

Golden Gazette



FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES

www.FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults

Ray Collins: 20 Years of Hard Work and Determination Led to Writing Success

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

When 92-year-old Ray Collins retired 20 years ago, he entered his next phase of life with the confidence of someone who had enjoyed many successes – a happy marriage, a loving family, and a rewarding career. He had no reason to doubt that he would be successful in achieving his dream of becoming a writer. He soon discovered that writing novels was harder than he ever imagined. Employing the same work ethic that has served him throughout life, he stuck with it, steadily improving year by year. He was also motivated by the support and encouragement he received from his family, especially his wife, Betty Ann. Eventually, Collins’ perseverance paid off. His first two novels, “The General’s Briefcase” and “Motive for Murder,” were published in 2023, and his third novel, “Setup” will come out in 2024.



Ray Collins' drive to succeed and belief in himself have led to many achievements, including his most recent success – becoming a published author. Photo courtesy Ray Collins.

his family’s home in Fort Scott, KS. The library was a point of pride in the small community, one of the nearly 1,700 libraries built in the U.S. by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie at the beginning of the 20th century.

An accomplished student, Collins attended Yale University on scholarship. His academic career was interrupted during his junior year when he was drafted. He still recalls the words of his dean, “You have the dubious distinction of being the only student in good standing at Yale to be drafted so far during the Korean War.” Collins attributes this to the draft board back home in Kansas prioritizing farmers over college kids. He attended boot camp in Fort Riley, KS, where he excelled despite the harsh conditioning, both physical and mental. Collins served 14 months in Korea before the war ended. He found the experience of transitioning from a wartime to a peacetime army fascinating, with soldiers spending their days training or painting instead of fighting.

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Collins’ childhood was spent in the Midwest, moving between several states, but he grew up primarily in Kansas. He was an avid reader from an early age and has fond memories of visiting the public library across the street from

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It is our policy that all articles published in the Golden Gazette must be written by employees of Fairfax County agencies or partner organizations.

READER SUGGESTIONS FOR CONTENT TO THE GOLDEN GAZETTE

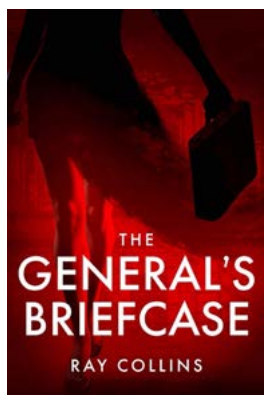
We'd like your feedback! What topics would you like to see in future issues? How can we make this publication even better?

Do you know a centenarian living in Fairfax County or an older adult who has given back in a significant way? We are always looking for interesting older Fairfax County residents to feature.

Email your suggestions to DFSGoldenGazette@FairfaxCounty.gov or call **703-324-GOLD**.

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After being discharged from the Army, Collins returned to Yale to complete his final year. He and his college sweetheart, Betty Ann, were married at the Harkness Tower Chapel on the Yale campus. Collins then attended Princeton University, earning a Master of Public Administration. During this time, the couple welcomed twins, Jim and Ann, to the family.

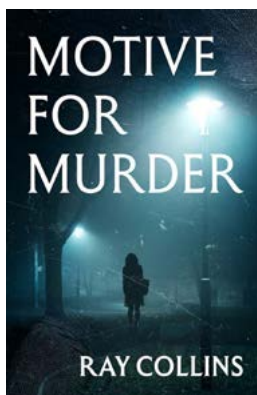


Collins' novels, "The General's Briefcase," was published in June 2023, and "Motive for Murder" in December 2023. Artwork courtesy Ray Collins.

After graduating, Collins joined the State Department as a Foreign Service Officer and became a Japanese language and East Asia specialist. His first assignment was in Manila, Philippines, where their third child, Nori, was born. His second assignment was in Japan, where Collins served as a political officer at the Embassy in Tokyo. The family lived in Japan for five years and during this time, they had their youngest child, Susan. Collins describes the family's experience of living in Japan as "total immersion." Their twins attended a Japanese preschool, where they quickly picked up the language, and soon all four children primarily spoke Japanese among themselves.

After eight years living abroad, he and Betty Ann decided that they wanted to put down roots in the U.S., so the family moved to Vienna, VA in 1964. While Betty Ann began teaching at Louise Archer Elementary School in Vienna, Collins made a career change, joining the Poverty Program, working on Head Start. During his career, he spent a year at Princeton University as a resident Mid-Career Fellow and later earned his PhD, focusing on public policy concerning children. After 30 years of federal service, Collins retired. He didn't remain retired for long, founding and leading Collins Management Consulting, a firm specializing in Head Start, childcare, and other family programs. In 2003, he sold the business and retired for good.

Collins planned to dedicate his retirement years to writing, with the goal of writing novels in his favorite genre – thrillers. Having written and published extensively throughout his career, he thought making the transition to fiction would come naturally but discovered that there was a big difference between fiction



and nonfiction, saying, "When I started writing fiction, I realized how hard writing is. It never occurred to me that writing was hard because I was writing things that I knew about. Nonfiction is pretty straightforward. Fiction is very different."

Despite discovering that writing was more difficult than he expected, Collins kept at it. "I have a fairly robust ego so I thought I could do really good stuff. I just had to keep refining

at the margin, keep improving. Since I was fortunate to have a lot of time, I believed I could get there," he says. Collins began attending writer's conferences, getting advice and feedback from other authors. While gaining helpful advice, he also enjoyed the time he spent with other writers, saying, "They're fun! Writers are, by and large, friendly and helpful people. I found very few exceptions."

Collins shares that writers fall into two categories. The first is writers who create an outline and write their novel from it. The complexity of the outline varies from writer to writer. Some of his favorite authors, such as James Patterson, write from an outline. Collins falls into the second category, which he calls "pantsers." Pantsers write from the seat of their pants, drafting a chapter at a time, letting the plot develop chapter by chapter. "I may have some general idea where I'm going and certain plot points that I think through in advance, but the book kind of evolves," he says. Collins also draws on familiar places to craft his novels. For instance, Washington, D.C., Fairfax County and Japan are all settings in his books.

