



# Golden Gazette

[www.FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults](http://www.FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults)

## David Meyer Believes in Serving His Community

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

David Meyer was raised by parents who were deeply involved in their community, always ready to lend a hand when needed. In this regard, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. Since moving to the City of Fairfax in 1981, Meyer has stepped forward to serve his community – from devoting countless hours to saving Historic Blenheim from being razed to serving as mayor during one of the most tumultuous periods in recent history. Through it all, his steadfast leadership has earned him the respect of his colleagues as well as the residents he served.



David Meyer served five terms on the City Council and three terms as mayor for the City of Fairfax. Photo courtesy David Meyer.

David Meyer was the youngest of three children, born to parents who sought a different life from the farming communities where they grew up in central Illinois. Lavon and Pauline Meyer met and began dating only after they both moved to Washington, D.C. The pair got married two months after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, and for the duration of World War II, Lavon served with the U.S. Army while Pauline worked for the U.S. Navy in a civilian role.

After World War II, the couple relocated to Arlington, where they welcomed their two daughters. The family then moved to Vienna before David was born. For the Meyers, life centered around spending time together as a family. They were also deeply involved with their church, Wesley United Methodist Church, and in the community. Pauline Meyer served as an election officer for the town of Vienna for many years, and Lavon Meyer coached and managed little league baseball teams, including his son's teams. David Meyer describes his father as having an "activist personality," – if he saw that something needed to be done in the community, he stepped up to do it.

David Meyer graduated from James Madison High School in 1970, then attended Randolph-Macon

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# DON'T MISS A SINGLE ISSUE OF THE *Golden Gazette*!

The *Golden Gazette* is a free monthly publication published by the Fairfax County Department of Family Services. It covers local news-to-use and human interest stories for older adults and caregivers.

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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](mailto:DFSGoldenGazette@FairfaxCounty.gov) or call **703-324-GOLD**.

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College in Ashland, graduating with a bachelor's degree in political science. He went on to attend graduate school at American University, earning a master's degree in public administration. He spent his summer breaks working a variety of jobs, including working for the Town of Vienna's public works department, doing trash pickup and performing other tasks. It was during this time that Meyer began to think about how government can directly affect people's lives, both positively and negatively, and started attending town council meetings to observe how they operated. After completing graduate school, he was hired by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Meyer met his wife Cindy while they were students at Randolph-Macon. After graduating, she moved to Northern Virginia and the couple wed a year later. A registered nurse, Cindy was hired by the National Institutes of Health. In February 1981, the couple purchased their first home in the City of Fairfax. Although they both commuted to Maryland for work, they had no desire to move there. They enjoyed living in Virginia and wanted to remain close to David's mom after his dad passed away. The couple welcomed daughter Louisa in 1990, followed by son Elliot in 1993.

Like his parents, David and Cindy became very involved in their community. In 1997, they learned that Blenheim, a historic property located on (then) Old Lee Highway in the City of Fairfax, was slated to be demolished to make way for 43 new townhouses. The Meyers, along with other concerned neighbors, formed a citizens' coalition to petition the City of Fairfax to purchase and preserve the property as a historic site. Built in 1859, the home is historically significant for the vast number of graffiti – signatures, pictographs, and thoughts – left on the attic and house walls by Union troops between 1862-1863.

The group met two to three times a week for two years at the Meyer's house, working to build community support to preserve the property. They invited the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and the President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to tour the site, and both declared the property to be historically significant. In 1999, the city council agreed to purchase Historic Blenheim and preserve it as a

historic site. During this time, Meyer also coauthored a book about the history of Fairfax, called "Fairfax, Virginia: A City Traveling through Time."

After his work to save Blenheim, Meyer was encouraged by community members to run for city council. Although intrigued by the idea, he wanted to spend his free time with his children, including serving as Scout Leader for Elliot's Boy Scout troop. However, eight years later, he decided the timing was right to run for city council. He won and between 2008 and 2017 served five terms, all while continuing to work full time.

In 2016, Meyer retired from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission after a 37-year career. One month later, the Mayor of Fairfax, Scott Silverthorne, resigned following his arrest on charges of felony drug distribution. Prior to this, Meyer hadn't seriously considered running for mayor, but with the city in crisis, he decided to run. On Tuesday, February 7, 2017, a special election was held to fill the post of mayor and Meyer won, defeating two of his fellow council members. He was re-elected for two more terms, serving as mayor from 2017 to 2022, a period he describes as "a very intense six years."

After five terms on the city council, Meyer was well prepared to lead. He knew that the slow pace of government would require him to be very intentional in how he communicated the city's goals, priorities, and strategies to decision-makers, especially incoming members of the city council. Meyer also understood that as mayor he would be required to wear many hats, explaining, "As mayor, you're leader of the community, communicating on behalf of the council and local government who we are, what we're doing, and why. We are a city of six square miles, 24,000 people, surrounded by a county of 400 square miles, 1.2 million people. While we're distinctive with our own culture that we're proud of, we're part of a larger metropolitan area, so we have to think regionally as well."

Both as a member of the city council and as mayor, Meyer prioritized economic development, knowing that a strong financial footing would allow the city to achieve its other goals. Under his leadership, the city had its triple-A bond rating renewed, making it one of

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only four cities in Virginia to earn that rating. Some of his other accomplishments include the construction of a new fire station on Fairfax Boulevard and working closely with local jurisdictions to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We are very fortunate in northern Virginia, and especially in the City of Fairfax. We have about 400 employees total and every person I’ve encountered over my 15 years working as a council member and as mayor is there to do the best job they can to help the citizens of this city. I got a lot of psychic rewards for being a part of that,” he recalls.

