

Golden



FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILY SERVICES

Gazette

www.FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults

Ron Fitzsimmons' Own Childhood Poverty Inspired the Creation of Alice's Kids

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

Childhood should be a time of growth, discovery and fun, safe from the responsibilities and worries that accompany adulthood. This is not always the case for kids living in poverty, whose childhoods can be marked by deprivation, instability, and shame. Having experienced such a childhood, Ron Fitzsimmons understands how small things can lift a child up, relieving some of the anxiety that is part of their daily life. Wanting to provide these moments of joy to children, Fitzsimmons and his sister Laura created Alice's Kids, a nonprofit that fulfills requests for items that are often out of reach of kids living in poverty.

Ron Fitzsimmons grew up in West Islip, New York, a middle-class town. His parents' relationship was troubled, and his father eventually left the family, leaving his mother, Alice, to raise her three children

alone without any means of support. Wanting to stay in the community, Alice applied for welfare and received just enough money to cover rent and some food. Local charities also gave the family food and secondhand clothing, but



Ron Fitzsimmons founded Alice's Kids with his sister, Laura, to help children living in poverty. Photo by Patrick Fitzsimmons.

the organizations used these moments as photo ops, publishing the photos in their newsletters to share their good works. Although well-intentioned, this practice led the family to become known as "the welfare family" in their community. Occasionally, Alice would get work cleaning houses or ironing clothes to earn money to spend on her kids. Simple things – a haircut, new clothes, a pair of shoes – provided moments of normalcy and happiness in the children's lives.

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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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The poverty Fitzsimmons experienced during his childhood was pervasive and impacted nearly every aspect of his life. “It’s hard when you’re in that situation and you’re just ashamed to walk through the halls (of school). My first pair of glasses I got when I was 14. I couldn’t see anything. Your stomach is growling but you don’t want to use the food coupons because you’re embarrassed so you skip lunch. There are all these factors that combine. And literally, there are times you go home and there is no electricity so you can’t do your homework at night. It all kind of adds up. You’re behind the eight ball pretty quickly when you’re in that situation,” he says. By the time he graduated from high school, Fitzsimmons was anxious to get out.

In 1967 he enrolled at Dowling College on Long Island, but current events quickly distracted him from his studies. Having lost three friends from high school in the Vietnam War, he joined the movement protesting the war. He also became a passionate supporter of Bobby Kennedy’s presidential campaign, running his campaign office on Long Island in 1968. Fitzsimmons eventually quit college and hitchhiked across the country, but after returning to New York, he went back to school, this time attending the State University of New York at Stony Brook. On his second attempt, he did well and graduated in 1977 with a bachelor’s degree in political science.

After graduating, Fitzsimmons moved to the Washington, D.C. area to go to law school, believing it was necessary to pursue a career in politics. He attended law school for one year and hated it, but was offered a job with Congressman Herbert Harris, so he traded school for a career on Capitol Hill. Fitzsimmons went on to work for two more members of Congress before leaving to become a lobbyist, advocating for reproductive rights. During this period, Fitzsimmons met and married his wife, Meg, and they had two sons, Patrick and Brian.



During the March 21, 2023, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting, the board adopted a resolution recognizing Alice’s Kids.

Eventually, Fitzsimmons grew tired of working in the national political scene, so he signed up to work as a substitute teacher at Mount Vernon High School. He also served for five years on the staff of Fairfax County Supervisor Gerry Hyland, who represented the Mount Vernon district. Working for Supervisor Hyland reignited Fitzsimmons’ interest in pursuing elected office, so he was preparing to run for the Mount Vernon seat when Supervisor Hyland retired. However,

his plans were upended when Supervisor Hyland decided to run again, a decision that opened the door to the founding of Alice’s Kids.

The idea for Alice’s Kids began one evening in Fitzsimmons’ living room. He and his younger sister, Laura Fitzsimmons Peters, were discussing the pain they experienced during their childhood.

A few days later, while subbing at Mount Vernon High School, a girl in one of his classes was crying. Fitzsimmons found out that she couldn’t afford a prom ticket, so he bought it for her. The incident got him thinking. “I went to teachers and asked if they paid for things for kids, and they laughed and said of course, we pay for things all the time,” he recalls. That night he called Laura with the idea for Alice’s Kids, a nonprofit offering targeted assistance to children by purchasing wished-for items their families can’t afford.

Alice’s Kids was founded in 2011, but it took some time to become fully operational. Before its founding, Fitzsimmons spoke to local nonprofits about his idea of targeted assistance to make sure they wouldn’t be stepping on anyone’s toes. He also reached out to local high school principals, asking for their feedback. Donors had pledged nearly \$50,000 to Fitzsimmons’ Board of Supervisors campaign before it was canceled, so he went to them and asked if they would be willing to donate that money to Alice’s Kids instead and many agreed.