While "Motive for Murder" was his second novel published, it was the first novel he began writing. While it has retained his original concept, the novel went through many iterations, with the plot, writing style, and the title all changing multiple times. While refining his first novel, he began work on the second, which went a little easier than the first. He found that his third novel was even easier. Although friends and family read his work and provided feedback, Collins chose to hire a professional

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editor, which turned out to be a great learning experience and made a huge difference in his writing.

Collins' first two novels were published by Koehler Publishing – “The General’s Briefcase” in June 2023 and “Motive for Murder” in December 2023. Both have been well received, winning NABE Pinnacle Book Achievement Awards and landing on the list of finalists for the Claymore Award from Killer Nashville Magazine. Collins' third novel “Setup” will be published in 2024.

Like the writing process, Collins has learned a great deal about the publishing process – from cover design to distribution to marketing. To prepare for his recent author’s talk at Patrick Henry Library in Vienna, he attended another author’s talk so he could see how the events work. While his preparation was helpful, his nervousness was unnecessary since his children packed the room with their friends, ensuring a warm and receptive audience.

While he will continue to promote his three novels, Collins believes that his writing days are behind him. Instead, he will be devoting himself to spending time with family, reading, watching movies, and visiting

Oakmont Rec Center with Betty Ann, where the couple enjoy weight training.

While his journey to becoming a published author was harder and took longer than he thought it would, Collins never gave up or lost hope. He attributes his eventual success to his drive to succeed, saying, “It got me through Yale, it got me through Princeton, and it got me through Korea. In combat there’s a lot involved in surviving. A lot is luck, some of it is skill, some of it is being part of the right team. But you have to believe in yourself.”

Collins offers this advice for others who may be thinking of learning a new skill, taking on a new hobby, or trying a new profession in retirement, “Focus on what you’re interested in, what excites you or stimulates your imagination. It could be anything. Otherwise, you aren’t going to muster the energy. These things take an enormous amount of time and energy. Maybe for some people they’re very easy, but I suspect they’re not for most, and certainly not for me.”

To learn more about Ray Collins and his writing, visit his website: raycollinsauthor.com. ☀

New Virtual Trainings: Exploring the Dimensions of Aging

by Kathleen Thomas, Department of Family Services

Everyone experiences challenges as they get older. We all encounter changes associated with our physical needs and our social-emotional needs. We also have to learn to adapt to ongoing changes in the world around us.

Professional and family caregivers can benefit from being able to understand what older adults experience when they face real-life challenges.

A unique opportunity allowing participants to “see through the eyes” of older adults is available through a new virtual training series called Exploring the Dimensions of Aging. The training series was developed by Embodied Labs and simulates what it is like to be an older adult encountering various challenges in everyday situations.

Facilitated virtual sessions will focus on how social isolation impacts an older adult, learning about the early signs and progression of Lewy Body Dementia

and Parkinson’s Disease, how to navigate caregiver burnout, and much more.

The free series is facilitated by ElderLink, a partnership program between the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging and Inova. Register for upcoming sessions:

- ◆ Friday, April 5 at 10 a.m. – Frank Lab (Social Isolation)
- ◆ Friday, April 12 at 12 p.m. – Elder Safety & Well Being Lab
- ◆ Friday, April 19 at 2 p.m. – Dima Lab (Lewy Body Dementia & Parkinson’s Disease)

To register for an Exploring the Dimensions of Aging virtual session visit: tinyurl.com/exploring-aging.

Additional program information will be shared in upcoming issues of the Golden Gazette. ☀

Driveway Paving Scams: Fairfax County Police Department Gives Tips to Avoid Fraudsters

by Fairfax County Police Department

Ahead of the spring season, Fairfax County Police Department's (FCPD) Financial Crimes Unit wants to warn community members of driveway paving scammers looking to take advantage of homeowners.

The Scam:

The schemes usually begin with solicitation, or a knock at the door. The fraudster typically presents a deal to re-pave a driveway, seal it, or provide other stone or concrete work. Fraudsters will attempt to create a sense of urgency for the homeowner to agree to the work immediately, sometimes without any formal contract. The fraudster typically takes a monetary deposit from the homeowner, begins work and fails to complete it, often leaving the homeowner's property in worse condition than it started.

Tips for Homeowners:

The Fairfax County Police Department urges homeowners to follow these essential tips to protect themselves from falling victim to paving scammers:

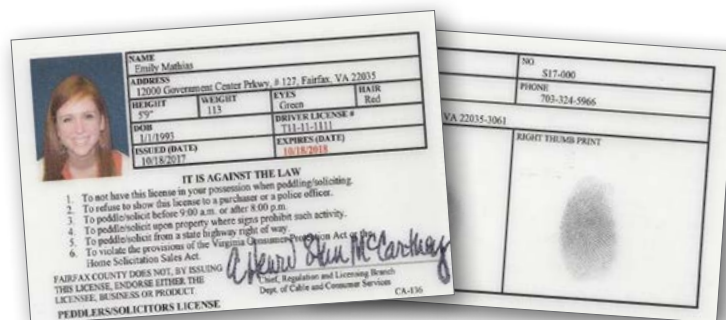
Know when solicitor violations are happening. Fairfax County ordinance Chapter 31 governs how solicitors can conduct their business. Legitimate and reputable businesses typically abide by local solicitation regulations.

◆ When a solicitor knocks:

- ◆ Ask for his or her soliciting license.
- ◆ If they do not have a valid license, ask them to leave.
- ◆ Close and lock your door.
- ◆ Immediately call Fairfax County Police (non-emergency) at **703-691-2131** to report the violation.

◆ When hiring a contractor:

- ◆ Request to see a copy of the contractor's business license.



Above is an example of a legitimate Fairfax County solicitor's license, which is a laminated card displaying the solicitor's photograph, fingerprints, and personal information.

- ◆ Contractors, including paving contractors, must have a valid Virginia Contractor's License issued by the Department of Professional & Occupational Regulation (DPOR). You can check the license status and file a complaint at the DPOR website by visiting dpor.virginia.gov.
- ◆ Consider receiving multiple quotes from different contractors. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.
- ◆ Keep all records, including contracts, text messages, emails, and any communication between you and your contractor.
- ◆ Do basic internet searches on addresses and phone numbers provided by contractors.

