Local third grader shines on stage

**SSSAS student has prominent role in the Folger Theatre’s ‘The Winter’s Tale’**

BY BRIANNE MCCONNELL

He’s an animated third grader whose recently discovered passion has landed him in the spotlight on one of the most well known stages in our region.

“You are you for your life and then when you are on stage, you’re a whole new person and when you memorize stuff it’s just in your head so it’s like it’s just you speaking to the audience,” nine-year-old Clarence Michael Payne said in a recent interview.

Payne is one of the youngest actors in “The Winter’s Tale,” the first production back at Washington, D.C.’s Folger Theatre after an almost four-year renovation project. Payne plays dual roles as Mamillius and Time in the play.

However, prior to auditioning for this role, Payne had never been on a big stage or auditioned for anything. Payne said for as long as he can remember, he’s had an interest in singing and dancing, but it was just over a year ago that he was formally introduced to musical theater – with just one week of musical theater camp back in 2022.

“Last summer we said, ‘Let’s get him into musical theater camp,’ and from the first day he came home, he was researching the songs and was just into it the whole week. We’d never seen him happier. [My wife and I said], ‘Oh my gosh we have to do more,’” Kenny Payne, Local third grader shines on stage


Council adopts ZFH

**Unanimous late-night vote caps months of contentious debate**

BY CAITLYN MEISNER

Just after midnight Tuesday, City Council voted unanimously to adopt the “Zoning for Housing/Housing for All” master plan and text amendments after a nearly four hours-long discussion between Council and city staff.

After regular business was conducted – voting on meeting minutes, discussions about grant applications and recognizing graduates of the City Academy – Council discussed ZFH with city staff spearheaded by Nancy Williams, assistant planning director, and Karl Moritz, planning director.

At the start of the docket item, Moritz and Williams presented information to correct the record on what they said were misstatements made at the November 18 public hearing about the issue. These corrections included studies of the infrastructure impact on the city.

The city of Alexandria is becoming increasingly diverse and growing each year.

**Holiday Gift Guide**

The best gifts in Old Town for him and her this holiday season. See the guide on page 11.

**Scottish Walk Preview**

Find the parade route and closures ahead of Saturday. Page 18
Christine Roland Garner

Enjoy the Scottish Walk this Weekend

Let me put my 35 years of experience to work for you!

ROSEMONT | $1,750,000

Fabulous brick Rosemont colonial on a wide tree lined street. Expanded with approx 3,200 sq ft of living space on 3.5 levels, off street parking and an amazing 7,250 (sq ft) rear yard and detached garage. This home was renovated in 2000/01 and awaits your custom finishes! There are 4/5 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, finished LL with recreation room and outside entrance. The family room with french doors to covered porch overlooks the yard with mature plantings, open green space and concrete drive pad. Bonus third level with oodles of space and potential! Blocks to 2 METROS, Shops & Restaurants in Del Ray and Old Town!!

OLD TOWN | 117 N PEYTON ST. | $1,175,000

Rarely available brick row-home just blocks to King Street Metro, shops, restaurants and bike path! Welcomed by an inviting front porch this three level home has 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths and beautiful hardwood floors. Main level has a living room with a gas fireplace, formal dining room, half bath, kitchen addition with white cabinets, viking gas stove, vaulted ceilings with cove lighting and a walk-in pantry! The partially finished basement has a rec. room, full basement, laundry and storage rooms with outside entrance. HEATED patio, planting boxes with mature trees, secure parking with garage door and alley access!

OLD TOWN | 507 WILKES ST. | $975,000

Historic 1840’s 3-story townhome in the SE Quadrant. Renovated 2 bedroom 1.5 bath, updated kitchen, SS appliances and new baths. Georgetown patio with alley access. Southern exposure, original working fireplaces, restored random width pine floors and sealed brick wall and floors. Dining room with brick arch and fireplace, living room and den with fireplace, powder room and french doors to patio. Two bedrooms—primary bedroom facing south has soaring ceilings and loft with access to additional storage under the eaves. Second bedroom has French doors overlooking gardens. Great location blocks to the River, shopping and restaurants.

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For additional information & photos, go to: www.ChristineGarner.com
Off-duty D.C. policeman arrested following collision in Alexandria

The Virginia State Police have charged Peter W. McCauley, an officer from the Metropolitan Police Department – the name of the District of Columbia’s police force – with a felony for eluding police following a high-speed chase on I-395. On the night of November 22, McCauley, who was off-duty at the time, was spotted by a State Trooper driving a Tesla at 95 mph in a 55-mph zone. The pursuit ended with a collision in Alexandria, resulting in multiple injuries.

The VSP detailed the event in a statement, noting that “at 11:57 p.m. on [November 22], a Virginia State Police Trooper observed a Tesla traveling 95 mph in the 55-mph zone in the southbound lanes of Interstate 395 near the Arlington/Alexandria line.” The trooper signaled McCauley to stop; however, McCauley refused to comply and fled the scene, leading to a pursuit.

The chase concluded in Alexandria, where McCauley exited on I-395 by Seminary Road, ran a red light, attempted to make a left turn and crashed into a woman driving a Honda Civic.

Footage of the chase and the subsequent collision has been released by the Virginia Department of Transportation. The video shows the moment McCauley struck the Honda Civic with his Tesla, which led to him veering off the road and hitting a wall. The footage also shows the Honda Civic hitting a light pole following the crash.

The woman, 22, was taken to a hospital nearby where she was treated for minor injuries. McCauley, 25, along with a 28-year-old female passenger in the Tesla, were also taken to the hospital. McCauley underwent an evaluation for injuries, and the passenger was treated for minor injuries. VSP said in a statement that everyone involved was wearing a seatbelt at the time.

MPD declined to answer questions from the Times on what disciplinary actions would be taken moving forward, citing “there is no further information to provide at this time.” The department did, however, respond with a statement saying they were investigating the matter and they were notified by VSP they had arrested McCauley.

“MPD’s Internal Affairs Division responded and immediately revoked the officer’s police powers. The incident is under investigation by MPD’s Internal Affairs Division,” MPD said in a statement to the Times.

In addition to MPD’s internal inquiry, the VSP has charged McCauley with a felony for eluding police following the collision. McCauley’s Tesla.

~ Happy Holidays from the Shelter ~

There is no place like home for the holidays, and the waiting pets of Alexandria are hoping for one of their own. If you have room in your home, please consider making space for a new best friend. You will be richly rewarded with more love and affection than your heart can hold.

~ Thank you ~

AlexandriaAnimals.org/Adopt-By-Appointment
703-746-4774

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Old Town
“Because everyone needs a home.”
Council approves LQBTQ+ Pride art on crosswalks

In the Tuesday night City Council meeting, Council approved a plan to add Pride art to the crosswalks in front of City Hall at the intersection of Fairfax and King Streets and Royal and King Streets. In a memo spearheaded by Councilor Kirk McPike, Council was presented with different materials to paint the crosswalks and a timeline for the project. There was a brief discussion about cost and which material would be best suited for the high-traffic area, and it was ultimately suggested to utilize stamped brick. The crosswalks will be implemented by June 1, 2024, in time for Pride Month.

