposes; AEDP served different purposes; AEDP helped smaller scale businesses.

Now AEDP is going to do both. How does that change their mission and function?

I congratulate them on the hire of Cristina Amoruso, their new small business director, and look forward to the celebration of her arrival and of small businesses touted in her announcement. But I also know that the director of AEDP, Stephanie Landrum, is a proponent of the proposed Business Improvemen Districts (see our FOIAs at nobid.org) which I think will hurt small businesses – especially new ones looking to locate in Alexandria – because of the proposed tax increase.

I am also involved in creating a new business organization that will be inclusive, diverse and bring people together across the political and economic divide so we can find common ground which is not always based on competition, but based on cooperation.

How will it fit in and be welcomed into the mix? I assume we will want to work with AEDP, the Mason Small Business Center and other existing business associations. But one of our principles will be transparency, which is the only way to build trust between organizations – and have a fair and level playing field.

Knowing what happened to make these changes, and what the plan for the future of small businesses from AEDP and City Council will be a good place to start to build that trust.

-Boyd Walker, Alexandria

Look at the facts, not rumors

BY MARK EATON

A major joy of writing a monthly newspaper column is the wealth of learning experiences for the columnist. Moments of enlightenment come from people saying, “Hey, why don’t you write about ——?” and from less direct conversations.

Not long ago, a long-time city activist enlivened our discussion by revealing the city leadership has an unspoken — but widely shared — plan to increase Alexandria’s population to 250,000 people by 2050. According to the Alexandria Demographics and Statistics Dashboard, the city’s current population is 158,309, so there is a distance to go.

Other knowledgeable Alexandrians, including former city officials, have confidently described an intentional plan: essentially a conspiracy of developers, lawyers and city officials to overdevelop the city. Their concern and suspicion is that developer-lawyer-politico relationships of mutual interest will prevail until the city — already the densest in Virginia — becomes so crowded that none of us can move.

Conspiratorial thinking has a long history in American public affairs. An early work on the subject, historian Richard Hofstadter’s 1964 essay, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” has been followed by numerous analyses of how conspiracy thinking develops.

The problem with conspiracies is that they are a lot of work. A conspiracy does not require committee meetings with formal procedural rules and minutes, but the organization and management of a successful conspiracy involves extensive planning, communication, coordination and work. History may see the presidency of Donald Trump as a series of failed conspiracies, the last of which culminated in the traumatic events of Jan. 6, 2021.

Many Alexandrians become frustrated about the ways the city deals with development, transportation, flooding, parking, education or other issues. The frustration leads to the assumption that its source is an intentional, even malicious, plan or design by city authorities and other malefactors.

The exasperation is certainly understandable. As a public mental health service to provide a new way forward, “About Alexandria” offers Hanlon’s razor and Grey’s law.

Hanlon’s razor, which dates from the 18th century, states, “Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.” A philosophical razor suggests a way of eliminating unlikely explanations of human behavior.

Grey’s law is a corollary of Hanlon’s razor. It holds, “Any sufficiently advanced incompetence is indistinguishable from malice.”

Hanlon’s razor and Grey’s law appear at first to be cute aphorisms. However, they give others the benefit of the doubt, something that helps improve relationships and makes us less judgmental and more understanding.

These maxims are an antidote to the proposition, or suspicion, that someone is out to get us and that the effort is grounded in malice and intent. They provide a useful default thinking mode that counters paranoia.

Hanlon’s razor and Grey’s law also help us deal with the unexpected twists and turns of decisions and their consequences. For example, density in Alexandria is a hot button issue and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Concerns about density underlie much of the debate about the Planning & Zoning Department’s multi-part proposals to reform the city’s zoning ordinance.

In major respects, zoning involves assessments about adjacency: whether structures in proximity are reasonably harmonious. Most people do not object to Southern Towers at its current site, but few residents would want similar structures on their blocks. Zoning codes are, in essence, efforts to organize our subjective impressions about what the city should be.

However, a look back at Alexandria’s development history over the last 40 years shows that some of the most unfortunate land use decisions were made to limit density and preserve what was perceived to be the city’s essential character. An example: the city might look very different if the development had been denser around the city’s Metro stations and more controlled elsewhere.