While mayor, Meyer was able to participate in many interesting events, but one of his most meaningful experiences occurred during his first term. In 2017, the City of Fairfax Band was invited to perform during the D-Day commemorative ceremony in Normandy, France, and invited Meyer to join them. Before departing, he did some research and discovered that four soldiers from the City of Fairfax died in Europe during World War II and two were buried at the Normandy American Cemetery – Staff Sergeant Maurice M. Williams and Private First-Class George T. Sutphin. Two days before departing, he was contacted by Sutphin’s family, who had learned of his trip and asked him to visit Private Sutphin’s grave on their behalf.

Following the D-Day ceremony in Normandy, Meyer and a few members of the band were escorted to the two graves by an employee of the cemetery, who brought with him a bucket of sand from Omaha Beach. Upon arriving at each grave, the man rubbed sand over the lettering on each cross, then brushed away the excess with a sponge. As the sand caught the light, the names sparkled on the crosses. After saying

a few words, a member of the band played taps at each gravesite. At Sutphin’s grave, Meyer brought out a small jar of soil he brought from home, collected (with the homeowner’s permission) from the yard of Sutphin’s childhood home. Scattering the soil, Meyer said “Since he could not come home, I thought I would bring a little bit of home to Private Sutphin.”

The band had hired a videographer to document their trip. After returning home, Meyer gave the Sutphin family a DVD of their visit to his gravesite, which the family gathered to watch with Private Sutphin’s 97-year-old brother.

*“We have about 400 employees total and every person I’ve encountered over my 15 years working as a council member and as mayor is there to do the best job they can to help the citizens of this city. I got a lot of psychic rewards for being a part of that.”*

In 2022, Meyer decided not to seek another term as mayor, which has allowed him to devote time to hobbies and activities that took a back seat during his busy career and years of public service. He especially enjoys reading, specifically historical biographies, and completing home improvement projects. He also enjoys genealogy and is planning to write a few family histories.

The Meyers are all avid

hikers, and he and Cindy enjoy hiking together in national parks.

Despite stepping away from elected office, Meyer continues to serve the residents of Fairfax. In September 2023, he was appointed to a four-year term as chairman of the Continuum of Care Board in Fairfax County, which will work with county staff to review the effectiveness of services to prevent and end homelessness. Meyer is optimistic that they will be able to make a difference, saying “We are one of the wealthiest regions in the United States and we need to address these issues. A significant portion of the people who are unhoused are veterans and for a variety of reasons they find themselves in this circumstance. We have a responsibility to do something about that.” ☀

## Artificial Intelligence: The Latest Tool of Scammers

by Martin Bailey, AARP Community Ambassador, Silver Shield Task Force

You may have noticed that artificial intelligence (AI) has been in the news a lot lately. The applications and potential uses for AI have amazed the public while also stirring fierce debate. Proponents view AI as a valuable tool that can provide numerous benefits when used properly, while detractors warn of dire consequences if AI use isn't properly regulated.

### What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial intelligence is a computer system made up of algorithms and models that enable machines to perceive reason, learn, and make decisions similar to humans.

In practice, AI is software that enables the processing of large amounts of data to solve tasks that otherwise require human intelligence, such as image recognition, video analytics, voice recognition, text recognition, and understanding language.

Some areas that AI is being used are natural language processing, computer vision, robotics, healthcare, finance, and transportation. AI systems have the potential to automate repetitive tasks, enhance productivity, improve decision-making processes, and contribute to scientific advancements. Some AI systems may also be able to understand, learn, and apply knowledge across various domains, similar to human intelligence.

It is important to note that AI is still a developing field, and while significant progress has been made, there are challenges to overcome. Ethical considerations, bias in AI algorithms, privacy concerns, and the impact on the job market are a few of the issues that need to be carefully addressed as AI continues to advance. AI has and will have many more applications that benefit society.

### Scams That Use Artificial Intelligence

Unfortunately, society's criminal element has already found ways to use AI. Nearly all the scams out there can be enhanced with the use of AI, including social engineering scams. Social engineering scams incorporate



a range of techniques used to psychologically manipulate a victim into providing sensitive information or money. Scams of this type include:

- ◆ Impersonator scams
- ◆ Romance scams
- ◆ Tech/Pop Up scams
- ◆ Financial/Investment scams

Scammers are using natural language processing (NLP) algorithms to create messages that mimic the writing style of a trusted source or exploit personal data to craft personalized scams. AI can also make the scripts more convincing, which provides a greater emotional impact. AI-powered chatbots can also be used to simulate human-like conversations. These AI enabled enhancements can make it harder for recipients to discern between legitimate and fraudulent communications. AI can also be used by scammers to better pinpoint their targets so instead of sending phishing emails to a larger pool of targets, they can send spear phishing emails to selective targets.

Another concern is that AI may be used to develop sophisticated malware and automated attack tools. By

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leveraging machine learning techniques, attackers can create malware that will adapt and evolve to evade traditional cybersecurity defenses, making it more challenging to detect and mitigate.