-Nemisner@alextimes.com

NOVA Parks celebrates Catherine Winkler

Catherine Winkler was honored for her work in creating the Winkler Botanical Preserve Tuesday with a new sign, according to a press release from NOVA Parks. Mayor Justin Wilson, Councilors Sarah Bagley and Canek Aguirre and Alexandria City Public Schools Superintendent Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D. were in attendance. The Preserve provides public access to nature and protects plants native to the Potomac region. The preserve was donated to NOVA Parks by Winkler and is located in Alexandria’s West End.

-Livanpate@alextimes.com

Fort Ward Park meetings scheduled

Two meetings to discuss the relocation and park accessibility of Fort Ward Park will be held next month, according to a press release from the city. The meetings will be held virtually on December 6 at 7 p.m. and in person at the Chinquapin Park Recreation Center on December 16 from 10 a.m. to noon. City staff will discuss recent updates and ongoing efforts to make the park accessible. Please visit alexandriava.gov/parks/fort-ward-park-and-museum-area-management-plan for more information on the plans.

-Livanpate@alextimes.com

City updates flood grant program

The city updated its flood mitigation grant program, which took effect on October 24, according to a press release from the city. The new program opens eligibility to all property owners by removing requirements to show proof of past flooding and also increases the maximum amount of 50/50 matching funding for eligible flood mitigation measures on association common areas up to $25,000. The grant program was established in August 2021 and is intended to help those impacted by flooding.

-Livanpate@alextimes.com

ACHS to be featured on ‘It’s Academic’

Students from Alexandria City High School will be featured on PBS’s quiz show “It’s Academic,” according to a press release from WETA. The show began in 1961, featuring high school students who answer academic questions in a competition. ACHS students will be aired on December 16 on WETA PBS at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. and on WETA Metro at 10 a.m., 7 and 11 p.m. Students from ACHS will be featured alongside students from Herndon High School and McLean High School. “It’s Academic” is recognized as the world’s longest-running quiz program in television history by the Guinness Book of World Records.

-Livanpate@alextimes.com

Renovations begin at Douglass Cemetery

The city is launching a new project to fix flooding and drainage problems at Douglass Memorial Cemetery at 1421 Wilkes St., according to a city press release. The cemetery is a historic African American burial location in the city since 1827, but burials stopped in 1975. According to project experts at the November 28 City Council meeting, research on the best infrastructure for the site has taken place. The first meeting to discuss renovation plans will be held on December 5 at 6 p.m. in the Nannie J. Lee Memorial Recreation Center. Questions about the project can be directed to historicalexandria@alexandriva.gov.

-Cmeisner@alextimes.com
The Pulse of Old Town

‘Nancy has the pulse of Old Town! Nancy has partnered with us to buy and sell two properties. Whether buying or selling, Nancy has the industry experience, local relationships and work-ethic that make deals happen! Each time she has sold one of our homes, she has generated a 28-29% return on our investment in just a few short years. However, Nancy is more than a realtor to us. Over the eight years we have known her, she has become our friend celebrating the adoption of our dog and the births of each of our two children.’

-Andrea & Adam Hechavarria

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studies on how zoning reforms can positively impact affordability and information on removing the word “family” in the ordinance.

After these discussions, Christina Zechman Brown, deputy city attorney, laid out the guidelines for the subsequent votes. She said it was recommended Council vote on the master plan, then the text amendments and housing policy.

Zechman Brown also said the language that was approved would be reflected in the implementation ordinance – how the city will carry out the ordinance – that they will receive next month.

Mayor Justin Wilson led the discussions about each text amendment, as there were no questions on the master plan. At the presentation of each amendment, many Councilors either shared their thoughts, asked questions of city staff or both.

Vice Mayor Amy Jackson posed a much-asked question by residents when the discussion came to single-family zoning changes: Why didn’t the city send out physical mailers across the city to notify residents about the potential zoning changes?

Moritz said instead of presenting information, the Planning and Zoning department wanted to engage the city residents in a discussion.

"We modeled our community engagement strategy on a goal of inducing discussion and ... engendering two-way, multi-way conversations about the topics," Moritz said. “In spite of our using the traditional methods of getting out the word, I feel that we’ve gotten so many more comments ... than we usually do.”

Jackson continued to press Moritz, stating many older residents are not going to check the city’s website for updates; rather, they likely would prefer a mailer to post on the refrigerator.

“A lot of the older people, they wait for things to come in the mail,” Jackson said. “I think we’ve missed a huge opportunity to hear from even more people. We didn’t reach everybody when we should’ve been, in multiple languages, to make sure they’re a part of the conversation, too.”

Jackson then stated that she would prefer if the single-family zoning aspect of ZFH was deferred for a couple of months. Her statements elicited some claps in the chambers, which were quickly silenced by Jackson herself and Wilson.

Councilor Canek Aguirre pushed back against Jackson, stating this is a slippery slope for the city. He commended staff for the amount of outreach done on the issue and expressed frustration with city residents: “We need folks to meet us at least a percentage of the way.”

“Are we going to say that we’re going to send out a mailer for every zoning amendment we do?” Aguirre asked. "From my 10 plus years of experience ... I’ll tell you what happens to these mailers: They get thrown away, they get ignored.”

Before Council voted on the text amendments, Councilor Kirk McPike took a few moments to address Alexandrians as a whole. Subsequently, each Councilor, Jackson and Wilson shared anecdotal stories "Whether you agree with what we do on these questions tonight or not, you are heard, I think these proposals are good ones and move the city forward and that’s why I’m willing to support them.”
– Justin Wilson, mayor

– Amy Jackson, vice mayor
you are listened to,” McPike said. “I value the opinion of every Alexandrian on matters such as these because Alexandria is all of our home, and we all love our home.”

“We’re talking past each other on this issue,” Wilson said. “I think these proposals are good ones and move the city forward and that’s why I’m willing to support them.”

Jackson motioned to exclude the single-family zoning amendment for deferral, which was seconded by Councilor John Taylor Chapman. The motion failed with two in favor, five opposed.

In an interview with the Times after the vote, Peter Sutherland, director of events and an Alexandria lead for YIMBYs of NoVA, said the organization is excited about the unanimous passage of the master plan and text amendments.

“It seemed clear … that they felt like they had learned a lesson about the way that some of the city’s residents wanted to be contacted in the future,” Sutherland said. “I anticipate there to be a bit more of a debate around when to send mailers for what purposes at what budget in the future.”

Sutherland also said he appreciated the rationale provided by each Councilor before the official vote was taken.

“It was interesting to hear the different lenses that they all took in terms of informing their own decisions,” Sutherland said. “I was really heartened to hear the stories of how teachers, first responders, nurses and service industry personnel … how they will be able to afford [homes here].”

Eric Wagner, a former planning commissioner for 22 years — and nine as its chair — said he was very disappointed with the vote.

“[I’m] just really, deeply disappointed,” Wagner said. “They acknowledged [outreach efforts were inadequate] and yet, not withstanding all of that, they went ahead and plowed forward and adopted the changes. And that, to me, was kind of shocking.”

Wagner said this vote will not help the dwindling trust Americans have for their government, but will worsen it.

