

Golden



FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILY SERVICES

Gazette

www.FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults

Mark O'Meara: Bringing Art and Entertainment to Fairfax for Over 30 Years

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

If you have gone to the movies at University Mall Theatres or Cinema Arts Theatre, you may be familiar with Mark O'Meara. As owner of both theaters, O'Meara is not one to stay out of sight in the back office. Instead, he relishes being out front, chatting with customers, selling concessions, and being part of the action. O'Meara's larger than life personality, along with his involvement and service in the community, have made him a popular figure in Fairfax.

The O'Meara family relocated to Fairfax County from upstate New York in 1990. While his wife Loretta worked as a nurse, O'Meara was a stay-at-home dad to their children. In 1991, O'Meara happened to stroll past the shuttered movie theater at University Mall and wondered what it would be like to operate a movie theater. A self-described entrepreneur, O'Meara was excited about the prospect of theater ownership. His interest in owning a theater wasn't capricious - he had always loved movies and ran a film festival while working in student affairs at Columbia University.



Mark O'Meara enjoys chatting with customers while working concessions at Cinema Arts Theatre.

After securing a lease of the theater, O'Meara embarked upon learning the ropes of running a movie theater. He learned how to operate film projectors by assisting a projectionist for several days. Deciding to open University Mall Theatres as a second-run, O'Meara initially hired a booker to secure movies from the studios before taking over booking duties himself.

In 1999, O'Meara was pitched the idea of converting University Mall Theatres into an art house theater. Although the idea was intriguing, O'Meara decided to pass on the idea, wary of alienating the loyal customers he had worked so hard to attract. However, a few months later, the movie theater at Fair City Mall became available, giving O'Meara an opportunity to try his hand at running an art house theater. After installing new seats and devising a more sophisticated concessions menu, O'Meara opened Cinema Arts Theatre. He admits that it took a while for the theater to catch on, recalling that their big breakthrough came in 2002

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GOLDEN GAZETTE

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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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with the release of “My Big Fat Greek Wedding.” Its 20-week run at Cinema Arts put them on the radar of moviegoers.

While working to make his theaters successful, he and Loretta were also busy raising their three children. O’Meara especially enjoyed coaching his children’s youth sports teams. Later he joined the Athletics Boosters at Robinson Secondary School and has been an active and enthusiastic member for over 20 years. His gregarious personality has been put to good use selling raffle tickets in the stands during football games. Even though his youngest child graduated in 2010, he still enjoys working at the games, saying “I love standing there selling hot dogs with other parents getting a feel for what the world is like from the kids’ point of view.”

In 2014, O’Meara faced a significant challenge. The wear and tear on the seats at both theaters had taken a toll and they desperately needed to be replaced. O’Meara and his staff created a campaign on Kickstarter, an online fundraising platform, to replace the seats at University Mall. Their campaign, called “Save Our Butts” sought \$100,000 to purchase new seats. Two weeks into the campaign, they reached their goal. A year later, they created a second campaign to purchase new seats for Cinema Arts. At first, donations trickled in slowly, but after swapping their usual previews for a humorous video asking for donations, they hit their goal. O’Meara credits his staff for their marketing savvy and the fiercely loyal customers who donated. As a thank you, plates engraved with the names of donors were installed on the seats at both locations.

O’Meara’s popularity can be attributed, in part, to his generosity in the community. He routinely donates movie tickets to nonprofits and community organizations for their fundraisers and his theaters serve as collection sites for Britepaths’ back to school backpack drive. He supports the work of young filmmakers at W.T. Woodson High School and Robinson Secondary School by hosting screenings (including a red carpet) of their film class projects at Cinema Arts. O’Meara has been recognized for his good works. In 2013, he was the Lord Fairfax honoree for the Braddock District and in 2015, he was awarded the Business for the Arts Award from the City of Fairfax, an award granted to businesses who have made

significant contributions towards the advancement of the arts in the City of Fairfax community.

The COVID-19 pandemic was devastating to O’Meara’s theaters, which were closed for nearly all of 2020. He credits the special COVID-19 loans, debt relief, grants and other programs for the survival of his theaters. When he was finally able to reopen, O’Meara made the decision to convert University Mall Theatres from a second run to a first-run theater, in part to compete with streaming services, which surged in popularity during the pandemic.

Although people have been slow to return to the theaters, the passionate support O’Meara has received from some of his customers has been encouraging. When Cinema Arts first reopened, a customer who refused to give her name returned monthly with envelopes of cash. When O’Meara tried to return them, she refused, telling him “You have to survive, you’re so important to the community.” To this day, O’Meara says that she visits the theater on a weekly basis, bringing with her a \$100 donation. O’Meara is in awe of her loyalty and generosity, saying “That is a story that boggles my mind. She is such a sweetheart.”