### How to Spot AI Generated Messages

- ◆ **Unnatural Language:** Many times, AI generated text will lack a natural conversation type flow. It may contain grammatical mistakes, strange language and phrases and a tone not consistent with the conversation.
- ◆ **Lack of Contextual Understanding:** If it appears that the responses you receive do not show a meaningful understanding to your question or are generic or unrelated to your queries, chances are it is an AI scam.
- ◆ **Lack of Personalization:** Scammers may use AI to send mass messages without personalization. You should be suspicious if you receive generic messages that do not address you by name or provide specific details related to your personal circumstances or history.
- ◆ **Word Repetition:** Look for text that uses the same words repeatedly or the overuse of buzzwords.

### How to Protect Yourself from Scams

- ◆ Be cautious of unsolicited emails, text messages and phone calls.
- ◆ Always communicate through a secure and verified messaging platform rather than an unsecured platform. These sites start with https and will have a pad lock icon.
- ◆ Use two-factor or multi-factor authentication.
- ◆ Use a random password generator and a password manager to generate and store strong passwords.
- ◆ Verify the source before clicking on any links or downloading any files.
- ◆ Never give a stranger money or personal identifiable information.
- ◆ If you suspect you are the target of a scam, stop communicating with the scammer immediately and report the incident to the authorities.

If you believe you are the victim of a scam:

- ◆ Call the Fairfax County Police Non-Emergency Line at **703-691-2131**, TTY 711.
- ◆ File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.
- ◆ File a complaint with the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center at **ic3.gov**.
- ◆ Contact the AARP Fraud Watch Network at **877-908-3360** with your concern. ☀

### Fairfax Area Commission on Aging

*by Beth Ann Margetta, 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 COA 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 November 15 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, December 20, 1 p.m.

#### Virtual via MS Teams:

Meeting ID: 250 983 213 135, Passcode: JMRLEA.

For call in (audio only) **+1 571-429-5982**,  
Phone Conference ID: 240 278 139#

To obtain meeting materials, visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/FamilyServices/Older-Adults/Fairfax-Area-Commission-on-Aging/Meetings** or contact **Elizabeth.Margetta@FairfaxCounty.gov** or call **703-324-5635**. For ADA accommodations, contact **Ana.Valdivia@FairfaxCounty.gov** or call **571-407-6960 TTY: VA Relay 711**. ☀



On October 28, local dignitaries and members of the community gathered to celebrate the opening of the new Fairfax County Animal Shelter Lorton Campus.

## Fairfax County Celebrates the Opening of a Second Animal Shelter

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

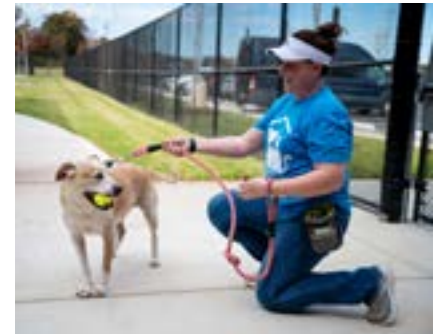
On Saturday, October 28, a community celebration took place for the grand opening of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter Lorton Campus and the Lorton District Police Station.

The new 23,000-square-foot facility, located at 8875 Lorton Road, is the second county-operated shelter, joining the Michael R. Frey Animal Shelter on West Ox Road in Fairfax. The Lorton Campus significantly expands the geographic reach and impact of the shelter, allowing for more pet adoptions while also providing a hub for essential services, including behavior and training support, pet wellness services, pet supplies, and other critical services that help keep pets with their families.

The new facility includes:

- ◆ 44 double-sided dog kennels
- ◆ 42 cat condos
- ◆ 2 catios
- ◆ A state-of-the-art veterinary clinic
- ◆ 20,000-square-foot outdoor space for the animals
- ◆ Facility-wide specialized airflow to reduce disease transmission
- ◆ Acoustical designs to decrease noise in animal housing areas

- ◆ Separate entrances for adoptions and admissions/vet clinic
- ◆ Focused effort on “fear-free” housing with the separation of species throughout the facility
- ◆ Natural light in almost all areas
- ◆ Sustainability features, including electric vehicle charging stations, space for solar panels, and energy-efficient systems



A shelter volunteer leads one of the dogs available for adoption on a walk around the new facility.

Hours of operation at the new shelter are:

- ◆ Monday: Closed
- ◆ Tuesday and Wednesday: Noon-5 p.m.
- ◆ Thursday and Friday: Noon-7 p.m.
- ◆ Saturday and Sunday: 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

For more information about the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, visit [FairfaxCounty.gov/animalshelter](https://FairfaxCounty.gov/animalshelter). 🌟

## Caregiving Over the Holidays

by Allegra Joffe, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

The holiday season can bring joy, peace, and excitement for many families. However, for many family caregivers the holidays can also be a time of additional stress. Caregivers are already trying to balance caring for loved ones in addition to caring for themselves and managing their jobs and homes. Adding one more responsibility or event can be overwhelming. Below are some suggestions on ways to manage stress as a family caregiver over the holiday season:

- ◆ Give yourself the gift of self-care. Do something that refreshes you and brings you joy.
- ◆ Communicate boundaries and limitations with family and friends. Share how much you can contribute to events, gifts, and food gatherings due to your caregiving duties.
- ◆ Do not over commit to too many engagements.
- ◆ Prioritize and choose holiday activities or events that are important to you.
- ◆ If relatives or close friends come into town, ask them to stay with your loved one so you can take a break.
- ◆ Allow others to help you and seek outside support as needed.