“It is a real shame that here, we’re experiencing this firsthand in Alexandria,” Wagner said. “It just reinforced the notion that the public hearings and public comment sessions that were held … were all more or less pro forma.”

KARL MORITZ

He said he was happy to see the discussion among Council on public engagement and hopes it can be improved in the future.

“It was really particularly helpful in the conversation to see … a table of the potential net new units to come over the next 10 years across all of the different components, and that 30 to 52% of [the 2,800 new units] are projected to be dedicated affordable housing,” Sutherland said. “We are really excited to see those projections.”

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Clarence Payne at theater camp.

Clarence’s father, said.

So this summer, Clarence’s parents signed him up for a two-week camp at Camp Arena Stage in the District.

“The thought process was: after this summer camp, let’s look around for something else like this rather than waiting for another camp in summer 2024,” according to Gladys Payne, Clarence’s mother.

That’s when opportunity came knocking. In August, a couple of months after camp ended, a teacher from the Arena Stage Camp emailed the family asking if Clarence would be interested in auditioning for a part in a play at the Folger Theatre.

“To be honest, we didn’t know what a big deal it was at first,” Gladys Payne said.

One week after reading a poem, memorizing dialogue on the spot and signing a song for his audition, Payne was offered the role.

Weeks later, he began the month-long run of rehearsals. And earlier this month, Payne made his official debut on the Folger Theatre stage.

Payne, who said he doesn’t get nervous for performances, revealed that his ritual before going on stage includes his vocal warm ups and a pep talk.

“A stage is a stage, let’s do this thing!” Payne said he tells himself.

Payne shares his roles in “The Winter’s Tale” with another young boy, a District resident, Richard Bradford. Folger Theatre Artistic Director Karen Ann Daniels – who’s also the Folger’s director of programming – said these two boys bring something special to the cast both on and off stage.

“I think to see how joyful they have been, how much they are learning ... but I think they teach everyone else,” Daniels said. “I think Clarence and Richard have allowed play and reminded us to keep that thing about being a child, which is the ability to play.”

While both boys are making their Folger Theatre debut in these roles, the play itself is a bit of a reprise for the theater. “The Winter’s Tale” is the first show back in the theater with audiences since 2020, when the Folger’s planned closure for renovations was lengthened by effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I think what it means to be inside the theater as someone who arrived during the pandemic and during the renovations – to finally be in the start putting in place the dreams we’ve been building for two years – I don’t even know if I have a word for it,” Daniels said.

The Shakespearean play “The Winter’s Tale” follows two rival kings, King Leontes and King Polixenes, along a journey with complex relationships woven into a story of jealousy, love, hope and resurrection.

Daniels said she’s known for two years this was the play she wanted to reopen with and said it has felt like a renewal all around.

“I think everybody who has worked on this production has really been generous with one another,” Daniels said.

Payne’s family expressed a similar sentiment. They said while their son had no prior experience on stage, that didn’t matter to the seasoned cast, the members of which have made the entire Payne family feel like they are right where they are supposed to be.

“It’s been a great experience for Clarence and for us and we’re just proud,” Kenny Payne said. “It’s a lot of hard work and we’re so proud of all the work he has put in without complaint and we know he just loves what he is doing.”

When he is not on the stage, Clarence is being silly with friends at St. Stephens and St. Agnes School in Alexandria where he is in third grade. His parents say having to balance school and late nights at the theater has brought out a new level of maturity in their young boy.

“The Winter’s Tale” is set to close December 17. With just over two weeks of performances left, Clarence Payne is already wanting to do more.

When asked if he had been bitten by the acting bug, Clarence shared his roles in the Folger’s director of education had just one word: “Yes!”

“ ”
‘Plating’ the criminal

APD looks to expand successful license plate reader program
BY RACHEL ROYSTER

Since March, the Alexandria Police Department has recovered 22 stolen vehicles, issued 37 arrests or warrants, located two missing persons and recovered more than $350,000 of stolen property with the help of six license plate readers.

The department also apprehended a fugitive from western Wisconsin who escaped from prison, stole a vehicle and drove to Alexandria. Using the technology, Alexandria police located and successfully apprehended them.

Alexandria Police Department Lieutenant Jason North said because the existing six devices have exceeded expectations, the technology “absolutely” fits into the department’s public safety strategy.

Automatic License Plate Readers are a piece of equipment that consists of at least one camera, a computer and computer software used to automatically recognize and interpret the characters on vehicle license plates. This data is then compared against a list of license plates bearing some significance to law enforcement.

North said though the department has used the technology for more than a decade, the license plate readers were mounted on police cars, prior to March. Now, the technology is in fixed locations that are disproportionately impacted by crime.

The current plan is to deploy 12 more license plate readers as soon as they can be purchased and installed.

The Automatic License Plate Readers were put in place to aid the department in combating the recent crime spike in Alexandria and elsewhere.

“One of the most impactful ways this technology can impact crime is assisting APD to intercept stolen vehicles in real time,” North said. “What we have found through research and experience is that stolen vehicles are oftentimes being used to commit other crimes. Having this technology to allow us to quickly intercept the vehicle not only allows us to address that crime at hand, but likely is allowing us to prevent a future crime from occurring.”

Since the implementation of the license plate readers, North said he’s anecdotally seen fewer and fewer stolen vehicles, though he said other variables may also be at play.

FILE PHOTO

Automatic license plate readers are a modern tool to detect crime on and off the roads.
Alexandria Police Department has seen success with the new license plate reading technology. The technology helps to supplement officers on the street. This technology is not intended to replace our officers, but really just enhance the impact that they can have,” North said.

With the current recruitment and retention issues, money that would typically be used to fund those officers goes into “vacancy savings.” Now, instead of having to expand the department budget, the money accrued is being spent on license plate readers, with each device costing the city $3,000 annually.

Between the six deployed license plate readers since March, the department has seen an average of 2.6 million plate reads per month, with about 220 of those being hits. The devices, all located on public roadways, only capture a picture of the exterior of the vehicle and the associated license plate. The data gathered in then cross referenced with a “hot list” of vehicles and plates associated with crimes like stolen vehicles, criminal activity, fugitives and missing persons or children. When a match is made, an officer is notified and given the opportunity to intercept the vehicle and take appropriate action.

North said in order to safeguard the privacy of citizens, the plate reads are only retained for 30 days, after which the data is permanently deleted. The police department also has a weekly audit process, where a sworn supervisor examines all officer usage of the system. If abuse of the system is found, there will be an internal investigation followed by appropriate action from the department.

In Fairfax County, Automatic License Plate Readers have been deployed on some police cars since 2011. According to the official city website, the Arlington County Police department does not use Automatic License Plate Readers, though the Commissioner of Revenue Office has since 2018. The office uses the technology to ensure that “all vehicles regularly garaged in the county are in compliance with registration, licensure and personal property tax provisions.” The Arlington data is only kept for 24 hours.

North said license plate reader technology is increasingly becoming a law enforcement best practice.

Dana Schrad, executive director of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, said the technology is “tremendously valuable” as an investigative tool. She said across the Commonwealth, data and records are only kept if it is relevant to an ongoing investigation.