To report a solicitor violation that is actively occurring, call FCPD's non-emergency number at **703-691-2131**. To report past solicitor violation complaints, please contact the Fairfax County Regulations and Licensing office at **703-324-5966**.

If you have been a victim of a financial crime, please contact the Fairfax County Police Department by filing a report through our Financial Crimes Online Reporting (FiCOR) website by visiting **FairfaxCounty.gov/Police_FiCOR**. If you are unable to file a report on the computer, call our non-emergency line at **703-691-2131** to have an officer assist you with making a FiCOR report.

For more information about elder fraud, visit the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crimes website by visiting **ovc.ojp.gov**. If you have been a victim of elder fraud and reside outside of Fairfax County, you can call the National Elder Fraud Hotline at **1-833-372-8311**. ☀

Rebuilding Together-AFF: Neighbors Helping Neighbors Live in Homes That are Safe and Healthy

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

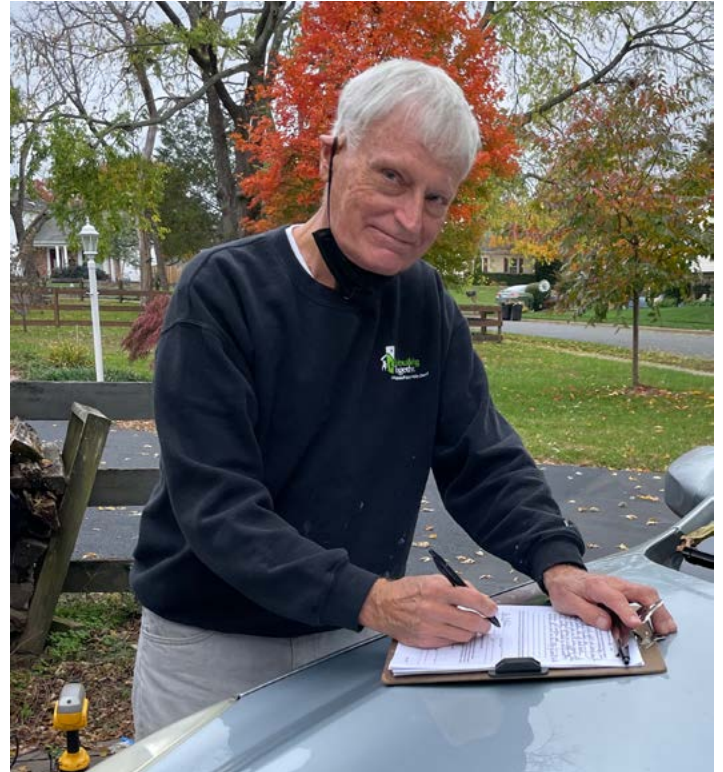
Rebuilding Together Arlington/Fairfax/Falls Church (Rebuilding Together-AFF) is a nonprofit organization that provides free home repairs to homeowners living on a limited income, with priority given to older adults, people with disabilities, and families with children. The goal of every repair or modification they make is to improve the health, safety, and accessibility of the home.

Most of the work done by Rebuilding Together-AFF is through their RT Express Program, created to deliver 40 common repairs selected for their significant health and safety benefits. The repairs focus on falls prevention, fire safety, moisture and ventilation, security, and energy updates. Some of their most common modifications include installing grab bars, double stair rails, comfort height toilets and brighter lighting.

Volunteers are the backbone of Rebuilding Together-AFF. Nearly all the repairs and modifications are completed by teams of skilled volunteers. Most repairs are completed in less than a day by a team of four or five volunteers. Each team is led by an RT Express team leader who oversees each project – joining staff in assessing each home in determining what fixes are needed, to completing the repairs and modifications.

David Throckmorton recently became an RT Express team leader after volunteering with Rebuilding Together-AFF for three years. Like many of their volunteers, he is used to doing his own home repairs and possesses a lot of useful skills – electrical, plumbing, drywall, carpentry, and painting. Since joining the team, he’s learned new skills, such as how to install a grab bar on a tile wall. More importantly, he now understands and appreciates the value of installing grab bars and second handrails, saying “Everybody I have done that for, including my parents, loves them. It’s just nice to be able to grab a handrail on each side. It really steadies them, and they love it.”

In his role as an RT Express team leader, Throckmorton’s job is to gather tools and needed supplies, assign tasks to the volunteers on his team,



Top, Bob Austin on a Rebuilding Together-AFF job site. Right, David Throckmorton installs a grab bar in the shower of a homeowner. Photos courtesy Rebuilding Together-AFF.



and help troubleshoot any problems that come up. He enjoys the camaraderie

that has developed among the volunteers. He also likes the challenge of solving problems that arise while working on older homes, saying, “You’re trying to do replacement and repair on a 60- or 70-year-old house with new stuff which the house might not be ready for, so you have to think, how will I make this work?”

Throckmorton’s favorite aspect of his work with Rebuilding Together-AFF is the response from the homeowners. “If a light switch is not working, we replace the light switch. It’s easy to do and the person

is happy because all of a sudden, they have a working light again. It's those type of jobs where the homeowner just goes 'Oh I'm so happy, I'm so happy' and it makes me happy," he says.

Bob Austin has been volunteering with Rebuilding Together-AFF for over 20 years and was one of the founding RT Express team leaders when the program launched in 2015. He first learned of the nonprofit when he joined fellow church members to help repair a home on National Rebuilding Day. Like David Throckmorton, Austin is experienced in home repair, skills he learned while assisting his dad with home improvement projects. He appreciates how much he's learned from working with other volunteers on a wide variety of projects. His new skills have come in handy when making repairs to his own home.

Austin credits his years as a Boy Scout leader for his ability to organize people and projects and get things done. He typically works on one or two projects each week and appreciates that he can pick and choose projects that fit his schedule.