O’Meara hopes that the immersive experience of watching a movie in a theater will bring people back. Another draw to his theaters is the special discount days – tickets on Tuesdays at University Mall are half price and he offers Senior Wednesday at Cinema Arts, where all tickets are \$6 for people 60 and older. Both of his theaters also offer assistive technology so that customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or low vision can enjoy the show.

A few years ago, O’Meara took on a new challenge. He joined a committee working on a project to create an all abilities adapted sports center in Fairfax County. He has devoted himself to learning more – touring facilities and conducting research – to learn how the center can best meet the needs of people with disabilities in the community.

Although O’Meara is 70 years old, he loves what he does and has no intention of slowing down. After all the highs and lows he has experienced during his 30+ years of theater ownership, he is still passionate about movies, connecting with people, and taking on new challenges. 🌟

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month!

National Volunteer Recognition Week is April 16-22, 2023.

These volunteers may inspire you to get involved in your community.

Volunteer Sam Lee is Making a Difference

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator

“Volunteering is a good feeling. It feeds your soul,” shared Volunteer Solutions volunteer, Sam Lee. He joined Volunteer Solutions in late 2016. He was a grocery shopper for two older adults and is a yard helper to a woman, who recently turned 90. Depending on the season, you can find Sam mulching, trimming bushes, pulling weeds, blowing, raking, and bagging leaves. He even fixed her small brick patio when it was sinking. He’s assisted her with some indoor projects, too. When Sam describes the solid trust and friendship they have forged over the past six years, you can sense the love and mutual admiration the two of them have for one another.

Since 2019, Sam has taken on the fascinating role of volunteering for the Smithsonian’s Museum of Natural History on Sundays. He has been an Insect Ambassador, educating visitors on live insects, beetles, and caterpillars, or, informing them on arthropods and demonstrating tarantula feedings. His current role is as a Paleo volunteer, assisting in the fossil lab and learning how to pick through and identify fossils.

When asked about what prompted his initial involvement in volunteer activities, Sam said he felt something was missing and that he needed to do something outside of his typical routine. He was shocked at how many volunteer opportunities Fairfax County offers. In 2010, he began serving as a volunteer at Alternative House, now called Second Story, a program for youth and young mothers in crisis. He subsequently joined the Befriend-a-Child program in the Department of Family Services as a mentor to a 10-year-old boy.

Sam was born in Florida and grew up in Sao Paulo, Brazil, before returning and attending college in New Jersey. He works in an IT-related role, on proposals



*“You can make a difference.
You may not be able to save the
world, but everybody can in
some way, somehow, contribute
and make a positive impact.
We all have that capability.”
– Samuel Lee*

for the federal government. He’s married, with a son who will be graduating from high school this June. Over the years, Sam has helped him explore volunteer opportunities, and influenced other family members to give back, too.

Sam Lee emphasizes the importance of kindness, “We need to be more generous with each other. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes. Be present.” ✨

Volunteering Has Been A Lifelong Pursuit for Hannah Van Hook

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator

In early 2022, when retired hospital nurse and clinical researcher, Hannah Van Hook, received the email from her Volunteer Solutions coordinator alerting her and others of a request for office support needed in the Guardianship Unit, she responded that she would do it. Lori Jones, a paralegal in that unit, recently raved, “Hannah is an amazing volunteer! She pays attention to the details, is professional, easy to work with, has a willingness to learn, and is flexible.”



According to Legal Services of Northern Virginia, a guardian is an “individual appointed by the court to bear responsibility for the personal affairs of the incapacitated person, such as their housing, health care, or therapeutic treatment.” The Fairfax County Guardianship Unit keeps track of the documentation and reports submitted by guardians. Hannah volunteers in the office one day per week, for eight hours, and assists with copying, filing, records management, uploading guardian reports and court orders into a database, sending reminder letters, and troubleshooting when certain documentation issues arise. She shared that her background in nursing, and her previous personal experience as her own mother’s guardian has helped her understand what guardians face.

For Hannah, volunteering has been a lifelong pursuit. She first joined Volunteer Solutions in 2017 and was a Meals on Wheels driver for a few years. She also participated in a Thanksgiving food delivery project with them in 2021. In the 1970s, while living in Denver, CO, she helped as a volunteer nurse, taking care of orphaned babies who were brought from Vietnam.

She moved to Virginia in 1986 with her military husband and their daughter and son. In the 1990s, Hannah became involved in volunteering at Volunteer

Fairfax under the Volunteers for Change program, which connected volunteers to a wide variety of opportunities. In 2016, she began serving at Capital Caring Hospice, helping with administrative tasks, answering phones, making deliveries, and visiting nursing homes for nearly four years.

In December 2022, she embarked upon another deeply impactful volunteer role, at Inova Fairfax Hospital with the No One Dies Alone (NODA) project. If a patient doesn’t have family or friends to help support

them, compassionate volunteers take 2-3 hour shifts and stay at their bedside.

When asked why she volunteers, Hannah responded, “The community gives us a lot and it’s nice to give back to the community. It’s good to be a part of something outside of yourself and your day-to-day.” 🌟

Thank You!