“I think that people understand that they’re used for a very limited purpose, particularly in the investigation of criminal activity,” Schrad said. “Records of non-related license plate numbers and so forth, are not kept by the agency. In other words, they don’t do this broad gathering of license plate numbers and then just keep them. It’s not even useful to keep that data.”

Schrad said as technology continues to improve and is better understood by the public, she thinks the public will appreciate the use of license plate readers.

“It’s more reliable than the human eye,” Schrad said. “It’s something that is a tool that really improves the ability of law enforcement to do investigations and do them more efficiently and more quickly.”

--rachel_royster1@baylor.edu
Local finds to impress your special lady
BY CAITLYN MEISNER

It’s a struggle each and every year to find something unique for the special people in our lives, but especially with the Amazon-ification of gifting, it’s gotten harder.

Thankfully, Alexandria has plenty of small businesses with great finds to avoid the big box stores this season.
Nothing is more frustrating than searching up gift ideas, and it seems it’s the same things on the list each year: robes, bracelets, purses or a water bottle. After so many years, these items grow tired.
I know I dread the potential “inspiration” my boyfriend may draw from a “gifts for her” internet search. To avoid this, make sure you slip this article – or the partner article on gifts for him – to your special someone so they get the hint.
Instead of online shopping this year – which, I know, is quite the struggle for procrastinators, me included – head out to Alexandria stores and peruse these and other local shops for great finds.

Penny Post
A locally owned and operated stationery shop, Penny Post has everything from pens, stickers, washi tape and office supplies. It’s an organized person’s dream store.

What immediately stood out to me in the store was the rainbow-themed section right at the entrance, filled with candles, stickers, journals and anything else you can imagine that belongs on your home
Upon entering the store on King Street, I was hit with the amazing smell of the Cranberry Balsam Fir Cedarwood soy candle by Rifle Paper Co. It was everything you can imagine a holiday candle would smell like – and I had to stop from buying five for myself. The candle retails for $38.

Across the store there are plenty of stickers – ranging from $3 to $5 – for the sticker buffs in our lives. Especially if your special someone is a Swiftie, Penny Post has got you covered with a spread of stickers to satisfy anyone in their “Red” era. The store also carries a variety of animal stickers, so if you have an animal enthusiast in your life, you can pick up quite a few of their favorites.

Today’s Cargo

A quaint jewelry store located at 1102 King St., Today’s Cargo has both vintage and modern jewelry that is appealing even to the non-jewelry gal. At the entrance of the store is a booth full of vintage rings, bracelets, brooches, earrings and watches. They’ll fit anyone’s style, especially if that special someone enjoys a pop of color or their birthstone. The staff is kind and knowledgeable, so make sure to ask around for further tips on what to purchase.

And if your lady is a fan of quirky earrings – including, but not limited to, bacon and eggs, tacos, blue jays, owls or cats – stop by for hypoallergenic sterling or gold-filled earrings for $20, $24 or $28.

Today’s Cargo also carries a wide selection of modern jewelry of your choosing with diamonds, gold and pearls.

Shop Made in VA

At 1121 King St., you’ll find nothing but local and handmade products at Shop Made in VA. As a variety store, there are hundreds of products made by local artisans and vendors on display for purchase.

Sprawled across the store is a booth full of vintage rings, bracelets, brooches, earrings and watches. They’ll fit anyone’s style, especially if that special someone enjoys a pop of color or their birthstone. The staff is kind and knowledgeable, so make sure to ask around for further tips on what to purchase.

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Today’s Cargo also carries a wide selection of modern jewelry of your choosing with diamonds, gold and pearls.

Shop Made in VA features several small businesses in the state, including handmade goods from Briana Berkowitz.
are dozens of tables and shelves of products, all eye-catching and unusual. Particularly intriguing were the tables of handmade earrings, pressed flower coasters or mugs. Briana Berkowitz of @somanyflowersva makes these beautiful clear coasters with real flowers pressed within them. These are the perfect gift for your lady if she’s looking for a way to brighten up a communal space with some new coasters that cost $25.

I was also immediately drawn to Gretchen Mull’s ceramicware, including earrings. Her products are simple but breathtaking, which makes the perfect accessory or addition to an outfit. Her earring products cost around $32 and more of her products can be found at @gretchenmulliceramics.

If your special lady is more of the flashy accessory type, Dreamer & Co.’s earrings are the right choice. The company works with women in the Horn of Africa – the ones who produce the earrings – and assist them in growing the local economy by selling the goods in the United States.

**Red Barn Mercantile**

Penny Post’s sister store on King Street is another hit for her this season. With a plethora of options that caters to almost anyone, you can definitely find something at Red Barn Mercantile for your lady.

If you’re in a jam when you’re in the store, the website has a tab of “Gifts” that you can filter by the “recipient,” including for the Alexandria lover, home cook, pet lover, adventurer and more. You can also filter by the type of gift.

The plush embroidered pillows immediately caught my eye, two of which showcase monuments and iconic buildings in both Alexandria and Washington, D.C. If you’re willing to spend the $225 for either of these pillows to add some local love to your home, I think it’s worth it. If not these cities, there’s also a wide variety of universities with...
pillows cut from the same cloth for $216. Think Syracuse, the University of Alabama, James Madison University and others.

Moving to the back of the store there is an entire wall filled with premium self-care items, perfect for a post-holiday season relaxation session. Plush robes and floral pajama sets for $94 each are great, thoughtful gifts for her.

And if she’s a lover of all things coastal, look no further. There’s an entire section of the store dedicated to the nautical-obsessed person, with mini throw pillows for $39, a $32 wall calendar for the upcoming year and an oyster key fob for $34.

-cmeisner@alextimes.com

Photo/CAITLYN MEISNER

Red Barn Mercantile has plush robes for your lady who loves self-care.

Red Barn Mercantile has coastal and nautical-themed items for purchase.

Penry Post offers strongly scented candles perfect for the holiday season.

Union Square

The art of imagination

Union Square is a master stroke of creativity. A unique adaptive reuse space located in Historic Old Town. With a decidedly French influence, this stunning venue showcases a selection of original paintings, prints and surrealistic fashion images by internationally recognized photographer, Rodney Smith.

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Find us online at Visit Alexandria Unique venues and on Wedding Wire.

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Shop Sustainable this holiday season!

Local. Non-Profit. Fair Trade.

LITTLE GIFTS LOTS OF HOPE

ten thousand villages.
The perfect gifts ‘for him’ this year

What to get your special man this season

BY LOGAN MITCHELL

Whether you’re shopping for your husband, boyfriend, father, brother or a special man in your life, it can be tricky knowing what to get for them. If you look through online gift guides, you’ll likely come across the same impersonal gifts repeatedly. Not every man wants whiskey-scented deodorant or soap, yet almost every website suggests it.

It’s easy to sit at home and shop on Amazon; after all, you don’t even have to get out of your pajamas. But you’ll be missing out on getting into the holiday spirit if you take that route. Picture spending an afternoon in Old Town or Del Ray, seasonally decorated and packed with tourists and shoppers alike.

You can’t capture the feeling of walking around in the cold, hearing holiday music faintly playing from speakers and inhaling the rich and warm smells of candles burning inside the local shops, by merely clicking on an online purchase.