For those who wish to maintain their suspicions about how the city operates, here is an aphorism from Joseph Heller’s novel, Catch-22: “Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t after you.”

The writer is a former lawyer, member of the Alexandria School Board and English teacher from 2007 to 2021 at T.C. Williams, now Alexandria City High School. He can be reached at aboutalexandria@gmail.com. His newsletter is free at https://aboutalexandria.substack.com/.

About Alexandria

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Exploring our city’s archaeology

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources celebrates Archaeology Month each October through special events and programs throughout the state. This year, Alexandria Archaeology is highlighting important archaeological sites from the West End to Old Town and everywhere in between.

In the 1960s and 1970s, residents advocated to preserve archaeological resources, eventually resulting in one of the first archaeological protection codes in the country in 1989. Under the code, the City of Alexandria’s Archaeology Division recovers, preserves and studies the layers left behind as the city grows and changes.

This partnership between professional archaeologists and the public continues. Evidence from those efforts can be seen in the free Alexandria Archaeology Museum on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, in interpretive signs and heritage trails throughout the city and other resources found online at alexandria.gov/archaeology.

Alexandria is a national leader in community archaeology and the preservation of its non-renewable cultural resources. Soon it will be one of the first cities in the country to have a publicly accessible interactive archaeology map. The Alexandria Archaeology Report Finder – nicknamed AARF for the dog lovers among us – is designed for exploring archaeological and historical research conducted throughout the city.

The map launches this month and shows our shared archaeological heritage is by no means limited to Old Town.

For those that prefer to explore in person, archaeology enthusiasts of all ages are encouraged to take part in one of Alexandria Archaeology’s many events this month. On Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., archaeologists will be on site at the Southern Towers Farmers’ Market at 4901 Seminary Road to share artifacts and research from the nearby Stonegate Archaeological Preserve, dating back to Native American use of the land as early as 8,500 years ago.

On October 10, the annual Ben Brenman awards will be presented by the Alexandria Archaeological Commission during the City Council meeting. On October 11 from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., kids aged 6 to 12 are invited to take part in the free “Great Pottery Puzzle” program at the James M. Duncan Branch Library.

On October 14 from noon to 4 p.m., adults and children of all ages can take part in a self-guided scavenger hunt or a guided tour during the Archaeology on the Waterfront event. Participants must register in advance for a free guided tour at shop.alexandriava.gov.

The day-long Alexandria Forum, “The Waterfront Revisited: Birth and Rebirth, 1750-2023,” will take place on October 20 at the Alexandria History Museum at the Lyceum. The forum will explore the waterfront through new research lenses, technologies, excavations and sources, with presentations by archaeologists and historians.

On October 21 from noon to 4 p.m., adults and families can participate in the free Art Safari event at the Torpedo Factory Art Center, including “Skin into the Past,” an archaeology-based activity experimenting with 19th-century ceramic slip designs and applying temporary tattoos in the style of transfer printed ceramics.

Finally, children ages 4 to 7 can take part in the free “Science Underground” program at the Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library on October 25 from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. to learn how archaeologists study the past by sorting and identifying artifacts.

Learn more about the upcoming events by visiting alexandria.gov/archaeology, following Alexandria Archaeology on Facebook or Instagram or visiting the free museum on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.
Weekly Words