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, December 13, 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, Social Services Specialist with Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, and Diane Watson, Dementia Friends Champion Volunteer. Register online at **bit.ly/FFXDementiaSeries** or call **571-407-6961**.



### Present! A Latino History of the United States

Friday, December 15, Noon-1 p.m.

The Molina Family Latino Gallery is the first Smithsonian gallery dedicated to the contributions of Latinos in the United States. Join the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging for this presentation to learn about the inaugural exhibition, Present! A Latino history of the United States. This exhibition presents foundational concepts, moments, and biographies that shed light on the historical and cultural legacy of Latinas and Latinos in the United States. Presented by Natalia Febo, National Museum of the American Latino. This program will be presented in Spanish. Register online at **bit.ly/CharlasEducativas** or call **571-407-6961**.

### Fairfax Caregiver Alert Notifications

"If we can't reach you, we can't alert you." Now, family caregivers can receive weekly emails, text messages, and voice communications to learn about the latest news on caregiving supportive services. These programs include workshops, caregiver webinars, case management, in-home respite, and much more. To subscribe, visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/alerts**. Create an account (or if you already have one, sign into your account), and select Area Agency on Aging/Caregiving.



## Parkinson Social Network

Parkinson Social Network (PSN) supports, advocates, educates, and enriches the lives of those touched by Parkinson's Disease. It's a non-profit organization run by volunteers, all of whom have a personal connection to Parkinson's Disease. Each month PSN offers virtual programs to support and engage those with Parkinson's, their care partners, family, friends, and other community members who are interested in sharing and learning. For more information, please contact Parkinson Social Network at **571-286-5000** or email **info@parkinsonsocialnetwork.org**. 🌟

## Open Your Heart and Become a Foster Parent

Do you or someone you know have room in your heart and home to support children in foster care? There are children in our community who need safe, stable, and loving homes. Fairfax County Department of Family Services is recruiting foster parents to care for medically fragile infants, teenagers (ages 13 and up), and large sibling groups (three or more). We need your help in spreading the word about the need for foster parents to support the 200 children in foster care in our community. For more information about this and other ways to support foster families, please visit our website [bit.ly/DFS-FCA](https://bit.ly/DFS-FCA), email or call our foster parent recruiter at **Maya.Mohindroo@FairfaxCounty.gov** or **703-324-7480**. 🌟



## Need Help Meeting Your Heating Needs?

*by the Public Assistance and Employment Services Division of DFS*

The Crisis Assistance Program is designed to help households overcome energy emergencies that cannot be met by other resources. An energy emergency is determined when a household has no heat or is in imminent danger of being without heat. Crisis Assistance offers assistance with one or more of the following:

- ◆ Payment of primary heat source utility bills (begins Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024).
- ◆ Payment of security deposits for primary heat utility.
- ◆ Purchase of primary home heating fuel when the fuel supply is low.
- ◆ Repair of inoperable or unsafe heating equipment.
- ◆ Replacement of heating equipment for homeowners only (when repair is not possible).
- ◆ Provision of supplemental heating equipment/maintenance.

### Open application period:

- ◆ **November 1 through March 15 for heating equipment repair/purchase/maintenance and a onetime-only heat security deposit.**
- ◆ **The first business day in January through March 15 for purchase of home heating fuel and payment of a heat utility bill.**

### Apply for Fuel Assistance and Crisis Assistance

- ◆ **Online:** at [CommonHelp.Virginia.gov](https://CommonHelp.Virginia.gov)
- ◆ **Phone:** Enterprise Call Center at **833-5-CALL-VA (833-522-5582)**.
- ◆ **In Person:** Applications for Energy Assistance are available at the Fairfax County Human Services Centers. Operating hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
  - ◆ **Alexandria** - Gerry Hyland Government Center, 8350 Richmond Hwy., Alexandria
  - ◆ **Annandale** - Heritage Center, West Wing, 7611 Little River Turnpike, Annandale
  - ◆ **Fairfax** - Pennino Building, 12011 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax
  - ◆ **Reston** - Lake Anne Office Building, 11484 Washington Plaza West, Reston
- ◆ **Paper Application**
  - ◆ Mail: 12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 232, Fairfax, VA 22035
  - ◆ Fax: **703-653-1355**
  - ◆ Email: [DFSmycase@FairfaxCounty.gov](mailto:DFSmycase@FairfaxCounty.gov)
  - ◆ Drop off at one of the four DFS office locations. 🌟

## Volunteer Solutions' IT On-Call Program

by Carol Wright, Volunteer Solutions

Feeling overwhelmed or frustrated with technology? Volunteer Solutions' IT On Call Program can help! The IT On-Call Program recruits and manages tech-savvy volunteers who provide free technology assistance to Fairfax area residents aged 60 and over. IT volunteers provide a variety of in-person technology assistance in the comfort of your home.

### How to Use Technology

IT volunteers are not only tech savvy but are patient educators who offer older adults computer support services at their own pace. Laptops, desktops, iPads, smartphones and smart TV's can be difficult to understand. IT volunteers help older adults understand these devices and teach the basics of using them. The volunteers can also help older adults understand how to use email and popular social media applications. Additionally, IT volunteers help users build their confidence by teaching them to understand the safety risks of using mobile devices and computers and explaining basic security measures in a way that is easy to understand.