If you want to recapture the holiday spirit, the best place is to stop around the city and see for yourself what the plentiful stores have to offer.

Penny Post

Penny Post is a delightful independent stationery store right in the heart of Old Town. What stood out to me was the variety of products. They do have stationery of course, but they also have puzzles, stickers, bookmarks and a delightful collection of pens.

The first item that caught my eye was a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle that when finished, displays the world of King Arthur. The best way I can describe the art style of this puzzle is an art tapestry with more detail. If the special someone in your life is a fan of Arthurian legend, they’ll

SEE FOR ‘HIM’ | 16

PHOTO/LOGAN MITCHELL

Shop Made in VA has a beard kit for sale for anyone on their beard journey.
also love the little booklet that comes with the puzzle that serves as a guide to the legends. The puzzle retails for $22.

Near the center of the store, there was a table covered in the aforementioned office -essentials. What stood out to me isn’t the most glamorous gift in the world, but it’s sturdy and gets the job done. It’s a tape dispenser, but not just any tape dispenser, though: a Penco Leader that retails for $28. It is crafted with enameled steel and comes in four colors, including ivory, red, green and navy.

Just from picking it up, I knew this was the kind of product that will last for decades if taken care of properly. As a proud cat dad used to the cats knocking everything off my desk, I can tell you that tape dispensers tend to break easily. If this one manages to fall off the desk, it’s more likely your floor will break before the dispenser does.

**Today’s Cargo**

Today’s Cargo is a jewelry store also located on King Street. It did not add a men’s section as an afterthought, which is evident through its great selection of watches and wedding bands, as well as a variety of other types of rings.

The front of the store has more vintage jewelry and I almost bought a watch or two for myself. There is plenty more in-store than online, so make sure you visit their brick-and-mortar location to look around and speak to the friendly employees.

**Shop Made in VA**

Shop Made, also on King Street, is a store that carries items exclusively made in the Commonwealth. The store was packed with people on Plaid Friday, so I found myself herded into a corner of the store and I’m glad I ended up where I did. It was filled with the sort of self-care gifts that not every man knows he wants, but can’t live without once he realizes how good he smells.

The first product I opened to smell was a bottle of cologne from Lineage Goods. There were three cologne fragrances for sale, each at $19: Boot Jack, grapefruit/fig and tobacco/spice.

Right next to the colognes were some delightful bars of soap made in Falls Church by Josh and Heather Mazen. Their business, Frontyard Farm, creates farm-inspired soaps made with natural ingredients. For the men in your life who have sensitive skin, these $6 soaps might help prevent any discomfort or flare-ups. For the vegans among us, they also have soap made without animal products. They also make deodorants, body and lip balms.

Wicked Naturals, based in Broadway, makes products tailored to the bearded men in your life. They offered
FOR ‘HIM’ FROM | 16

great-smelling beard oils for $10, shaving soap for $12 and, my favorite, a $42 beard product kit filled with the essentials. It comes with beard oil, a wooden brush, a beard shampoo bar and a wood soap bar dish. This box is perfect for someone who either just started their beard journey or who has walked the bearded road for years.

Red Barn Mercantile

If the special person in your life is a fan of America’s pastime, I highly recommend getting a copy of “Baseball Parks: Then and Now,” which retails for around $30. The book explores how ballparks have changed and is filled with amazing photographs. It’s the perfect conversation starter or coffee table book. If you want to splurge, there’s a leatherbound edition available for $115.

There was another book that any man who likes to think of himself as a maestro behind the bar cannot go without, it’s “The Bartenders Manifesto” by Toby Maloney and Emma Janzen. This guide goes far beyond being a recipe book and dives into the science and chemistry of what makes a good cocktail. The aim of the book is to inspire you to create your own cocktails with the knowledge you have gained and is available for $32.

Frontyard Farm, a local small business, makes fragrant soaps to suit anyone.
The annual Scottish Christmas Walk and the Holiday Boat Parade of Lights will return Saturday to celebrate the holiday season, according to a press release. The Scottish Christmas Walk starts at South Saint Asaph and Wolfe Streets at 11 a.m. and ends at Market Square on King and Royal Street at 1 p.m. The Holiday Boat Parade and Lights will start at the Old Town Waterfront and will last from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. The Boat Parade and Lights will also include other fun events, such as dockside festivities in Waterfront Park from 1 to 8 p.m. and a family friendly event at Canal Center from 3 to 7 p.m. No parking zones or road closures will be in effect. Alexandrians can visit the city’s website for updated traffic patterns. For more events this weekend, check out our calendar on page 21.

Ivanpate@alexetimes.com

A parade-packed Saturday

The 52nd annual Scottish Christmas Walk commemorates Alexandria’s Scottish founding.

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The Scottish Christmas Walk features traditional aspects of Scottish culture, including bagpipes.
The origins of the Scottish Walk Parade

In 1605, five residents of Aberdeen, Scotland were prosecuted for parading through the town “maskit and dancing with bellis.” More than 400 years later, it might be difficult to imagine why an event like Alexandria’s Scottish Walk Parade – one of the most cherished holiday parades in this city, founded in 1749 by Scottish merchants – would have been outlawed in Scotland.

After the Scottish Reformation in 1560, Christian celebrations were rare, and in 1640, Christmas was officially banned in Scotland. In fact, December 25 did not become a Scottish public holiday until 1958.

Two Alexandria women are credited with creating much more than bonnie holiday traditions. They developed the city’s Scottish Christmas Walk, now in its 52nd year, as a community event to highlight the city’s Scottish heritage and to support the mission of the Campagna Center, then known as the “Community Y.”

The Community Y had previously served as Alexandria’s YWCA – a place where in 1945, a group of local women organized to provide the “only place where women of all ages, regardless of race or creed, could gather for social activities that promoted leadership, morale and inspiration.”

In 1962, Elizabeth Anne Campagna joined the organization as the YWCA’s executive director. During her 25-year stewardship, Campagna fostered dozens of innovative programs for women and their families that formed a vital safety net.

Campagna also transformed the nature of the assistance the city gave to those in need. Through the creative use of city, state and federal funds, she oversaw the development of additional initiatives including Alexandria’s first Head Start program, latch-key assistance, tutoring and crisis intervention.

In the 1970s, theYWCA separated from the national group to become the independent Alexandria Community Y. In 1971, working in tandem with former City Manager Vola Therrell Lawson – then serving as Alexandria’s assistant director for the Economic Opportunities Commission – Campagna developed the city’s Scottish Christmas Walk with the support of Junior and Supporting Friends, a core of women volunteers.

Current Campagna Center President and CEO Tammy L. Mann explained the event’s mission and ongoing relevance.

“This event and the associated activities that evolved around the Walk were designed to recognize the city’s Scottish heritage and draw attention to the work of the Center,” Mann said.

In the early 1980s, TCC’s current headquarters was purchased at 418 South Washington St. in Old Town. In 1991, the facility was renamed the Campagna Center in honor of Elizabeth Anne Campagna’s commitment to the community. With the addition of a middle school program in 2012, the Center is the only nonprofit in Alexandria serving children across the education spectrum, from birth through high school.