Volunteer Solutions thanks our volunteers for their caring hearts, talents, and time they contribute to help support older adults, adults with disabilities and family caregivers. You each bring so much to our community, and we greatly appreciate you. A special congratulations to Sam Lee, Hannah Van Hook, and Tucker Maney for receiving the 2023 Star Awards from Volunteer Solutions!

If you wish to join our efforts, explore volunteer opportunities with Volunteer Solutions, under Fairfax County’s Department of Family Services, at bit.ly/FXVSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov. For other opportunities in Fairfax County, go to bit.ly/FFXVOLUNTEER. 🌟

Celebrate National Poetry Month with Fairfax Poet Laureate Danielle Badra

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

Meet 2022-2024 Fairfax Poet Laureate Danielle Badra. As Fairfax Poet Laureate, she will serve as a poetry ambassador and promote the appreciation of literary arts throughout the county, region and state. Badra invites members of the public to discover and engage with poetry through “Poetry in the Parks,” a community engagement project she is developing in partnership with Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA). The project will showcase the relationship between poetry and nature.

Born and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Badra received her BA in Creative Writing from Kalamazoo College and MFA in Poetry from George Mason University where she was the poetry editor of “So To Speak,” a feminist literary and arts journal, and an intern for Split This Rock. She has published two collections: “Dialogue with the Dead,” published in 2015, and “Like We Still Speak,” winner of the 2021 Etel Adnan Poetry Prize.



In addition to drawing inspiration from the natural world, Badra also cites long walks and listening to piano music as sources of inspiration. She believes that anyone can benefit from reading or writing poetry because it opens your mind to new experiences and perspectives. Personally, writing poetry serves as an emotional outlet for Badra and has helped her heal while experiencing grief and loss.

A Candle from Rome, Italy (2003)

By Danielle Badra

the reason why I never lit the wick before now
pollinated pistil of a tiger lily thick with wax
petals of bright orange & burnt yellow & almost alive eleven years ago

on the way to the Pantheon I purchased a candle
at an artisan's stand in an ancient square called Campo de' Fiori
where Giordano Bruno burned at the stake for watching the stars
& acting out the art of memory

my father stared there at the bronze statue & wept without words
my sister & I watched my father weep at the feet of an old martyr
my father would not weep like that again

until he held my sister's hands while she was seizing
I watched him weeping while my sister was seizing
we held hands

Published with permission from Danielle Badra. This poem was originally published in her book, "Like We Still Speak" (University of Arkansas Press, 2021).

If you are interested in reading poetry but don't know where to begin, Badra recommends the work of these contemporary poets: Lucille Clifton, Diane Seuss, Brian Teare, Zeina Hashem Beck, Phillip Metres, Hayan Charara, George Abraham, Fady Joudah, Adrienne Rich, and Anne Carson.

For Poetry in the Parks, Badra is planning to install poetry plaques at four Fairfax County parks – Burke Lake, Huntley Meadows, Ellanor C. Lawrence, and Riverbend. Each plaque will feature a poem, a biography of the poet, poetry prompts, and a QR code that can be used by members of the public to submit their own works created in response to the prompts. Badra envisions compiling the submissions into a digital

community chapbook. A chapbook is a small book or pamphlet, often of poetry.

Badra will also host poetry readings and workshops at park locations during her tenure. The first three events have been announced and were developed in partnership with ArtsFairfax and Fairfax County Park Authority. Additional events to be announced. For more information and updates, visit [ArtsFairfax.org](https://www.artsfairfax.org).

Poetry in the Parks Events:

Arab-American Heritage Month Poetry Reading Saturday, April 15, 3-5 p.m.

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road,
Chantilly

Celebrate National Poetry Month and Arab-American Heritage Month with Arab-American poets Danielle Badra, Rayan Afif, and Zeina Azzam (Alexandria Poet Laureate 2022-25). Following the reading, parkgoers are invited to participate in a poetry writing workshop to learn and practice the Ghazal, an Arabic verse form with an intricate rhyme scheme.

Pride Month Poetry Reading Saturday, June 24, 3-4 p.m.

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road,
Chantilly

Celebrate Pride Month with a poetry reading featuring some of the region's most prominent LGBTQ+ poets - Sunu Chandy, Kim Roberts, Holly Mason Badra, and Malik Thompson. This reading lifts up a variety of voices and experiences to honor the rich legacy and contributions of poets and poetry in the queer community.