### Set-Up and Installation

Is something not working properly, and you can't figure out what's wrong? IT volunteers can help to get it working. The volunteers help with Wi-Fi/router issues and setting up Wi-Fi, a new computer,

tablet, printer, or Smartphone and much more. If you need help resetting a password or web browser support, IT volunteers can also help!



### Affordable and Accessible Internet

Do you already have internet but think that it's too expensive? Would you like to have internet but cannot afford it? IT volunteers can assist in referring you to Computer CORE. Computer CORE is a non-profit organization that provides free online digital literacy classes, refurbished computers, and assists individuals signing up for free internet through the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Computer CORE has Digital Navigators that can help you sign up for ACP. To learn more about the ACP and its eligibility requirements, contact Computer CORE by calling **866-977-3033** or via email at **helpdesk@computercore.org**.

Let us empower you! Call today to get help from an IT On-Call volunteer or if you're tech-savvy and would like to help, please call **703-324-5406** or email **VolunteerSolutions@fairfaxcounty.gov**. 🌟

## Volunteering Makes Spirits Bright

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator



Be a light in your community. A few hours of volunteering per month can make a difference, for you as the volunteer, and the recipients of your time. Here are some of the many ways to help or check out **bit.ly/FFXVOLUNTEER** for more opportunities.

The Fairfax County Department of Family Services' **Body Safety Program** needs volunteer classroom instructors to help empower elementary students with the tools to prevent or interrupt child abuse and exploitation. Students range from pre-K through sixth grade. Bilingual volunteers (English/Spanish) are also needed. Visit the program website at **bit.ly/BodySafe** to learn more and register. The next training will be on January 24, 2024, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., with lunch provided. Email **Elizabeth.Martinez2@FairfaxCounty.gov** or call **703-324-7459** for more information.

**Computer C.O.R.E.** needs volunteers to teach basic computer skills to adults via Zoom or serve as a "Zoom Administrator." They provide the necessary tools and training. This is an all-virtual volunteer role. The time commitment is one hour per week, 6-7 p.m., or 7:15-8:15 p.m. for ten-week terms – January-March, April-June, and September-November. They will accommodate vacation schedules using substitute teachers (another volunteer role). Other roles are available. Go to [computercore.org/volunteer](http://computercore.org/volunteer).

**ECHO (Ecumenical Community Helping Others)** is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization, aiding individuals and families in need within the Burke-Springfield community. They offer food, clothing, housewares, and financial assistance for housing and utilities. Volunteers process donations, counsel and assist clients, handle administrative tasks and much more. Go to [echo-inc.org](http://echo-inc.org) to learn more and choose the "Volunteer" tab for additional details. Email [VolunteerCoordinator@echo-inc.org](mailto:VolunteerCoordinator@echo-inc.org), leave a phone number and the best time to reach you.

**Volunteer Solutions**, a program of Fairfax County's Department of Family Services, offers various

opportunities to provide support to older adults, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers, one-on-one, or in senior centers. Drivers, grocery shoppers, social visitors, and skilled volunteers are needed. Create new connections and help decrease social isolation. Are you into fitness, dance, music, art, or teaching languages, including ASL? To learn more and register go to [bit.ly/FXVSVOL](http://bit.ly/FXVSVOL), email [VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov](mailto:VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov), or call 703-324-5406.

The **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)** provides free tax preparation to qualified people in Northern Virginia. The Fairfax County Department of Family Services needs volunteers to act as greeters, interpreters (including ASL), screeners, tax preparers, online tax coaches, social media outreach, and IT support. Free training (classroom and on-line) is available for screeners and tax preparers. Opportunities are available throughout Fairfax County, with flexible schedules, including evenings and weekends. Volunteers are needed through mid-April. Go to [nvacash.org](http://nvacash.org).

If you wish to submit volunteer opportunities, email Tanya Erway at [VolunteerSolutionsRecruitment@FairfaxCounty.gov](mailto:VolunteerSolutionsRecruitment@FairfaxCounty.gov). ☀

## Shepherd's Centers Offer Free Transportation Services for Older Adults

The non-profit Shepherd's Centers are sponsored by local area congregations, corporate partners, community groups, and individuals to serve adults 50 and older. The centers offer free transportation for medical appointments and non-medical needs (e.g. grocery shopping) for adults 50+ who live in their center's service area and are able to independently get in and out of a car. Although this service is free to the client, and is not means qualified, an application is required. Once accepted, a request for a ride must be made at least five days in advance. Individual centers also offer additional programs and services. Visit the website or call the center in your area for more information.

**Interested in volunteering at a Shepherd's Center?**  
Contact a center to learn more:

- ◆ **Shepherd's Center of Fairfax/Burke** - 703-323-4788; [SCFBVA.org](http://SCFBVA.org); or email [info@scfbva.org](mailto:info@scfbva.org).
- ◆ **Shepherd's Center of McLean, Arlington and Falls Church** - 703-506-2199; [SCMAFC.org](http://SCMAFC.org); or email [info@scmafc.org](mailto:info@scmafc.org).
- ◆ **Shepherd's Center of Oakton/Vienna/Dunn Loring/Reston/Herndon/Great Falls** - 703-281-0538; [SCNOVA.org](http://SCNOVA.org).
- ◆ **Shepherd's Center of South County** - 703-799-0505 or email [SCSC-Transport@Verizon.net](mailto:SCSC-Transport@Verizon.net).
- ◆ **Shepherd's Center of Western Fairfax County** - 703-246-5920. ☀
- ◆ **Shepherd's Center of Annandale/Springfield** - 703-941-1419; [ShepherdsCenter-Annandale.org](http://ShepherdsCenter-Annandale.org); or email [shepherdscas@vacoxmail.com](mailto:shepherdscas@vacoxmail.com).