During the early 2000s, TCC became Alexandria’s sole provider of Early Head Start services and expanded the number of children served through Head Start. In 2016, the Early Learning Center was opened to serve young children ineligible for Head Start.

The Campagna Center also added vital programs that addressed the needs of middle and high school students at risk for school failure and welcomed the New Neighbors program to help adults and young children learn English.

Today, the organization ensures Campagna’s legacy lives on. TCC has more than 200 staff members, 27 board members and more than 150 volunteers dedicated to the well-being of Alexandria’s children, teens and adults.

“The Scottish Walk Parade is an annual tradition to commemorate the city’s Scottish founders. Throughout its history women have been at the helm. Today, women lead both at Alexandria’s Scottish Walk Parade – one of the most cherished holiday parades in this city, founded in 1749 by Scottish merchants – would have been outlawed in Scotland.

The Scottish Christmas Walk Parade is an annual tradition to commemorate the city’s Scottish founders. Throughout its history women have been at the helm. Today, women lead both at Alexandria’s Scottish Walk Parade – one of the most cherished holiday parades in this city, founded in 1749 by Scottish merchants – would have been outlawed in Scotland.

The writer is a founder of Alexandria Celebrates Women, a nonprofit commemorating the centennial of women’s suffrage and highlighting influential women throughout the city’s history.
Seven ways to creatively display favorite photos

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Family photos, vacation pictures, candid snapshots of friends and family: they’re often visual representations of some of your most treasured moments, so it’s likely you’ll want to give them some special treatment.

Consider these easy and affordable ways to showcase some of your favorite photos.

Variations on a theme
You don’t need a whole set of matching frames to create a unified look. Gather frames of different sizes, shapes and textures then paint them all the same color. White, cream or black are colors that let the eye focus on the photograph. Then when you group them together, you’ve got a cohesive display without everything being the same.

Location, location, location
Photos don’t always need to be on a wall or shelf. Try hanging a series of related photos on the back of a door or between windows.

A new use for old frames
Take a large frame with no back and paint it. Then take two pieces of ribbon or wire and attach them to the back of the frame, dividing it into three sections. Attach small photos to the ribbon or wire with mini clothespins or other small clips.

New frames out of old windows
Fit a photo mat inside each pane of an old window. Attach photos to the backs of the mats and you have a vintage frame.

Map it out
Showcase favorite travel photos by covering a mat with a map from one of your vacation spots. Just trim the map to fit your mat, tape it to the back and insert your picture.

Get it on canvas
Treat your photos like the works of art they are by having them printed on artist canvas. There are a variety of online vendors that let you choose the size and photo treatment to create a unique piece for your personal gallery.

Put it all on the table
Add to your stylish decor and protect your furniture all at the same time by making your own photo coasters.
DECEMBER 1
HOLIDAY TOURS OF POPE-LEIGHNEY HOUSE
Tour the Pope-Leighey House during special evening tours and see the home decorated for a mid-century holiday. Tickets are $15 per person and limited. Event runs until December 16.
Time: 6 to 8 p.m.
Location: 9000 Richmond Highway
Information: woodlawn events@savingplaces.org

DECEMBER 2
CHRISTMASTIDE AT GUNSTON HALL
Join George Mason’s Gunston Hall Christmastide program at the historic home. Children’s crafts, games and indoor snowball fights are available for all ages. Sample food in the kitchen and enjoy an 18th century experience. Tickets available now. Members receive a 50% discount. Tickets at the door cost $10 for adults and $8 for children.
Time: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Location: Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road
Information: gunstonhall.org/events/christmastide-at-gunston-hall/

HOMES ADVERTORIAL

Corner, luxury residence at The Oronoco

The Oronoco continues to show its popularity with quick sales and even off-market sales. This 2,285 square foot residence with balcony features an open floor plan designed to provide the ultimate in contemporary comfort. Enjoy 10-foot ceiling heights, a private den perfect for a home office, large modern kitchen with a center island and luxury finishes, a living room with fireplace and wet bar, a dining area large enough for dinner parties and a primary bedroom suite with two walk-in closets. Luxury amenities include 24-hour concierge, pool, fitness center, yoga studio, club rooms, pet wash station and bike storage rooms. Just minutes to Reagan National Airport, Amazon’s HQ2, Capitol Hill and major transportation hubs.

HOMES ADVERTORIAL

DECEMBER 4
WMPA PERFORMANCES
An American composer inspired performance, the WMPA will highlight different cultures and their musical interactions with Evan Meier, Valerie Coleman and Florence Price. Tickets are available and required for entry. $35 for adults, $30 for seniors and $5 for children under 18.
Time: 3 p.m.
Location: George Washington Masonic Memorial Theater
Information: wmpamusic.org/philharmonic-schedule.html

DECEMBER 6
AUTHOR TALK: SERENA T. WILLS
Join Serena T. Wills, a local poet, as she reads poetry from her latest book, “Artists’ Paradise Pieces of Life, Volume Three.” Wills artistically illustrates her life experiences with her poetry from childhood to a professional poet. Books will be available for purchase and signing.
Time: 5 to 7:45 p.m.
Location: James M. Duncan, Jr., Branch Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave.
Information: alexlibraryva.org/event/9337934

AT A GLANCE
Address: 601 N Fairfax St.
#509, Alexandria, 22314
Neighborhood: Old Town
Price: $2,000,000
Square feet: 2,285
Bedrooms: 2
Bathrooms: 2.5
Year built: 2014
Contact: Heath Corey
TTR Sotheby’s International Realty, Old Town
Homes Advertorial

PHOTOS/TOWNSEND VISUALS

Left: Welcome to The Oronoco. Middle: Large modern kitchen with center island. Right: Enjoy 10-foot-tall ceilings and contemporary comfort.
Editorial

‘It ain’t over’

Let the lawsuits begin!

It’s difficult to envision any other near-term course of action following City Council’s unanimous vote Tuesday night to pass the divisive Zoning for Housing initiative in the face of fierce opposition from a large swath of Alexandria residents.

And given the successful legal challenges to similar reforms passed in Minneapolis and Arlington, expect more of the same in the Port City.

Minneapolis passed zoning changes that abolished single-family zoning back in 2018 in a much-heralded victory for the “yes in my back yard” – or YIMBY – movement. This plan was touted here in Alexandria by consultants that were paid $100,000 by the city of Alexandria to promote the ZFH plan.

However, the Minneapolis zoning changes were quickly challenged in court by a group of plaintiffs, including environmentalists and “smart growth” advocates. After several years of legal wrangling, a Minnesota judge ruled in September that building under that city’s new zoning law must halt while an environmental impact study is conducted.

In adjacent Arlington, a lawsuit filed by residents advanced last month after a judge “denied most of the county’s motions to dismiss the case, according to an attorney for the 10 residents who sued Arlington,” according to ARNow.

The action in Arlington was significant, because the judge ruled that residents of single-family neighborhoods have standing to sue prior to redevelopment taking place. In recent years, Alexandria judges have dismissed numerous lawsuits filed by city residents on the basis of standing.

In the 19 years of the ‘Times’ existence, we don’t recall any single issue that has outraged such a large swath of our city’s residents as ZFH.