Poetry Beneath the Stars Saturday, August 19, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Turner Farm Park, 925 Springvale Road, Great Falls
Fairfax Poet Laureate Danielle Badra invites stargazers to contemplate the cosmos through poetic form. Attendees will be provided with examples of star-gazing poetry and then given writing prompts to generate poems of their own while staring up at the marvelous milky way. 🌟

Mature Living – Scam Prevention

Many people continue to fall victim to scams, and seniors are often a desirable target for scammers. Melissa Smarr is a Code Specialist with Fairfax County Government Land Development Services and a facilitator with Fairfax County Silver Shield Anti-Scam Campaign, and she reveals how we can protect ourselves and our assets. Producer Fran Guastadisegni talks with MPO Anthony L. Capizzi, a Crime Prevention Specialist with the Fairfax County Police Department. He describes actual scams that people have fallen prey to and offers tips on how to avoid them. We close out our discussion with Trudy Marotta, the Volunteer Community Ambassador with AARP, Virginia, and a member of the Silver Shield Task Force. Trudy is also a spokesperson for the Fraud Watch Network for Fairfax County, and she shares valuable resources we can all use to stay safe.

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.** 🌟

Your Time Matters to a Child

by Angela Folly Morlu, Department of Family Services

Dr. Anthony P. Witham once said that “Children spell love... T-I-M-E.” With the hustle and bustle of our lives, you might find that your time with the children in your life is precious and short.



Despite your best intentions, the realities of life can easily derail plans to spend time with your littlest loved ones. Competing schedules over work,

commuting, afterschool, evening, and weekend activities can make it seem like it's impossible to make time to see your grandkids or other children important in your life.

During Child Abuse Prevention Month the Parenting Education Programs' staff is taking time to assure you that it's possible to make quality time with a child a part of your routine, because we all know that having multiple people in a child's life who support them and love on them is important to their self-worth.

Focusing just a few minutes of uninterrupted time and attention with each child one-on-one can make a huge difference in their lives, their behavior, and your relationship with them.

Still not convinced that your time matters? Here are some reasons to prioritize time with a child.

1. Little moments add up. Spending time with each child makes positive memories and develops a shared history. It's in those everyday unscripted moments that the magic happens in relationships. The spontaneous fun, the belly laughs, and the small bonding moments often happen when you are focused on each other.

- 2. Let the child take the lead.** It can be valuable to step into a child's world and spend time how they would like. Open-ended, creative, or imaginative activities can allow a child to assert their developing personalities. You can learn a lot about them if you just enjoy your time with them and don't try to correct or teach them during this time.
- 3. Engage your child in what you do.** Other times, it's good to bring your child into doing an activity you enjoy or even something you do out of necessity. It can help your child to better understand you and what you value. It creates opportunities for conversation and sharing memories. Supporting you can also boost their self-esteem. Helping you make a grocery list, sort socks and fold laundry, or chop veggies for the salad are all simple ways a child can spend time supporting you.
- 4. It can be just a few minutes.** Keep it simple. Take short breaks during your day to spend time with a child. Call them on the phone to chat or text them during the day if you live apart. If you are together, set a timer to help everyone know when the break is ending. Give your grandchild a two-minute warning when the time is winding down to ease the transition.
- 5. Plan for the occasional longer activity.** As often as you're able, have adventures together. Work on a longer project together or go someplace fun. Make it just the two of you if you can arrange it. If you are married, give your spouse time to do this as well.

Intentionally giving a child this regular attention will help them feel seen, heard, connected, and valued. This supports their overall development and reduces disruptive, attention-seeking behaviors.

If you need help thinking of things to do with your grandchild, look on our website at bit.ly/3yhg1Yx for a list of ways to integrate short bursts of together time into your daily schedule, as well as some activities that require more time or planning. During Child Abuse Prevention Month this April, take time to start incorporating these activities into your day. ✨

Do You Need Help with Home Repairs and Modifications?

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

Rebuilding Together Arlington/Fairfax/Falls Church (Rebuilding Together-AFF) is a nonprofit organization that helps low-income homeowners live in homes that are safe and healthy by making repairs and upgrades at no charge to the homeowner. The work is performed by skilled volunteers with priority given to older adults, people with disabilities, families with children, and veterans.

In 2015, Rebuilding Together-AFF created the Rebuilding Together Express Program (RT Express) to fill a gap in the services they offered. RT Express augments and complements Rebuilding Together's traditional home repair program by delivering 40 common repairs that focus on fall safety, fire safety, moisture and ventilation, security, and energy updates selected for their significant health and safety benefits. RT Express is able to respond quickly to requests for help, with teams of four to five skilled volunteers completing half-day projects with a budget of \$500 for materials. Since 2015 more than 375 homeowners have been served through the RT Express program.

Many of the homeowners served by RT Express are older adults so a top priority is falls prevention. Grab bars, double stair rails, comfort-height toilets, and brighter lighting are some of the most common improvements made. Since the RT Express program was established, volunteers have been able to correct 95% of fall hazards and 92% of all hazards for the homeowners they've served.

Expressing her gratitude for the work performed at her home by RT Express volunteers, Mrs. B wrote, "The railing on the back stairs and the railing in the house and the gravel under the driveway and... I can't name just one repair that made the biggest difference for me!



Top: volunteers with the RT Express program install new handrails outside the home of an older adult. Right: a volunteer installs a grab bar in a bathroom. Both repairs will help prevent falls. Photos courtesy Rebuilding Together-AFF.