## Safety Tips for a Happy Holiday Season

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

'Tis the season for decorating your home, preparing favorite recipes, and getting together with family and friends to celebrate the holidays. Along with joy and celebrations, the holidays can also be a time of increased risk. Fires caused by faulty decorations and cooking mishaps can cause property damage and injury. Thieves are also active during the holidays – burglarizing homes while people are away visiting loved ones. The good news is that there are steps you can take to stay safe.



*To guard against fires, always inspect holiday lights for damage.*

### Holiday Decorations

Decorating for the holidays is a much-loved tradition, and unpacking decorations each year may feel like seeing a beloved friend again. It is important to check your decorations to make sure they are in good working order and to display them safely in your home. Tips for decorating safely include:

- ◆ Always use flameless candles near flammable objects.
- ◆ Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from a heat source, such as a fireplace.
- ◆ Never overload an outlet.
- ◆ Inspect holiday lights for broken cords or loose bulbs and discard or recycle any that are damaged.
- ◆ If you have a live Christmas tree, check the water supply, and top it off daily.
- ◆ Turn off your decorations when you go out and when you're asleep.
- ◆ Prevent trip hazards by keeping extension cords away from walking paths.
- ◆ Keep all batteries stored safely out of reach of small children and pets.

- ◆ Never leave candles burning unattended, especially when children or pets are present.
- ◆ Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.

### Holiday Cooking

Did you know that Thanksgiving is the peak day for fires caused by home cooking, with Christmas Day coming in second and Christmas Eve in fifth? With that in mind, follow these kitchen safety tips to avoid accident or injury:

- ◆ Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves when cooking. Long loose sleeves are more likely to catch on fire or get caught on pot handles.
- ◆ If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stove or stovetop.
- ◆ Keep things that can catch fire, such as dish towels, curtains, or paper at least three feet away from the stove.
- ◆ Always use potholders or wear oven mitts to prevent burns when handling hot dishes.
- ◆ Do not leave cooking food unattended.
- ◆ Turn pot handles inward.
- ◆ Keep children at least three feet away from the stove and areas where hot food or drink is being prepared.
- ◆ If a small grease fire starts in a pan, put on an oven mitt, and smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Do not remove the lid until it is completely cool.
- ◆ If there is an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed to prevent flames from burning you. Have the oven serviced before you use it again.

### Holiday Travel

If you plan to travel during the holidays, there are steps you can take to ensure that your home is safe and secure. Consider these tips before you depart for holiday travel:

- ◆ Install security cameras, preferably ones that have recording capabilities.

- ◆ If you're traveling out of town, avoid announcing your plans on social media.
- ◆ Put your mail and newspapers on hold.
- ◆ Ensure your residence appears occupied, even when no one is home, by using timers on lights.
- ◆ Keep all doors and windows closed and locked.
- ◆ Secure sliding glass doors by placing a metal rod or a wooden dowel rod in the track.
- ◆ Lock the door to an attached garage.
- ◆ Keep the perimeter of your home well-lit.
- ◆ Have a trusted neighbor check on your home while you're away.
- ◆ Keep landscaping trimmed near entrances and walkways.
- ◆ Keep an inventory of your property.
- ◆ Store ladders, tools, and any other outside objects in a locked shed or garage. ☀



*Taking steps such as installing ample exterior lighting and using timers on indoor lights will make your home an undesirable target for criminals while you're away.*

## Quality Long-Term Care in the Community

*by Katie Patterson, Long-Term Care Ombudsman*

Do you or someone you know receive long-term care services in the community? The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLTCOP) can assist in resolving care concerns and provide information about community based long-term care services such as home health, hospice, and adult day health care. Consumers can also search for information about these services on Medicare's website, **Medicare.gov**. There consumers can locate services near where they live, read the most recent survey results, and compare agencies, to make an informed decision about their long-term care services.

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. The NVLTCOP is a resident-directed program that is available to assist with concerns and to educate the community about long-term care services. For more information about long-term care services in the community, or nursing facility and assisted living concerns, please call the NVLTCOP at **703-324-5861**, **TTY 711**, or contact the Ombudsman Program by email at **NVLTCOP@fairfaxcounty.gov**. ☀

## Be Prepared for Emergencies when Traveling this Holiday Season

*by Moriah Kitaeff, Department of Emergency Management and Security*

The winter holidays are a time to spend with family and friends, and for a lot of people that means traveling to visit loved ones. Long car rides in the winter should come with special preparation, as you should be prepared for the unfortunate possibility that your car can get stuck in the snow and you might have to wait for an undetermined amount of time for services to reach you.