One of the fascinating aspects of this dispute is how it cuts across ideological lines. While the zoning changes have been done in the name of progressive ideals such as increasing the affordable housing supply and eliminating racism – and many supporters are genuine in those motivations – the YIMBY movement has been funded by the conservative Koch Brothers and backed by developers.

Meanwhile, those fighting against the initiative also run the political gamut, from self-described progressives to centrist Democrats to Republicans. The leader of the opposition group Coalition for a Livable Alexandria is a Black man.

Whether this local opposition to ZFH runs deep enough to topple at least four members of City Council in the looming 2024 local election is unclear. What is clear is that in this one-party town, that changeover would have to take place in the June Democratic primary, not the November general election.

It’s difficult to get a reliable handle on the depth of opposition to ZFH in Alexandria. The CLA commissioned a poll from Bellwether Research, which often works with Republican candidates. That poll showed 58% of city residents were opposed to ZFH with only 26% supporting the initiative.

We asked readers for their opinion on whether ZFH should be considered as one package or broken up into pieces in our weekly, admittedly unscientific, poll. The response: 68% favored breaking it up and 30% wanted it considered as one, large package.

Patch also asked readers for their take on ZFH in another unscientific poll that was limited to Old Town, Del Ray and West End Patch readers, and a whopping 81.5% said they were opposed to ZFH, with 15.4% supporting.

Council had its say Tuesday night. But as baseball sage Yogi Berra said, “It ain’t over ’til it’s over.”

Opinion

“Where the press is free and every man is able to read, all is safe.”
- Thomas Jefferson

Photo of the Week

Donations to SFA go far

To the editor:

If you could pay part of your annual tax bill in the form of a donation to a very worthwhile local charitable organization – instead of through a check to the government – would you?

Believe it or not, a little-known Virginia program called The Neighborhood Assistance Act Tax Credit Program for Education allows you to do just that. The program, offered through the Virginia Department of Education, offers tax credits of up to 65% for donations to just over 80 approved neighborhood organizations, including the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria.

These tax credits are a powerful tool for Virginia taxpayers – both individuals and companies – interested in supporting education at the local level. Approved organizations like the SFA can offer you a 65% tax credit to be applied to your Virginia state income taxes. If you were to give $1,000 to the Fund, you would receive a $650 tax credit to pay your Virginia state tax bill. This is a tax credit, not a tax deduction – directly reducing your total tax bill.

There are also ways in which this tool can be even more powerful. When you pay your tax bill, you must pay it in cash. But your donation to an approved neighborhood organization like the SFA can be made with appreciated securities, enabling you to avoid a potentially substantial capital gain on the eventual sale of the securities. Or it can be made as part of your required minimum distribution from your Individual retirement account.

Your donations to the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria are also an amazingly powerful tool. As an SFA donor and volunteer, I’m overwhelmed each year by the impact I see our supporters have made in the lives of Alexandria City High School students and their families. Beyond the scholarships, many students would never make it through the complicated college application process or know how to apply to career and technical programs without the substantial advisory help provided by our SFA staff, housed right in the ACHS building.

Our dedicated staff helps students find their way to the right program and decipher the financial aid package to make sure it works for their family. Often, they’d still have a tuition gap to close, which is where an SFA scholarship often makes the difference in making those college dreams possible.

Some compelling numbers that help illustrate the need, the effort and the support provided by SFA: More than 60% of ACHS students are living at or below the federal poverty level. More than 60% of SFA scholarship recipients are the first in their family to apply to college. And $1.4 million in scholarship funds were
Letters

All are welcome in Del Ray

To the editor:

There isn’t much that could be said about the “Zoning for Housing/Housing for All” initiative that hasn’t already been said by someone in the last year. It’s not at all unusual in this city of advocates and activists for our neighborhoods to get swept up in the debate. Indeed, it’s one of the things we do best.

However, I’ve always been impressed by how Del Ray has risen to the challenge and largely stayed out of the fray of mudslinging that other pockets of our city more regularly engage in. As president of the Del Ray Citizens Association, I looked ahead to the discussions of this year and knew we could once again rise to the challenge.

I am disheartened to be writing an apology, on behalf of my beautiful neighborhood of Del Ray, because a few of our neighbors acted in a way so uncharacteristic and outright embarrassing of our community.

On Thanksgiving morning, in front of a record-breaking crowd, a handful of neighbors thought it best to stand on corners proudly displaying what are effectively “keep out” signs. Most appalling, some went so far as to yell variations of, “We were here first” chants. Wow. Seeing this in writing cuts deep.

To be clear, I’m not sure who these people were, if they are members of the Del Ray Citizens Association or even residents of Del Ray. But really, it doesn’t matter. The damage is done.

In a community that has long celebrated spreading kindness and community, we have a pocket of voices standing on one of our neighborhood’s largest stages literally telling people they aren’t welcome. Both visually and vocally. The irony of the situation is not lost on me.

On a day to reflect on what we are thankful for, some chose to protest. That’s their right. To be sure, it’s a right to be thankful for. But on a morning that saw you, the people of Alexandria, donate more than 1,200 pounds of food and the Del Ray Business Association hand over an $8,000 donation so that ALIVE! can continue its vital work of distributing 20,000 meals a day to our neighbors in need, there were some individuals making it very clear that only a select few are actually welcome within the bounds of our own neighborhood and city at large.

I find this stance utterly distasteful and unbecoming of the character and charm this neighborhood has come to stand for. And on behalf of our community, including those who don’t see the damage they have done and are continuing to do: I am sorry. Because in this neighborhood, all are welcome.

-Katie Waynick, president, Del Ray Citizens Association

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Giving is a family affair

BY HEATHER PEELER

When my parents passed away a few years ago, my sisters and I decided to honor them by establishing a charitable fund in their names at ACT for Alexandria. The fund has been a powerful expression of our family’s values. When our family gathered last week for Thanksgiving, we discussed the organizations we want to support through the fund.

My parents were artists and social justice activists. They were courageous, choosing to love and marry at a time when their interracial marriage was illegal in most of the country. The Peeler Productions Memorial Fund is a way for our family to remember their lives and put their values into action.

My family’s experience is not unique. Many families tap into the spirit of the season to give back and uplift the community in numerous ways. Some families gather during the holiday season to volunteer to distribute food or donate coats to a local clothing drive. Family philanthropy is a timeless tradition that extends beyond mere financial contributions, encompassing the values, beliefs and principles passed down through generations.

At ACT, this is our busiest time of the year when we work with many families to help them put their philanthropic goals into action through a donor advised fund. A donor advised fund is like a charitable bank account. When you open the account and make deposits into it, you receive an immediate tax benefit.

The assets are invested and have the potential to grow, thereby expanding your giving potential. You have the flexibility to make a donation from the fund to any nonprofit organization of your choice, at any time. It can be a way to streamline and make the most of your giving.

Whether you choose to give with or without a donor advised fund, there are numerous benefits to family philanthropy. Giving as a family instills and perpetuates shared values and beliefs. It provides an opportunity to educate younger generations about social responsibility and the importance of giving back.

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The writer is president and CEO of ACT for Alexandria.