All the repairs have lifted my spirits and made a big difference in my sense of physical and mental wellbeing."

Homeowners in Arlington or Fairfax

Counties, the Cities of Fairfax or Falls Church, or the towns of Herndon and Vienna are eligible for the program if required income and other guidelines are met. To learn more about the RT Express program or to apply, please visit rebuildingtogether-aff.org, email info@rebuildingtogether-aff.org, or call 703-528-1999. If you need assistance completing the application, please call 703-528-1999. Reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities will be made upon request. ☀

What to Think of When Planning for the Future

by Allegra Joffe, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

While it may be unpleasant to think about, it is important to recognize that a family caregiver may pass away before their loved one. To ensure that you consider and plan appropriately for this scenario, consider the following questions:

- ◆ Who is going to take care of their loved one's medical needs?
- ◆ Who will manage their finances and pay bills?
- ◆ Where will their loved one live if they were living together in the same house?
- ◆ Will they have enough funding to pay for in-home care or other housing options, such as assisted living?
- ◆ Are family or friends willing to immediately step in to help the person in need of care?

Family caregivers may not have planned what they would do in this situation, but it is important to have a plan in place in case an emergency happens, such as a fatal heart attack or car crash. Having a plan can provide peace of mind and reduce stress for the caregiver, family members and the loved one. Caregivers can start by processing the questions mentioned above and speaking with trusted family and friends to come up with a plan. Next steps could also include working with professional advisors, such as an attorney, legal aid, and/or financial advisors.

In addition, family caregivers can reach out to the Aging, Disability, and Caregiver Resources Line at **703-324-7948** and request a caregiver consultation to explore the different options available to them.

The Top Ten Legal "Facts" that Family Caregivers Need to Know, but Probably Don't - Caregiver Webinar

Wednesday, April 19, Noon to 1 p.m.

In this presentation, Rory Clark, Elder Law attorney, Founder of GuideWISE Family Caregiver Support Network, and managing partner and founder of the Legacy Elder Law Center, will demystify the law and identify common mistakes that can be devastating to family caregivers and their loved ones. Topics covered



will include critical misconceptions about Medicare and how it pays for skilled nursing care, must-know truths about court appointed guardianships/conservatorships, essential legal planning documents, government long-term care benefits, and the new trend toward interdisciplinary life care planning for older adults. Online registration: bit.ly/CAREWEB1

Virtual Dementia Friends Information Session

Wednesday, April 12, Noon to 1:15 p.m.

Join this presentation and learn how to become a dementia friend and turn your new understanding of dementia into a practical action that can help someone living in your community. Online registration: bit.ly/DementiaFriendlyFairfax

Maintaining Balance as a Caregiver with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion

Friday, April 7, Noon to 1 p.m.

Caregivers are naturally adept at caring for others, sometimes at their own expense. Both mindfulness and self-compassion can help the caregivers take care of their own needs, so they can provide in turn the best care possible. In this presentation, Alfred Wishart, LPC, LCDC, CRC at the Dallas Center for Mindfulness and Compassion, will include a mixture

of lecture and brief meditation practices that can be incorporated in everyday life. Online registration: bit.ly/StayingWell-123

The Role of Food and the Wellness of the Heart-Caring for Your Heart & Preventing Heart Disease

Friday, April 14, Noon to 1 p.m.

In this presentation, Dr. Akil Taher will talk about heart disease, which has become the leading cause of death for both men and women for 104 years in a row. In addition, he will discuss the importance of whole food plant-based diet (WFPBD) and lifestyle changes in the prevention and reversal of heart disease, which will be backed by science as well as his own personal story. Online registration: bit.ly/StayingWell-123

RAFT Dementia Support Program

The RAFT Dementia Support Program is a new initiative in Northern Virginia that is part of the Regional Older Adult Facilities Mental Health Support Team (RAFT). This RAFT Dementia Support Program fulfills a vital community need for individuals with dementia and their caregivers to prevent psychiatric hospitalizations, and to provide comprehensive education and planning to improve caregiver resilience while improving safety and stability in community placement. In this free program, trained dementia specialists will work one-on-one with families to provide education, connect to services, and offer new strategies for managing challenging behaviors. Anyone can make a referral to the program. For more information, please visit bit.ly/RAFTdementiaProgram or call 571-357-0274. ✨

Fairfax Area Commission on Aging

by Jacquie Woodruff, 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 Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of the City of Fairfax and the City of Falls Church.

At the March 15 COA meeting, Land Development Services staff led a discussion about Parking Reimagined, an initiative to review Article 6 of the Zoning Ordinance which regulates off-street parking and loading. The goal of this effort is modernization of parking and loading requirements, creating greater flexibility in the provision of parking for current and future land uses.

COA Meeting, Wednesday, April 19, 1 p.m.

In Person: Pennino Building,
12011 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax, VA 22035
Room 200 and 206

Please note: As of March 15, 2023, the COA meeting location was changed from the Fairfax County Government Center to the Pennino Building.