For Austin, the most enjoyable part about volunteering with Rebuilding Together-AFF is the opportunity to use his skills to help people in need, especially older adults. "Many times, these people are my neighbors, they live in my neighborhood. You don't know who needs help until you get involved," he says. Many of the people they serve are older people who live on a fixed income, without the means or know-how to make repairs. In many cases, a simple repair can make a world of difference to the homeowner. Austin recently replaced the outlets in the kitchen of an older man who lived alone. The outlets had been broken for several years, so the homeowner was grateful to be able to plug in his coffee pot and microwave again.

Another life-changing modification that Rebuilding Together-AFF makes to some homes is installing donated stairlifts. A skilled volunteer overhauls each stairlift to put it in top shape. Because they can be reused repeatedly, Rebuilding Together-AFF volunteers have started applying stickers to the stairlifts, asking to be contacted when the homeowner no longer needs the device, ensuring that it will be put to good use in another home.

Austin has witnessed firsthand the difference a stairlift can make in the life of a homeowner. He recalls installing one in the home of a woman who was unable to climb stairs after suffering a stroke. She hadn't been able to go upstairs for five years, so she had to rely on sponge baths since her main floor only had a half bath. After the Rebuilding Together-AFF team installed the stairlift in her home, and they were gathering up their tools to leave, Austin and the other volunteers searched for the woman to say goodbye. Finally, one of the volunteers realized she was upstairs running a bath, ecstatic to finally be able to use her bathtub again.

In addition to their RT Express projects, Rebuilding Together-AFF hosts National Rebuilding Day annually, on the last Saturday in April. This year National Rebuilding Day falls on Saturday, April 27. Many of the projects planned for National Rebuilding Day are more extensive than RT Express projects and will utilize larger volunteer groups, including faith-based groups and employees of Rebuilding Together-AFF's corporate partners.

If you would like to learn more about Rebuilding Together-AFF's program or apply, call **703-528-1999**, email **info@rebuildingtogether-aff.org**, or visit **rebuildingtogether-aff.org**. To learn more about volunteering with Rebuilding Together-AFF, visit **rebuildingtogether-aff.org/volunteer**. 🌟

Accessible Parking Survey

The mission of Fairfax County's Land Development Services (LDS) focuses on the safe and sustainable building of our communities, which includes the regulation of off-street parking. As such LDS is conducting a survey to determine the nature and extent of available accessible, off-street parking within Fairfax County. Your survey response will help to provide a more informed view of accessible parking as we consider and evaluate future options. If you use off-street accessible parking or would like to answer on behalf of a person with a disability, please participate. The survey will be available until April 15. Take the survey: **publicinput.com/accessibleparking**. 🌟

Reaching your Limits

by Allegra Joffe, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

When a family caregiver feels they are reaching the limit of their capacity to support and care for their loved one, those feelings are often accompanied by caregiver burnout. Caregiver burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that happens while you're taking care of someone else. According to the Cleveland Clinic, these are the signs of caregiver burnout:

- ◆ Emotional and physical exhaustion.
- ◆ Withdrawal from friends, family, and other loved ones.
- ◆ Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed.
- ◆ Feeling hopeless and helpless.
- ◆ Changes in appetite and/or weight.
- ◆ Changes in sleep patterns.
- ◆ Unable to concentrate.
- ◆ Getting sick more often.
- ◆ Irritability, frustration, or anger toward others.

Caregiver burnout is caused by a number of different reasons that vary from person to person. Burnout may be experienced due to the high demands of balancing several roles at once, such as the roles of a caregiver, spouse, parent, employee, son, daughter, etc. Other causes may be a lack of self-care, feeling a loss of control with planning and scheduling, or the stress of managing the increasing financial costs of care.

Family caregivers who are reaching their limit and experiencing caregiver burnout are encouraged to find support for themselves and their loved ones. A recommendation for a family caregiver would be to consider scheduling a caregiver consultation with a professional. Consultations provide space for caregivers to learn about new resources and supports they can implement to help alleviate caregiver burnout and discuss what next steps are needed when they are reaching, or have reached their limitations in their caregiving role. If you wish to learn more about caregiving resources, call our Aging, Disability, and Caregiver Resources Line at **703-324-7948** or visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults**.



Virtual Dementia Friendly Information Session

Wednesday, April 10, noon-1:15 p.m.

Join this presentation and learn how to become a dementia friend. Turn your new understanding of dementia into practical action that can help someone living in your community. Presented by Allegra Joffe, Supervisor with the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, and Diane Watson, Dementia Friends Champion Volunteer. Register online at **bit.ly/DementiaFriendlyFairfax** or call **571-407-6961**.

Navigating the Journey of Dementia

Wednesday, April 17, noon-1:45 p.m.

In this virtual presentation, Teepa Snow, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA, Founder of Positive Approach to Care®, will address the differences between typical aging changes and changes due to dementia, and will explore structural and functional brain changes that often occur with dementia. Attendees will be introduced to physical and verbal techniques for improving care interactions and reducing the risk of distress. The session will also provide suggestions for stress reduction for care partners. The overall goal of the session is to improve awareness of positive ways to connect and interact throughout the journey of dementia. Register online at **bit.ly/CAREWEB1** or call **571-407-6961**.

Library Theatre: Winnie the Pooh

Saturday, April 27, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Fairfax County Public Library is hosting the Globe Openstage who are presenting a live theatre experience at the library, presenting Winnie the Pooh. Globe Openstage (GO!) is an aggressively accessible, highly

adaptable, on-the-go theater community. This group of volunteer actors travels from location to location, offering abridged plays of beloved classics. The show will be in-person at the Lorton Library. Registration is required. Register online at bit.ly/FFXWinnieThePooh.

Insight Memory Care Center

Insight Memory Care Center offers support for care partners of individuals living with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia, even in the earliest stages of the journey. A helpful first step is visiting the MCI Care Partner Support Group or the Early-Stage Care Partner Support Group, depending on your loved one's diagnosis. Both groups meet virtually for your convenience and are facilitated by IMCC's expert staff. IMCC's support groups give care partners the chance to connect with others who have similar experiences, to share practical advice, and to discuss frustrations, fears and hopes. All IMCC support groups are free and open to the public! Learn more at InsightMCC.org/support or call 703-204-4664. ✨

Tax Filing Deadline Reminder

For most taxpayers, the deadline to file your personal federal tax return, pay any tax owed or request an extension to file is **Monday, April 15, 2024**.