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JAHNS

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provided through SFA in 2023 alone. During the past 37 years, SFA has granted nearly $18 million in scholarships to Alexandria students.

Since its inception, SFA has been a great example of broad community support at work. The vast majority of SFA funding comes via relatively modest donations. While the amount of each donation certainly matters, the sheer number of supporters is what has made the difference to so many students over time.

The opinions expressed in letters and columns are those of the writers only and do not reflect the views, nor receive the endorsement, of the Alexandria Times.
Christmas and the Civil War

Historians often point to Clement Clarke Moore’s poem commonly known as “Twas the Night Before Christmas” as creating an American concept of Santa Claus. But did you know that Moore’s poem has strong ties to Union recruiting and supporters from the Civil War?

Moore’s poem references many interpretations of Saint Nick by the political cartoonist Thomas Nast, famous for his work in Harper’s Weekly. Nast is best known for his depictions of “Boss Tweed” and Tammany Hall corruption in New York City. He believed strongly in the Union cause and the abolition of slavery. The cartoonist continued to call attention to racial injustice well after the end of the Civil War.

Thomas Nast first drew Santa Claus for Harper’s Weekly in the winter of 1862. Throughout the war, Nast often depicted Santa Claus celebrating Christmas with Union soldiers, as you can see in this image. President Abraham Lincoln later designated Nast’s depictions of the war, especially his annual feature of Santa Claus “as the best recruiting sergeant the North ever had.”

Nast cartoons first publicized other details about Santa Claus. For instance, Nast revealed Santa’s residence at the North Pole to readers in 1866. Later, Nast’s cartoons introduced the workshop and the naughty and nice list.

While Nast portrayed Christmas in camp in rather idyllic terms, the soldiers remembered the experience differently. One soldier from Connecticut stationed near Alexandria wrote:

“December 25: Cold and windy. Snow still on the ground; but in the afternoon it warmed up and commenced to melt, and by night the ground was entirely clear of snow, leaving the ground very muddy. The camp was very quiet. The boys were standing in groups around the fire and discussing the menu of the Christmas dinner.”

You can get in the holiday spirit and learn how Christmas was observed during the Civil War at Fort Ward Museum’s annual Civil War Christmas in Camp program on December 9 from noon to 4 p.m. This popular family-oriented event features a patriotic Civil War Santa Claus, reenactors in winter camp settings, and period decorations. The suggested donation is $2 per person and $5 for families. Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site is located at 4301 West Braddock Road. For more information about this program, please call 703-746-4848, or visit alexandria.gov/FortWard.
Weekly Words

ACROSS
1 Like many notebook bindings
7 Afro-Brazilian dances with syncopated rhythms
13 Like the population of Mongolia compared to China
20 Crazy Horse or Sitting Bull
21 Hanging on every word
22 Sid Caesar’s comedy partner Fabray
23 “Rocky III” hit song
25 Chosen to play, say
26 Potpie ingredients that come from pods
27 Chairman Charles?
28 Place for rolls and loops
30 Reason for students to cram
31 Double standard?
32 Barely noticeable
34 Put into office
37 Kids’ game in which two players toss an object to keep it away from a third
41 Kate’s TV pal and roommate
42 Country music star McCann
43 Hard on the ears, in a way
44 “Picnic” playwright
48 Like legends
50 Buckets
52 Please as punch
53 National’s opponent?
54 Part of an electrical appliance
55 Elite invitees

18 Zeta follower
19 Sleep stage (Abbr.)
24 “Shampoo” co-star Goldie
29 Get some air
30 Reason for students to cram
31 Double standard?
32 Locate a word search word
33 Not to mention
34 English actress Bloom
35 Singer and actress O'Shea
36 Verbal equivalent to a shrug
37 Verbal equivalent to a shrug
38 CPR pros
39 Hurl, in modern slang
40 Like some movie scientists
41 Peak experience in Europe?
42 Country music star McCann
43 Hard on the ears, in a way
44 “Picnic” playwright
45 Tapes or sew, say
46 He raised Cain in the Bible
47 Western alliance based in D.C.
48 Like Richard I
50 Buckets
51 Funny fellow
52 Put in in Punjabi
53 Yellowfin tuna
54 Part of an electrical appliance
55 Elite invitees

Belly of the Beast by Paul Coulter, edited by Jeff Chen

DEATH NOTICES

MERTICE CLARK (91), of Alexandria, Nov. 18, 2023
ROGER LYNN DEMIK (79), of Alexandria, Nov. 16, 2023
CATHRYN LORRAINE BRADSHAW LANGSTAFF (94), of Alexandria, Oct. 18, 2023
ALFRED RANDALL PRESCOTT (73), of Alexandria, Nov. 17, 2023
JOHN MATTHEW SCORCE (88), of Alexandria, Nov. 21, 2023
BETTY JEAN THODOS (88), of Alexandria, Nov. 19, 2023
BARBARA WASH (87), of Alexandria, Nov. 25, 2023

Solutions from last week

BETTY JEAN THODOS (88), of Alexandria, Nov. 25, 2023
BARBARA WASH (87), of Alexandria, Nov. 25, 2023

BELLY OF THE BEAST by Paul Coulter, edited by Jeff Chen
Interested in construction and/or an electrician? Apprentices earn a paycheck and full benefits while learning the trade firsthand.

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powerdesigninc.us/careers or email careers@powerdesigninc.us

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**SEEKING QUALIFIED SUBCONTRACTORS**

The Hanover Company is seeking qualified subcontractors to bid on their Springfield Town Center project. The project consists of a seven-story concrete and wood frame podium apartment building, and associated sitework. The building construction is expected to commence in April of 2024. Interested parties should send an email to BidsSpringfield@Hanoverco.com. Please include background information on your company including your safety EMR, similar completed projects and references.

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**STEEL ROOFLING**

Building construction is expected to commence in April of 2024. Interested parties should send an email to BidsSpringfield@Hanoverco.com. Please include background information on your company including your safety EMR, similar completed projects and references.

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Neighboring Old Town Alexandria in this exclusive and distinctive enclave is this two-year-old, custom build which has been carefully curated with detailed high-end finishes throughout. Here are featured the benefits of modern living with fashionably gracious, classic finishes. The high ceilings, large rooms, millwork, and design details are incomparable, and the sweeping staircase sublime. One primary suite is on the main level with a roll-in shower – only one step up takes you into these divine premises. The great room is the heart of the home, and the kitchen features a Lacanche seven-burner stove and custom solid white oak cabinet millwork. Behind pocket doors are quiet work and homework spaces with smart wi-fi; and entertaining flow is well-designed and fluid. There are four levels with six en-suite bedrooms. The Diamond Glass gloss lacquered wet bar, pantry, and 1,000-bottle wine cellar are unparalleled. The three-season living room features a wood-burning fireplace and television connector – for some major football viewing, and there is a grilling porch with hood! Formal spaces and quiet nooks for the most discerning. It will be your great fortune to become the steward of this amazing residence. Whether birthday parties or black-tie galas, this property will host many years of joyous laughter and clinking glasses. DCA is eight miles away! Offered at $5,000,000.

Celebrating 29 Years of service to my clients and my community!

Janet Caterson Price
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