To obtain meeting materials, visit FairfaxCounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/fairfax-area-commission-on-aging/meetings or contact Jacquie.Woodruff@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-324-5403. For ADA accommodations, contact Ana.Valdivia@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 571-407-6960 TTY: VA Relay 711. ✨

Virtual Live Well: Chronic Disease Self-Management

Thursdays, April 13-May 18, 10 a.m.-Noon.

Don't let ongoing health problems stop you from living the life you enjoy. Fairfax County's Virtual Chronic Disease Self-Management Program is a FREE six-week group interactive workshop series for individuals who are interested in learning how to better live by effectively managing their ongoing health conditions. Learn positive strategies for better overall health, such as

managing pain and fatigue, sleeping, and eating better, increasing physical activity, & much more! Connect with others managing similar concerns. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. For more information, please contact Kathy Akindemowo, 703-324-9814, TTY 711 or Katherine.Akindemowo2@fairfaxcounty.gov or register at tinyurl.com/CDSMP123. ✨

Give Your Home an Insurance Check-Up This Spring

by Carly Mullinax, Department of Emergency Management and Security

Lots of people participate in the ritual of spring cleaning to keep their homes safe and clean, but when was the last time you gave your home some TLC by reviewing your insurance policies? Whether you rent or own your home, it's important to make sure you reevaluate your insurance policy from time to time to ensure you are prepared for a disaster and understand what your policy does and does not cover.

The first step to beginning your insurance check-up is to evaluate what types of hazards may impact your area and understand how they could affect you. For more information on the types of hazards that may impact the residents of Fairfax County, visit bit.ly/3Sj5fL3 to watch the Department of Emergency Management and Security's webinar on "What Hazards Could Affect Fairfax County."

Another great resource for those who are unsure of what type of flood insurance they need is the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services' Flood Plain Viewer. This

interactive map will allow you to look at your area and see if it falls in one of Fairfax County's historic flood plain areas:

FairfaxCounty.gov/publicworks/stormwater/flood-information.

The second step is documenting any valuables or important property you own (including medical equipment) by taking pictures and storing them in a safe place. This may help you prove the value of your belongings and speed up the claim process in the event of a disaster.

Lastly, speak with an insurance professional about the types of hazards you may be affected by and review what would be covered for each scenario. It's important to ask them to differentiate between natural and human-caused disasters as these may be covered differently under your policy. For example, a flood from a broken pipe may be covered, but flooding from heavy rains in your area may not be. ☀



Understanding Long-Term Care Facility Inspection Reports

by Camden Doran, 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 at 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**. ☀

2023 Tax Relief Workshops Schedule

From the Department of Tax Administration

Staff from the Department of Tax Administration will be at the locations listed below to assist with filling out the 2023 tax relief application form, as well as answering questions. To ensure that we are assisting individuals in a timely manner, all workshops will be utilizing appointment scheduling. Please use the contact information listed below to make an appointment with our office.

Braddock District

Hosted by Supervisor James Walkinshaw

April 4, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

Braddock Hall

9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke

Dranesville District

Hosted by Supervisor John Foust

April 11, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

McLean Governmental Center

1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean

Hunter Mill District

Hosted by Supervisor Walter Alcorn

April 10, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

North County Governmental Center

1801 Cameron Glen Drive, Reston

Franconia District

Hosted by Supervisor Rodney Lusk

April 13, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

Franconia Governmental Center

6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria

Mason District

Hosted by Supervisor Penelope Gross

April 20, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Contact Chris Delta at **703-256-7717** or by email at **Mason@FairfaxCounty.gov** to schedule an appointment.

Mason District Governmental Center

6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale

Mount Vernon District

Hosted by Supervisor Dan Storck

April 12, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

Mount Vernon Governmental Center

2511 Parkers Lane, Mt. Vernon

Providence District

Hosted by Supervisor Dalia Palchik

April 14, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

Providence Community Center

3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax

Springfield District

Hosted by Supervisor Pat Herrity

April 6, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

West Springfield Governmental Center

6140 Rolling Road, Springfield

Sully District

Hosted by Supervisor Kathy Smith

April 5, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Contact **703-324-2550** to schedule an appointment.

Sully District Governmental Center

4900 Stonecroft Boulevard, Chantilly ☀

Reminder: The Deadline for Filing Your Tax Return is April 18, 2023

The filing deadline to submit 2022 tax returns or an extension to file and pay tax owed is **Tuesday, April 18, 2023**, for most taxpayers. By law, Washington, D.C., holidays impact tax deadlines for everyone in the same way as federal holidays. The due date is April 18, instead of April 15, because of the weekend and the District of Columbia's Emancipation Day holiday, which falls on Monday, April 17.

Taxpayers requesting an extension will have until Monday, October 16, 2023, to file.

Visit **irs.gov** for more information.