The deadline to file your 2023 individual income taxes in Virginia is **Wednesday, May 1, 2024**. ✨

Fairfax Area Commission on Aging

by Linda Hernandez-Giblin, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

The Fairfax Area Commission on Aging (COA) is an advisory board mandated by the Older Americans Act. Commissioners for the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging are appointed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of the City of Fairfax and the City of Falls Church.

At the March 20 COA meeting, the COA continued discussion of the implementation of the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan and initiative development committees. SHAPE Initiative Development Committee meetings will be ongoing through the duration of the Plan.

COA Meeting, Wednesday, April 17, 1 p.m.

In Person:

Pennino Building, 12011 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax, VA 22035 – Room 200 & 206

To obtain meeting materials, visit FairfaxCounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/fairfax-area-commission-on-aging/meetings or contact Linda.Hernandez-Giblin@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 703-324-5859. For ADA accommodations, contact Ana.Valdivia@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 571-407-6960 TTY: VA Relay 711. ✨

National Financial Capability Month

by Moriah Kitaeff, Department of Emergency Management and Security

In an unpredictable world, the importance of emergency savings cannot be overstated. Disasters and emergencies have a knack for striking when least expected, leaving individuals and families grappling with unforeseen challenges. Emergency savings provide a buffer, offering peace of mind and the ability to navigate unexpected circumstances without the added stress of financial instability. By prioritizing the establishment of an emergency fund, individuals can better face the uncertainties of life and ensure a measure of financial resilience in times of need.

A fantastic way to start increasing your financial capability is to look at the Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK) created by FEMA. It can be found at fema.gov/emergency-financial-first-aid-kit and is offered in multiple versions such as large print for those who struggle reading small text, as well as different languages. For more information about emergencies, and what you can do before, during, and after they take place, visit the Fairfax County Community Emergency Response Guide here: FairfaxCounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cerg. ✨

Honoring and Celebrating Volunteerism

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator

The month of April is Global Volunteer Month, which came about after National Volunteer Week was established by presidential proclamation fifty years ago. This year, National Volunteer Week is celebrated April 21-27. Volunteers in Fairfax County are essential to creating a rich fabric of engagement, and we honor and recognize all the ways they serve our community.

Volunteer Solutions is a partnership between the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS). We have volunteers who provide support one-on-one to older adults, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers, and in group settings, to participants in senior centers and adult day healthcare centers.

Volunteer Solutions appreciates all our generous volunteers, and is taking this opportunity to spotlight Julie Brown, a dedicated volunteer who has taken on various roles over the past nine years. Julie initially helped older adults with grocery shopping, errands, and more. She then transitioned to volunteering in a group setting at Lewinsville Senior Center, where she continues to enrich her community today.

Julie's husband is from McLean, Virginia, and they moved here in 2000 from Boston, where they got their master's degrees. They have two sons, in 8th and 11th grades. Julie is originally from Florida and has a master's degree in physical therapy. She worked at Massachusetts General in Boston, National Rehabilitation Hospital in DC, Virginia Hospital Center, and then, finally, a home care agency.

In 2017, Julie became a certified S.A.I.L. fitness instructor via Volunteer Solutions/NCS, and the Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance. She summarizes the fitness program in this way, "Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) is a comprehensive exercise program with an emphasis on fall (and injury) prevention, through balance exercises, strengthening, and gentle aerobics. You don't need an exercise background to become an instructor; you just need to complete the one-day certification training." Julie educates participants on how to be safer and lead



Above, Julie Brown leading her twice a week S.A.I.L. class at Lewinsville Senior Center. Right, volunteer Julie Brown.



healthier lives, while forming connections and friendships. As a former physical therapist, her background fits well with this volunteer role.

Julie leads her classes twice per week, in 12-week sessions, taking into consideration each participant's fitness level, showing them how to adjust their movements accordingly. It's a judgment-free zone and her motto is, "Never compare yourself to anyone else. We're all on our own journey."

Lewinsville Assistant Director, Ana Diaz, explained, "Members are sometimes taken aback when they hear that S.A.I.L. is to help with 'fall prevention,' but once they give the class a chance they fall in love with Julie's welcoming, friendly, and easygoing personality. She goes beyond the volunteer instructor role, ensuring members are enjoying the class with peers and meeting their individual goals."

Julie has gained so much popularity at this center that they ran out of space in the main room and started live streaming her class in the room across the hall for additional participants. Ana joked, “We could not split Julie into two, but thanks to technology we somewhat did.” Julie is so dedicated that even when she goes away for a month-long summer vacation to North Carolina, she teaches the class virtually from there. She shared that she maintains personal boundaries and only leads the class once per week while she’s on vacation. She recognizes that self-care is important.

We are grateful for Julie and all volunteers who generously give their time to others!

Volunteering benefits all involved. Consider improving the quality of your own life while helping others improve theirs. Social connections positively impact health, too. If you would like to volunteer as a fitness instructor (there are various types needed; one with training provided and others where you bring your skills to the role) – or any other activity leader – at one of Fairfax County’s senior centers, go to bit.ly/SeniorCtrOpps for the list of roles. To peruse a broader array of volunteer opportunities, go to bit.ly/FFXVOLUNTEER.

If you’d like to let our community know about other local volunteer opportunities email Tanya Erway at VolunteerSolutionsRecruitment@FairfaxCounty.gov to possibly be included in a future edition. ✨

Help Prevent Child Abuse – Volunteer with the Body Safety Program

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

If you visit a library branch or other Fairfax County facility this month, you may notice a sea of blue pinwheels flanking the entrance. These pinwheels are placed at locations across the county to designate April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, an annual recognition created to raise awareness and provide education and support to help prevent child abuse.

For those who want to do more to combat child abuse in our community, there are opportunities to get involved. One way is to volunteer with the Body Safety Program, a school-based program that focuses on building safety skills within a child by educating them to identify risks, empowering them to act if they are threatened or victimized, and providing five key body safety rules that are easy to understand.