Ensure that you have a car emergency kit, and that it is ready to support you with tools made for cold weather safety. Your vehicle emergency kit should include:

- ◆ Jumper Cables, Tools and Flares
- ◆ Flashlights
- ◆ Ice Scraper and Air Tire Gauge
- ◆ Phone Charger
- ◆ Blanket/Poncho and Handwarmers
- ◆ First Aid Kit
- ◆ Water and Shelf Stable Food

Learn more about building emergency kits at **FairfaxCounty.gov/emergency/readyfairfax/makeanemergencykit**. ☀

## Antioch Baptist Church Makes Nature Conservation a Priority

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

Church congregations often give thanks for the beauty of the natural world, but how often does that appreciation translate into conservation efforts? Antioch Baptist Church in Fairfax Station has made it their mission to eradicate the invasive vines growing on their church campus, protect the native trees, and create an environment where native plants and animals can thrive. This worthy initiative is being championed by church members who believe that the earth is a gift, and it is our duty to care for it.



*(Top) In August, Derrick Savage, Anna Dixon, Beverly Wilson and Margaret Fisher began removing invasive vines on their church's campus.*

*(Left) This photo shows the size of some of the vines choking the trees surrounding the church sanctuary. Photos courtesy Anna Dixon.*

Antioch Baptist Church's conservation project began with one observant church member. Following Sunday service in late July, Anna Dixon, a certified Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) and volunteer with the Audubon at Home Ambassador program, noticed that invasive vines were choking dozens of trees near the

church sanctuary. She asked Executive Pastor Melvin Jones for a map of the campus so she and her friend Margaret Fisher could conduct an Audubon at Home site visit. A certified VMN, Fisher is also the Outreach Coordinator for the Plant NOVA Trees campaign, which has partnered with Audubon at Home to develop a demonstration program that encourages communities to rescue trees from invasive vines. Paster Jones recruited Ron Beasley, Chair of the Trustees, to assist Dixon and Fisher on behalf of the church.

A few days later, Dixon, Fisher and Beasley met at the church campus to conduct their assessment. The trio discovered that the invasives were not only widespread but posed a real danger. Trees covered with invasive vines, struggling to stay erect, were tilting toward the sanctuary. Dixon and Fisher submitted an Audubon at Home site visit report identifying several hundred trees that were at risk.

Following the assessment, several other church trustees and members walked the campus to see the problem for themselves. By mid-August, Trustee Beasley was authorized by church leadership to apply for an Audubon at Home faith community grant to jump start the invasive removal process. As more church members became aware of the project, they learned about the dangers posed by invasives on native trees and plants, both at the church campus and in their own yards.

Despite the soaring temperatures, in late August Dixon and Fisher met up with Church Trustees Derrick Savage and Beverly Wilson to begin rescuing some of the trees on campus that were being strangled by massive Asian Wisteria vines. Although difficult, the foursome found the work gratifying and an important first step towards saving the native trees.

Since then, the church has invited state and county conservation experts to tour the campus and make recommendations. Having received briefings and recommendations, Antioch's Board of Trustees is working to create near and long-term plans for remediation and maintenance that will be done in an eco-friendly manner. The plans will address removing

invasives, protecting native trees, and curtailing stormwater runoff on the campus. They are also considering recommendations for the church's prayer garden and other areas of campus. In addition to church leadership supporting conservation efforts, members of the congregation are also excited about the project, and many are interested in joining a green ministry group.

If you are interested in implementing a similar project at your own church or house of worship, Anna

Dixon recommends first educating yourself and other members about conservation, including the removal of invasive plants and cultivation of native plants and trees. She also recommends walking the property and completing a site assessment. If your congregation has a trained naturalist, ask if they would be willing to lead the initiative. If not, Dixon suggests contacting Audubon at Home at [audubonva.org/audubon-at-home](http://audubonva.org/audubon-at-home) for information on how to get started. ☀

## Helpful Tips for Buying and Using a Smart TV

by Natalie Kindle and Doug Povich, Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Black Friday sales, family holiday gatherings, and the Super Bowl often prompt people to purchase a new TV. If you haven't bought one in the past ten years, you may not be ready for what you'll find online or at your local electronics retailer. All TVs for sale today are so-called "smart" TVs, meaning they have built-in connections to the internet and can provide access to streaming services. The choice of TVs and how to use them can feel daunting. Here are some tips to help you hit the ground running (or more like sitting) in front of your new TV.

### Buying Tips:

- ◆ **Set a budget.** Knowing how much you can afford to spend will quickly narrow your choices. The good news is that TV prices are constantly falling. You can expect to spend \$300-\$400 for a good 55" smart TV, the most popular size.
- ◆ **Choose the right size.** After price, size is the biggest factor in your decision. The right size depends on how far away you'll be sitting. A good rule of thumb is to divide the distance from the TV (in inches) by 1.5. So, if you'll be sitting 90" from the TV, you should have a 60" set.
- ◆ **Focus on the important features.**
  - ◆ **Screen type.** Be prepared for jargon and lots of acronyms, but there are basically only two types of TVs on the market – LCD and OLED. Most sales are for LCD screens because they're less expensive than OLED.
  - ◆ **Resolution.** 4K (or Ultra HD) refers to the number of pixels that comprise the screen. It's the

standard these days.

- ◆ **Color range.** Look for "HDR" (High Dynamic Range), which delivers more colors, contrast levels and brightness to the screen.
- ◆ **Refresh rate.** This is how fast the picture is refreshed on the screen. Today's standard is 120 Hz. Slower than that and fast-moving things can look blurry.