ACROSS
1 Japan’s continent
5 It’s a relief!
8 Milan luxury label
13 “I’m just a soul ___ intentions are good” (Marie Curie quote)
18 Loot
19 Hemsworth of “The Duel”
21 George Eliot’s “___ Marner”
22 Lofty lodge
23 BESTSELLING MEMOIR ROILED BY CONTROVERSY! (Patti, Tina, Jordin, Roberta)
27 Bete ___
28 Ancestry.com offering
29 Poker giveaways
30 Australian airport code
31 PC key
32 Promethean gift
33 PRIZE FLOWER SUCCUMBS TO HEAT! (Donna, Doris, Bill, Axl)
43 Speech fillers
44 Actress Mendes
45 Actress Merman
46 Round number?
47 It lifts the sole
49 “The Addams Family” cousin
50 Bruno, Fiona)
53 Strretched-out yarn?
54 VIRAL RUMOR PLUMMETED PHONE SALES! (Keith, John, Gladys Britney, Billy)
62 Bit of marine life
63 Corduroy and duck
64 Be in a cast
65 Matthew of “The Americans”
66 Decluttering guru Marie Kondo
67 Show the ropes
68 “___ a pity”
69 Solid ___ rock
71 Empire and Fuji centers
72 Corel
73 “In that case ...”
74 Time for a revolution?
75 Run ___ (rampage)
76 Gets
77 Pop’s Dua
78 Pigeons
79 Popeyes rival
86 They’re far from basic
89 Nintendo “exergaming” product
90 French site of a 1598 edict
91 “Didn’t hurt too bad”
92 Pullup targets, briefly
93 Out of place
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95 More than sore
96 Amazed
99 Car in “The Italian Job”
101 Bona ___
102 James who wrote “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men”
103 Sal who started an academy
104 Artsy online site
106 Axe target
107 Pirate’s hideout, perhaps
108 “Told you!”
109 Peeve
110 Wong of “Beef”
111 Saul Goodman’s bailiwick

DOWN
1 Viper’s relative
2 Wild trumpeter
3 “I follow him to serve my turn upon him” speaker
4 Boom’s workplace concern
5 Duke’s colorful character
6 Word before “space” or “ball”
7 Smoothed (down)
8 Secretive “Hey!”
9 Ready to drop, perhaps
10 “Sorry to say ...”
11 Pub projectile
12 Pose
13 Mass consumption?
14 “Catch-22” author
15 Word of mouth?
16 Sets (on)
17 Comical squeal
18 Gifted group
19 Uncovered
20 "I might be able to answer that"
21 Leaving a lot uncovered?
22 Flap
23 Was in a blue state
24 Expiration date words
25 Takes an indirect route
26 Takes a starring role?
27 Rapper’s line?
28 Ellington’s “Take ___ Train”
29 Get an earful
30 Iridescent gems
31 Rosemary relative
32 Bold competitor?
33 “Fuhgeddaboudit!”
34 Details, as a scheme
35 Welcome letters for a nine-to-fiver
36 Take on a starring role?
37 Card game call
38 Card game call
39 Pop’s Dua
40 Imitation?
41 “Told you!”
42 Pullup targets, briefly
43 Out of place
44 Patronize, as a cafe
45 More than sore
46 Amazed
47 Car in “The Italian Job”
48 Solid ___ rock
49 Corel
50 “In that case ...”
51 Time for a revolution?
52 Runs ___ (rampage)
53 Gets
54 Pop’s Dua
55 Stretched-out yarn?
56 Be in a cast
57 Amazed
58 Aiming at a target
59 “I might be able to answer that”
60 Leaving a lot uncovered?
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110 Imitation?
LEGAL NOTICE

Board of Architectural Review
LEGAL NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing will be held by the Board of Architectural Review on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chamber, room 2400, second floor of City Hall, 301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314 on the following applications:

BAR#2023-00382 OHAD
Request for alterations at 1 Cameron Street
Applicant: Landry’s Inc.

BAR#2023-00412 OHAD
Request for partial demolition/encapsulation at 1 Cameron Street
Applicant: Landry’s Inc.

BAR#2023-00386 OHAD
Request for signage at 809 S Washington Street, Unit 2
Applicant: Old Town Ace Hardware

BAR#2023-00390 OHAD
Request for partial demolition/encapsulation at 105 Franklin Street
Applicant: Deyi Awadallah

BAR#2023-00391 OHAD
Request for alterations at 105 Franklin Street
Applicant: Deyi Awadallah

BAR#2023-00393 PG
Request for alterations at 901 Oronoco Street
Applicant: Brian Raimondi

BAR#2023-00394 OHAD
Request for alterations at 211 King Street
Applicant: Rajat Malhotra

Old and Historic Alexandria District (OHAD); Parker – Gray District (PG)

Public comments will be received at the Public Hearing. The public may submit comments in advance to Lanning Blaser at lanning.blaser@alexandriava.gov or make public comments on the day of the Public Hearing.

For reasonable disability accommodation, contact Alicia Chase at alexandria.chase@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.3810, Virginia Relay 711.

For further information, call the Department of Planning & Zoning at 703.746.4666 or visit alexandriava.gov/dockets.

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