68-year-old Georgia Hubert began volunteering with the Body Safety Program two and a half years ago. After retiring from a rewarding career with the U.S. Department of State, she felt that it was time for her to give back. She began volunteering with several nonprofit organizations, including Potomac Valley Pekingese Club



and the Lions Club. Even with all her commitments, she sought a volunteer opportunity to help children and found the Body Safety Program on the Fairfax County volunteer website. After reading a description of the program, she thought it was perfect for her.

Like most adults, Hubert never took a body safety class as a child but recognizes how valuable it would have been. She believes that children growing up today need it more than

ever, saying “I think it’s important. There’s so much out there on the internet now. These kids really need more guidance as to what they should be thinking of to be street smart.” Since joining the program, she’s discovered that children are often unaware of even basic safety rules. Some of the things she’s heard from them include, “I didn’t know I shouldn’t get in a car, even if it’s my neighbor.” “What do you mean it’s against the law to take pictures of somebody’s body?”

The Body Safety Program uses the curriculum, Childhelp® Speak Up Be Safe, to talk about child abuse with children

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in Pre-K to sixth grade. Volunteers are taught a curriculum for each grade level and can choose which grades they want to teach. Hubert is happy to teach all levels.

Although she was nervous teaching her first few classes, Hubert has settled in and is confident leading the program. She admits that her biggest worry had nothing to do with the topic or leading a class, saying “Technology was my biggest concern; not being in the classroom with kids who might be a little rowdy.” However, she discovered that classroom teachers and Fairfax County Children, Youth, and Families’ staff are happy to help troubleshoot any technology issues she encounters.

Although the classroom program lasts only one hour, Hubert believes that they accomplish a lot, saying, “I’m happy when I leave the class because they know all five rules.” The five Body Safety rules children learn are:

1. It’s MY Body – Your body belongs to you.
2. Ask an Adult if I’m Safe – Identify safe adults.
3. I Have Choices – Know what to do if no safe adults are available.

4. Tell Someone – Share uncomfortable feelings and situations with safe adults.
5. It’s NEVER My Fault – Understand abuse is NEVER a child’s fault.

Hubert encourages older adults to join her in volunteering with the Body Safety Program. She has found the curriculum clear and easy to follow and the time commitment reasonable. Hubert also enjoys witnessing how the program empowers the students in the classrooms she visits.

To volunteer with the Body Safety Program, you must:

- ◆ Be at least 21 years old.
- ◆ Have your own transportation to locations across Fairfax County.
- ◆ Be available during school hours.
- ◆ Commit to teach 4-6 classes a month for one school year.

To learn more or sign up, call **703-324-7459**, email **DFSBodysafety@FairfaxCounty.gov**, or visit **bit.ly/DFS-VPS-BS-V**. ☀

Long-Term Care Facility Inspection Reports: Valuable Information for All!

by Katie Patterson, Long-Term Care Ombudsman

All long-term care facilities are inspected or “surveyed” on a regular basis to ensure they are complying with regulations and standards of care. These inspection reports are available to consumers online, and each facility is required by law to make the latest state inspection report available for examination in a place readily accessible to everyone. These reports provide valuable information about a facility’s deficiency citations in particular areas, and what actions they took to resolve the deficiencies. This information can also be useful for anyone researching a specific facility if they are considering long-term care options for themselves or a loved one.

Nursing facility surveys can be found through the ‘Care Compare’ tool located on Medicare’s website, **medicare.gov/care-compare**, as well as through the state survey agency, Virginia Department of Health Office of Licensure and Certification. Assisted living

facilities inspection reports can be found on the Virginia Department of Social Services website, **dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/alf.cgi**. The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLTCOP) can also assist consumers in interpreting inspection reports and can provide aggregate complaint data for specific facilities located in the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and Loudoun County.

As a mandated program under the Older Americans Act, the NVLTCOP is often called on to assist residents and consumers to advocate for their rights to ensure quality of care and quality of life. For more information about inspection reports and complaint data, or other nursing facility and assisted living concerns, please call the NVLTCOP at **703-324-5861**, **TTY 711**, or contact by email at **NVLTCOP@fairfaxcounty.gov**. ☀

10 Ways to Take Climate Action on Earth Day and Every Day

by the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination

Earth Day, celebrated annually on April 22nd, is a global event to demonstrate support for environmental protection. You can join the effort to protect our planet – and support a healthier and more resilient Fairfax County – by taking these 10 climate actions suggested by the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination!

1. **Estimate your current carbon footprint** using an online calculator. Many of our daily activities like driving a car, disposing of waste and using electricity cause greenhouse gas emissions. It's an increase in these greenhouse gas emissions and their ability to trap heat that is leading to hotter temperatures worldwide and causing issues such as the melting of the polar ice caps, rising sea levels, weirder weather, and much more. A carbon footprint calculator like the one from the Environmental Protection Agency will help you estimate your household's emissions so you can take actions to reduce them – and save money on energy too!
2. **Learn about Fairfax County's climate plans, policies, and initiatives.** From plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resiliency community-wide to a sweeping environmental vision that addresses the conservation and protection of natural resources, these plans and policies help to define a sustainable future for all residents. View the plans at [FairfaxCounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/policies-and-initiatives](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/policies-and-initiatives).
3. **Sign up for Fairfax Alerts** to stay informed about emergencies in Fairfax County, including weather events. Fairfax Alerts is managed by the Department of Emergency Management and Security (DEMS), and you can choose to receive alerts by email, phone or text.
4. Hire a professional to **conduct an energy assessment (audit)** of your home to see where improvements can be made. Federal tax credits for energy audits are available.
5. **Adjust your thermostat** during hot or cold months.
 - ◆ Thermostat settings during warm months: Turn your thermostat up a few degrees (78F recommended)
 - ◆ during the summer months to reduce energy used by air conditioning.
 - ◆ Thermostat settings during cold months: Turn your thermostat down a few degrees (68F recommended) in the winter months to save on heating. Wear an extra layer of clothing.
6. Replace your **incandescent and CFL bulbs with LED light bulbs**, which are much more energy-efficient while producing the same amount of light. They last much longer, too!
7. **Buy and install weather stripping and caulk** around your doors and windows to reduce air leaks that create annoying drafts. Common culprits for air leaks include doors, windows, exterior outlets, ducts, and connections to the outside such as cables or plumbing fixtures. Sealing air leaks helps you reduce energy use and save money. To help you identify air leaks in your home, check out a thermal camera from Fairfax County Public Library!
8. **Drop off your food scraps (compost)** at any Farmer's Market location in Fairfax County, at the I-66 transfer station or I-95 landfill. Composting reduces emissions from our landfills. Visit [FairfaxCounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets) to find the Farmer's Market locations and schedule.