### Tips for Operating Smart TVs:

Once you have your new TV, you'll need to know how to use it. Here are some tips:

- ◆ **Internet connection and security.** Remember, your smart TV requires an internet connection. Your TV can connect via Wi-Fi or a wired connection. As with anything connected to the internet, be aware of possible security vulnerabilities.
- ◆ **Setup.** Most TVs walk you through the setup process the first time you turn them on. You may need to set up an account with the TV manufacturer to use the apps. Smart TVs monitor your viewing habits to give you programming recommendations and targeted ads. If you're concerned about privacy, opt out of data collection during setup.

If you haven't shopped for a TV recently, the choices can feel daunting. These tips should help you take the smart TV plunge, or at least ease your way into the water. ☀

## Mature Living – SHAPE the Future of Aging

Fairfax County's aging population is increasing. In 2019, 1 in 7 county residents were aged 65 and older and that number is expected to grow to 1 in 5 residents by 2035! To meet that demand, Fairfax County is working on the SHAPE the Future of Aging initiative to continue to improve Fairfax County's ability to be a place to age well, and for older adults to live safely, independently and with dignity.

Tara Turner, Director of the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging joins host Anne Hall to discuss SHAPE:

- ◆ Services for Older Adults and Family Caregivers
- ◆ Housing and Neighborhood Supports
- ◆ Access to Mobility Options
- ◆ Personal Well-Being
- ◆ Economic Stability and Planning

Channel 16 also spoke with Cathy Cole, Chair of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging. She shared her experience on the commission, and the important work she and the other volunteers do on behalf of our older residents.

*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](http://FairfaxCounty.gov/CableConsumer/Channel-16/Mature-Living)

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

... Community Calendar continued from back cover

### Service of Remembrance

**Sunday, December 17, 6 p.m.**

Fairfax Memorial Funeral Home, 9902 Braddock Rd, Fairfax

Join us for a candlelight event to honor and remember all those we have lost in the past year. Refreshments will be provided following the service.

### Memory Screenings at the Wellness Center for Older Adults

**Monday, December 18, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.**

Wellness Center for Older Adults, 4027B Olley Lane, Fairfax

Insight Memory Care Center will offer 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. Register for a 30-minute time slot by calling 703-970-3601.

### Your Guide to Communications Technologies and Services in the 21st Century

**Monday, December 18, 1-2 p.m.**

Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Rd. Reston

Presented by Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services – CPRD. For more information contact Cassie Lebron via email at [Casmera.Lebon@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Casmera.Lebon@fairfaxcounty.gov) or call 703-390-6157.

### Who's Watching Whom? Your Smart TV and Your Privacy

**Tuesday, December 19, 10:15-11:15 a.m.**

This is a virtual event (Zoom) presented by Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services – CPRD. For more information contact Jennifer Thompson via mail at [Jennifer.Thompson@servicesource.org](mailto:Jennifer.Thompson@servicesource.org).

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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## December Community Calendar

### Vendors Needed! Young at Heart Senior Center Advisory Council Craft and Vendor Market

The market will take place on Saturday, March 9, 2024, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Boulevard, Fairfax. If you are interested in selling your crafts or merchandise, spaces are available for \$45 each. Each space comes with a rectangular table and two chairs. For information and/or a Vendor Registration form, please call Mary Fazio at 571-623-4979, email [CRAFTV2024@gmail.com](mailto:CRAFTV2024@gmail.com), or call the Green Acres Senior Center at 703-273-6090.

### Three & Half Acres Yoga Class

**Mondays, Dec. 4, 11, and 18, 10:15-11:15 a.m.**

Hosted by the Virtual Center for Active Adults. This mat-based yoga class is designed specifically for older adults or anyone interested in a gentle yoga session. Please check with your doctor before starting this or any exercise program. For more information, visit [bit.ly/novaVCAA](http://bit.ly/novaVCAA); To join the virtual presentation on Zoom, visit [bit.ly/VCAAzoom2](http://bit.ly/VCAAzoom2); Meeting ID: 905 123 5932; Passcode: 3636

### Brain Gym

**Fridays, Dec. 8, Jan. 5, Feb. 2, 2-3 p.m.**

George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale  
Improve your brain health with fun exercises like sudoku, word puzzles, memorization games,

and more. Come to one or all the sessions. No registration. For older adults. For more information, call 703-256-3800.

### Shakespeare Opera Theatre's Hansel and Gretel

**Saturday, Dec. 9, 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 10, 3 p.m.; St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 8991 Brook Rd., McLean**

**Saturday, Dec. 16, Noon and 4 p.m.; Grace Episcopal Church, 6407 Main St., The Plains**

SOT presents the beloved children's tale in operatic form in a lighthearted performance for all ages! Enjoy Bavarian treats before and during the show! Presented in English translation. Tickets start at \$39.50. For more information or to purchase tickets, call 443-226-8270 or visit [Shakespeareoperatheatre.com](http://Shakespeareoperatheatre.com).

### How Exercise Helps with Brain Health

**Wednesday, December 13, 1-2:30 p.m.**

Virtual and in-person event at Insight Memory Care Center, Fairfax 3955 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax  
Learn how exercise changes the brain in ways that protect memory and thinking skills. For more information and to register, visit [Insightmcc.org/get-involved/events/event\\_calendar.html](http://Insightmcc.org/get-involved/events/event_calendar.html).