Normal Medicaid Enrollment Resumes

by Amy Carlini, Department of Family Services

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicaid members have been able to keep their health coverage even if their eligibility status changed. Due to the passage of the federal 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Virginia and all other states will now begin re-evaluating eligibility for Medicaid members.

VIRGINIA MEDICAID MEMBERS
Stay covered!

Has your information changed in the last two years?

- ✓ Mailing address
- ✓ Physical addresss
- ✓ Phone number(s)
- ✓ Email address

VIRGINIA'S MEDICAID PROGRAM
DMAS

Coverage for members will not be canceled or reduced without first asking for updated information, but we need to be able to contact you.

What Medicaid Members Can Do:

- ◆ Update your contact information online at **commonhelp.virginia.gov**.
- ◆ Call Cover Virginia at **1-855-242-8282**.
- ◆ Call the DFS Customer Call Center at **703-324-7500** or email **DFSMYCase@FairfaxCounty.gov**.
- ◆ Respond to notices/renewals to confirm that you are eligible.

Visit CoverVA.org for more information.

If you receive Medicaid you may also be eligible for SNAP, TANF, Energy Assistance, Child Care Assistance and more. Apply at **CommonHelp.Virginia.gov/access** or apply by phone at **1-833-5-CALL-VA (1-833-522-5582)**.

Learn about other low-cost medical assistance resources: bit.ly/3JszbS7. ☀

Got Mulch?

Did you know that Fairfax County operates a brush grinding operation which produces double-shredded wood mulch that is clean, good quality and free to residents? Mulch can be picked up at two locations:

- ◆ **I-66 Transfer Station**, 4618 West Ox Rd., Fairfax, VA 22030. Hours are Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 7 a.m.-4 p.m.; Call **703-631-1179** for more information.
- ◆ **The I-95 Landfill Complex**, 9850 Furnace Rd., Lorton, VA 22079. Hours are Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 7 a.m.-4 p.m. Call **703-690-1703** for more information.

Proof of Fairfax County residency may be required. Acceptable proof is a driver's license, state ID card, property tax bill or utility bill.

Hoppers are available for loading your vehicle but are sometimes out of service. When that occurs, residents have the option to self-load the mulch. Visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/free-mulch** or call the site to confirm the hopper is operational before you visit.

When quantities are sufficient, mulch is also distributed to various park sites for pick up. Call the Mulch InfoLine at **703-324-5995** for park locations. ☀

Talking About Gender with Children and Teens Can Prevent Interpersonal Violence

by Debra Miller and Abby Picard, Domestic and Sexual Violence Services

Here's an interesting fact: 1 in 4 Americans lives in a multigenerational household. According to the 2021 American Community survey, 16,668 grandparents in Fairfax County live with grandchildren under age 18, and 3,288 are their grandchildren's primary caregivers.

Research on children's identity development show most children understand their own gender between the ages of 2 to 3, but their understanding of *what* gender means is impacted by their experience of the world as they grow. Adults can often reflect their own ideas about gender through stereotypes we reinforce to children.

When children are very young, boys with female friends may be called a "ladies' man" or girls may be called a "heartbreaker." While meant as compliments, these are assumptions about the gender expression and sexuality of children long before they are old enough to date. Adults may also excuse aggressive behaviors of young boys toward girls with statements, like, "he only chases you around the playground because he likes you" or "he's just teasing." Sometimes called a "boys will be boys" attitude, this teaches girls they are responsible for how boys treat them and teaches boys they can break girls' boundaries without consequences.

Sexual violence and harassment are often seen as a normal part of adolescence and adult life. Teenage boys are often excused for making sexual comments about their female peers or insulting other boys using sexist or homophobic language. These peers are taught to accept bad behavior (think: wrestling, hitting, or pranks like pulling someone's pants down or stealing their clothing) as a joke, which violates their bodily autonomy. Teenage girls are often told they are responsible for the way they are treated sexually when adults tell them not to dress provocatively or to "just ignore" sexual comments about their bodies.



Gender Norms and Romantic Relationships

Nearly 40% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders who responded to the Fairfax County Youth Behavior Survey dated someone in the last year. When teens start romantic relationships with others, the attitudes they have been exposed to will inform how they behave. Boys can feel pressure to prove their masculinity by having sex early and often, and girls can feel pressured into having sex to keep or satisfy boys they date. Youth with LGBTQ identities may have a particularly difficult time with gendered expectations because they often do not align with norms of their assumed gender.

National statistics show 1 in 3 teens experiences physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from a dating partner and 1 in 2 teens experiences some form of sexual harassment at school. If a child experiences sexual assault or violence, their experiences can be impacted by their gender. Girls may not be believed or seen as overreacting, and boys may struggle with their identity, as masculinity is often depicted as dominance or strength.