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9. Consider ENERGY STAR® or a WATER SENSE models when replacing or upgrading home appliances like refrigerators or washers and dryers. These models are guaranteed to improve efficiency and save money in the long run.

10. Switch to an electric vehicle (if feasible for you.) Be sure to take advantage of federal tax credits and other incentives available for EVs.

This list of actions is just a sample of what you can find on the **Fairfax County Climate Action Checklist** – an interactive checklist designed to help you track your progress in adopting sustainable habits and making environmentally conscious choices that can also save you money. This Excel spreadsheet offers a

list of 70-plus actions you can take, along with their cost up front and yearly savings in both money and carbon emissions. There are also links to incentives and resources to make taking actions cheaper and easier.

You can also download our topic-based checklists, for actions specific to home energy, transportation, waste, natural resources and building climate resiliency.

Visit FairfaxCounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/resources-residents for more information.

Want to find other ways to make an impact? Come to Earth Day Fairfax 2024 – Fairfax County’s largest Earth Day celebration! The event is Saturday, April 20, 2024, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Sully Historic Site. Visit FairfaxCounty.gov/parks/earthday to learn more! 🌟

Ask The Experts: Is My Deck Safe?

by Danielle Badra, Land Development Services

Collapses and failures of decks, porches and balconies accounted for about 2,900 injuries between 2016 and 2019, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Jay Riat, Fairfax County’s Building Official, answers a few questions to help residents ensure their decks are safe, “The health, safety and welfare of you and your family should never be compromised,” said Riat.



What is the average lifespan of a deck?

The answer to this question varies. It depends on the materials used to build the deck; how much “load” or stress your deck has undergone and how often; the quality of the work done by the builder; how well the deck was maintained; and more. But, in general, if the deck was built and inspected to code and maintained properly, it should last 20 years or more.

How can I ensure my deck is safe?

You should be evaluating your deck on an annual basis and maintaining it as recommended by your builder.

However, we recommend that you have it inspected by a licensed contractor on a regular basis. The older your deck, the more often you should have it inspected.

Is there anything I can do to extend the life of my deck and identify any potential issues before they become dangerous?

Make sure you follow manufacturing and building recommendations for cleaning and maintenance. Minimize the stress your deck experiences. For example, you should shovel the snow off your deck after a heavy snow fall. Look at this checklist from the North American Deck and Railing Association, nadra.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/NADRA_DSM_Checklist.pdf, and review the following critical safety elements of your deck. If you see any issues with the connection points or wood quality, consider staying off your deck until a professional inspects it, repairs it or replaces it.

- ◆ Is the material of your wood deck still solid, no wood rot or splitting or insect damage, including

the posts at the ground? If your deck is composite, is there mold growth, breakage or delamination?

- ◆ Are all the places where your deck is attached to your home secure?
- ◆ Is there rust or corrosion on any of the fasteners used to connect your decks, rails, beams and joists together? (Look at the fasteners, bolts, brackets, etc.)
- ◆ Are the guards, rails and stairs sturdy and well secured?

Please make sure you use your deck safely as well:

- ◆ Don't add large heavy items such as swimming pools or hot tubs on top of your deck; this is dangerous and could cause them to collapse.
- ◆ Make sure all stairs are well lit for safe travel after the sun goes down. This can be as simple as adding inexpensive solar powered lights.
- ◆ If you are using grills, heaters and outdoor fire pits on decks, be careful and follow all rules regarding their use. In addition to structure failure or collapse, fire is also a deck hazard.
- ◆ Do not overcrowd the deck beyond its designed load bearing capacity.

Remember, before building a new or replacing an existing deck, building permits are required.

Helpful Links to Apply for a Deck Permit:

- ◆ Permit Library ([FairfaxCounty.gov/landdevelopment/permit-library/addition-alteration-residential](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/permit-library/addition-alteration-residential)) – Decks fall under the residential addition/alteration permit type.
- ◆ Typical Deck Details ([FairfaxCounty.gov/landdevelopment/sites/landdevelopment/files/assets/documents/pdf/publications/deck-details.pdf](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/sites/landdevelopment/files/assets/documents/pdf/publications/deck-details.pdf)) – These details may be revised soon to meet the 2021 Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- ◆ Deck Boot Camp ([FairfaxCounty.gov/cableconsumer/channel-16/deck-details-boot-camp](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/channel-16/deck-details-boot-camp)) – Watch Land Development Services (LDS) staff member, Kyle Kratzer, guide you through the Deck Boot Camp training.
- ◆ Hire a Contractor ([FairfaxCounty.gov/landdevelopment/hiring-contractor](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/hiring-contractor)) – Learn about finding a licensed contractor. ☀

Mature Living – Volunteering

Volunteerism helps build strong communities and increases socialization. Volunteering can also improve physical health and longevity in those who volunteer.

Host Anne Hall talks with representatives of two volunteer organizations in Fairfax County. Emily Swenson, Supervisor of Volunteer Solutions with the Area Agency on Aging, reveals how this team has evolved over the years. Emily shares tips on how to connect to this volunteer resource for individuals who need assistance, as well as those who want to assist others.

Volunteer Fairfax's CEO, Jennifer Williamson and Board Member Donna Patchett talk about their organization, and the variety of opportunities for people of all ages who want to help in their community.

This episode also includes personal stories from two volunteers, Maria Romain, a S.A.I.L. instructor, and Jeff Rogers, an IT On-Call volunteer. They explain how they got involved in volunteering, and the benefit they gain from their experience.

Mature Living can be seen on Channel 16 or 1016 (depending on your service provider) on the following days and times:

- ◆ Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
- ◆ Monday at 5 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.
- ◆ Tuesday at 4 p.m., 8:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.
- ◆ Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.
- ◆ Thursday at 8:30 a.m., 4 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.
- ◆ Friday at 9:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m. and 9 p.m.
- ◆ Saturday at 9:30 a.m., 4 p.m. and 11 p.m.

This program can also be seen on your computer: [FairfaxCounty.gov/cableconsumer/channel-16/mature-living](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/channel-16/mature-living)

You can find information on services for older adults at [FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults) or call **703-324-7948, TTY 711, Monday-Friday.** ☀

... *Community Calendar continued from back cover*

Consumer Affairs Presents: Consumer Affairs 101

Tuesday, April 16, 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Hosted by the Virtual Center for Active Adults. For more information, visit bit.ly/novaVCAA; To join the virtual presentation on Zoom, visit bit.ly/VCAAzoom2; Meeting ID: 905 123 5932; Passcode: 3636

George Mason Friends Book Sale

Wednesday, April 17-Sunday, April 21

George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale

Preview sale, Wednesday evening, 5-8 p.m. Entry fee \$20 per adult. General sale, Thursday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Free. Browse a wide variety of high-quality used books, CDs, and DVDs. For more details, visit georgemasonfriends.blogspot.com or call 703-813-6616.

Author Spotlight: Your Daughter, Your Advocate

Thursday, April 18, 6-8 p.m.

AARP Virginia and Insight Memory Care Center present Bonnie Manns Roache, author of "Your Daughter, Your Advocate: A Daughter's Account of Caring for her Mother Against Lewy Body Dementia in a Flawed Care System." Learn about the challenges of caregiving for a loved one with Lewy body dementia. Virtual and in-person at First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Faith Activities Center, 2932 King Street, Alexandria. Register online at InsightMCC.org/author-spotlight.

Scam Jam 2024

Friday, April 19, 8:30 a.m.-noon

Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax. Event begins at 9 a.m. The focus will be on scams and how artificial intelligence is aiding in their evolution. For more information, visit aarp.org/fairfaxscamjam.

Friends of the Centreville Regional Library Spring Book Sale

Friday, April 26, 1-5 p.m.; Saturday, April 27, 1-5 p.m.; Sunday, April 28, 1-4 p.m. Bag sale

14200 St. Germain Drive, Centreville
Shop fiction for all ages and a variety of nonfiction. Check facebook.com/centrevillefriends or email FriendsofCRL@gmail.com for more details.

AARP Life@50+ Academy: Planning for Your Health, Wealth, and Happiness

Saturday, April 27, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

First Baptist Church of Vienna, 450 Orchard St. NW, Vienna

Free event. Keynote speaker, Dr. Denise King-Miller, will share her inspiring story with lessons on how to live a long, happy, healthy, and conscious life. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. Enjoy morning refreshments and a complimentary lunch. The program starts at 9 a.m. Hosted by the Seniors with a Purpose Ministry of First Baptist Church of Vienna. Please register at: events.aarp.org/Life04272024

Poetry in the Parks - National Poetry Month

Saturday, April 27, 1-2:30 p.m.

Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria

Hosted by ArtsFairfax and Fairfax Poet Laureate Danielle Badra. Celebrate "Poetry in the Parks," with a poetry reading featuring Emilia Phillips, Maricielo Shirley, and Benjamin Renne. For more information, visit FairfaxCounty.gov/parks/green-spring.

Ayr Hill Garden Club Plant Sale

Saturday, May 11, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

The sale will take place next to the Freeman Store and Museum, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna. Order plants online through April 28 and pick up at the May 11 sale: ahgcplantsale.square.site/ Select plants for sun and/or shade, deer resistant plants, drought tolerant plants, native plants, and more. Proceeds benefit Ayr Hill Garden Club.

Please note that dates, prices, and times are correct at publishing. However, please confirm information by calling or checking using the phone numbers or websites provided.

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April Community Calendar

Check Out the Lifetime Learning Institute

During its current "open season," area seniors and their friends are invited to consider joining the Lifetime Learning Institute (LLI) affiliated with Northern Virginia Community College. It is an organization centered on classes, activities and fellowship for retirees. The annual membership fee is \$110. For additional information, please email Janice Viola at admin@linoval.org or Mary Alexander at mary@mkalexander.com.

Love to Play Softball?

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. We play most Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna from May-July and September-October. For more information, please visit our website: www.goldengirls.org.

Tour "Woodbury" at Sunrise at Silas Burke House

Saturday April 6, 10:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

The Burke Historical Society will conduct free tours of "Woodbury," the historic house at Sunrise at Silas Burke House (9619 Burke Lake Rd, Burke). Small group tours will begin at 10:30 a.m. The last tour group will be at 12:15 p.m. Tours will last around 20 minutes. No registration is required.

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc. Widow/Widower Support Group

Saturdays, April 6, 13, 20, 27, 1:30-3 p.m.

4606 Ravensworth Road, Annandale
Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc., provides bereavement support services to those who have suffered the loss of a loved one. We are a non-sectarian, non-profit organization that has been serving the local community since 1976. We are trained volunteers who provide peer support. We are not therapists, and no one is paid. For more information, call Haven at **703-941-7000**, email havenofnova@verizon.net, or visit our website www.havenofnova.org.

Family Dynamics and Dementia Care

Wednesday, April 10, 1-2:30 p.m.

Virtual or in-person at Insight Memory Care Center – Fairfax, 3955 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax
For some families, dementia has a silver lining, bringing families closer as members work together to solve a common challenge and causing relatives to depend on each other for emotional support. Often, dementia sparks conflict, guilt, grief, sacrifice, uncertainty – negative emotions that can affect the quality of life for the person with dementia and their loved ones. How can we navigate these new dynamics? Register online at InsightMCC.org/events.