Practice the Appropriate Response

By teaching young people of all genders to respect their own and others' bodily autonomy, adults can help them

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build skills in respecting their partners and recognizing their own experiences if they are sexually assaulted or abused. Healthy relationship behaviors can be practiced by asking permission before hugging them or by teaching them to ask before taking a toy away from someone else. By practicing these behaviors with the adults in their lives, children learn their bodies matter and it is important to be respectful of their peers' bodies, too.

This can also show you are a safe person for them to come to if they experience sexual violence. If a child or teen discloses violence or harassment, it is important to:

- ◆ **Thank them for telling you.** It can be difficult to share what happened, and by telling you, they are trusting you with this information.
- ◆ **Listen to and believe them.** One of the reasons people do not come forward is because they are afraid they will not be believed. By believing and not interrupting them, you are reinforcing they did the right thing by telling you.
- ◆ **Ask them how you can help and support them in how they want to move forward.** It is important to empower children and teens to make their own decisions (when possible) on what they want to do next. It can be easy to start making decisions on their behalf. Experiencing sexual violence is a situation where they were unable to make their own choices, and you can give that power back.
- ◆ **Seek resources.** It can feel devastating when a loved one, especially a child, is hurt. Make sure to utilize resources available to you and the child for support.

If you learn a child in your life has been violent in their relationships or harassed someone, you can:

- ◆ **Identify the harmful behaviors and let them know it is not OK to treat people that way.** Whether they learned the behavior from their peers, media, or other adults, it is important to hold them accountable for their own actions.
- ◆ **Identify what healthy relationship behaviors look like.** Reinforcing these behaviors helps reframe what is acceptable in their relationships.
- ◆ **Remind them they can control their own responses to anger, frustration, pain, and peer pressure.** Reassure them change is possible and you believe they can do better.
- ◆ **Seek resources.** Talk with counselors and other youth-serving professionals about options to understand their behavior and practice healthy coping strategies. These professionals can also help you seek your own support.

Being willing to talk to young people about hard things like gender stereotypes, relationships, and accountability for their actions can have a lifelong impact on their understanding of what respect from and toward a partner should look like. Preventing violence is not always possible, but as a trusted role model to your grandchildren, your actions can make a difference.

Want to learn more about these topics? Register for an upcoming, free “Unpacking Gender” workshop. Visit bit.ly/3tnRFBX for dates, times, locations and to register. ☀



Save the Date for Scam Jam 2023

Saturday, April 29, 9 a.m. to noon

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University

4210 Roberts Rd, Fairfax, VA 22032

Join AARP Virginia and Fairfax County's Silver Shield Task Force for this free hybrid event (attend in-person or online.) Learn about the latest scams targeting older adults and how to protect yourself from scammers.

For updates and additional information, visit aarp.org/FairfaxScamJam.

April Community Calendar

Softball Players Needed!

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Women over the age of 40 and all skill levels are welcome. We play most Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna from May-July and September-October. For more information, visit goldengirls.org.

Players Needed for Northern Virginia Senior Softball

For fun, fitness, friendship, and to avoid dementia, join one of 24 slow-pitch softball teams! We welcome men 50+ and women 40+ of all skill levels. Our average age is 66, with many players in their 80s. No tryout, just an assessment for team-level assignment. Two games, each Tuesday and Thursday morning, April-July, and Fall Ball, September-October. For more information, call Dave at 703-663-7881.

Alzheimer's Association Presents: A Caregivers Guide to Finance

Tuesday April 11, 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;
Password: 3636

Northern Virginia (NOVA) Virtual 50+ Employment Expo

Friday, April 14, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Jewish Council for the Aging's free 50+ Expo connects jobseekers and employers. The expo will offer workshops to learn about current hiring trends and practices as well as the opportunity for jobseekers to network with employers. Register at virtualexpos.accessjca.org.

Memory Screenings

Monday, April 17, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Wellness Center for Older Adults,

4027B Olley Lane, Fairfax

Insight Memory Care Center offers free confidential memory screenings and educational materials to people with concerns about their memory or who want to check their memory now for future comparison. Call to reserve a 30-minute appointment at 703-970-3601.

George Mason Friends Book Sale

Thursday, April 27-Sunday April 30, 10:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.

George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Tnpk, Annandale
Browse a wide variety of books, CDs, and DVDs. For more details, visit georgemasonfriends.blogspot.com or call 703-813-6616.

Friends of the Centreville Regional Library Spring Book Sale

Friday April 28, 1-5 p.m.; Saturday, April 29, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, April 30, 1-4 p.m.

Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr, Centreville
Shop for fiction for all ages, a variety of nonfiction, and DVDs. Bag sale on Sunday. For more information, email FriendsCRL@gmail.com.

Burke Historical Society Meeting

Sunday, April 30, 3 p.m.

Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Rd, Burke

Gee Gee and Speedee—The Historical Saga of McDonald's in Fairfax County

In 1957, the Gee Gee Food Corporation opened the first McDonald's in Virginia on Route 1 in Alexandria. Learn how they built the largest single franchise operation of the McDonalds chain in the nation until Ray Kroc bought them out in 1967.

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.