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In mission and process, Alice's Kids works differently than many other nonprofits. Requests are submitted by teachers and counselors on behalf of children who are in kindergarten through 12th grade for items that fall outside the scope of most nonprofit giving – things like sports equipment, prom tickets, art supplies, or summer camp fees. Once the request is approved, Alice's Kids issues a gift card or check to a store or other entity, which the teacher gives to the child's parent to purchase the item. Gifts are always anonymous, both to preserve the child's dignity and to give parents the opportunity to be their child's hero by purchasing the item.

Requests to Alice's Kids grew steadily each year, most of them local. That all changed in 2019 when Washington Post columnist Theresa Vargas wrote an article about the organization. Almost overnight, Alice's Kids went from a local to a national charity. They received nearly \$300,000 in donations the weekend after her article was published. Keeping pace with the donations to Alice's Kids were requests for aid, which poured in from across the country.

For several years, one of Alice's Kids' staunchest supporters has been the actor Patton Oswalt, a Virginia native who initially learned about the nonprofit on social media. In addition to donating to Alice's Kids and sharing information about them on social media, he chose to play for Alice's Kids when he competed on *Celebrity Jeopardy* this year. Oswalt's second place finish earned Alice's Kids \$250,000; an amount that moves them closer to their goal of spending \$1,000,000 this year. His win brought additional publicity and accolades, including the Virginia House of Delegates passing a resolution applauding Alice's Kids, and congratulating Oswalt for his win, and a Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' resolution recognizing and congratulating Alice's Kids for its work.

Fitzsimmons estimates that he devotes 50-60 hours each week serving as executive director of Alice's Kids, but he

loves it. "The point is, with all the stuff I've done, and I think I've done a lot of good stuff, this is the best work I've ever done. How can it not be?" As difficult as his childhood was, it prepared him for this work because he understands the struggles and shame children living in poverty experience each day.

Many of the requests and stories that come to Alice's Kids are similar, but a few have been so powerful that Fitzsimmons felt compelled to go above and beyond.

One request they received from Texas was for a homeless teen who was an all-state trumpet champion preparing to attend college to study music. The teen didn't have a trumpet of his own (he played a school trumpet throughout high school) so the counselor requested a few hundred dollars to go toward

buying him a trumpet. To ensure that the boy received a good quality instrument, Alice's Kids sent much more money than was requested. Fitzsimmons also contacted the office of famed trumpeter and composer, Wynton Marsalis, sharing the young trumpeter's story. He asked Marsalis to film a video of support for the youth. In response, Marsalis sent the teen a heartfelt video full of advice and encouragement, even sharing his personal cell number so the boy could contact him.

About a year ago, Alice's Kids created an impact team to measure their work. The team contacts teachers and counselors to follow up and find out what happened after their request was fulfilled. The results show that they are making a difference. "You hear from the teacher about the kid who went to summer camp who has come back different and now he wants to be a math teacher," says Fitzsimmons.

To learn more about Alice's Kids, please visit their website at aliceskids.org. Donations can be made online or by calling 703-746-8108. For the latest news and updates, follow Alice's Kids on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter @allicewillhelp. ✨

"The point is, with all the stuff I've done, and I think I've done a lot of good stuff, this is the best work I've ever done. How can it not be?"

Celebrate Communication Returns to Springfield Town Center!

by Eileen McCartin, Ph.D., Executive Director, Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons

What do deafness and hearing loss mean to you? Do you have hearing loss or love someone who does? Please join us at our free outreach event, Celebrate Communication 2023, at the Springfield Town Center on Saturday, September 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Enter at the main entrance, next to Maggiano's restaurant. We'll be on the lower level near Starbucks.

Now in its 21st year, this unique information fair is hosted by the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons (NVRC). It is specifically designed for the deaf and hard of hearing community, their families, and friends. Come learn about the latest communication technologies and apps. You'll also find information about cochlear implants, hearing aids, telephone relay services, American Sign Language, and captioning. We will be showcasing live captioning apps on devices provided by Google.

Representatives will be on hand to tell you about local services; the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will have information to share



At Celebrate Communication 2022, NVRC Technology Manager Debbie Jones demonstrated and answered questions about a variety of assistive devices. Photos courtesy NVRC.



Children attending Celebrate Communication 2022 enjoyed having their photo taken with the Yellow Dog mascot and getting their faces painted.



about their Technology Assistance Program.

The Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA) will be issuing reduced fare ID cards for people with disabilities (bring your ID and proof of disability).

Browse items from our popular deaf crafters. Chat with NVRC's team to learn about our device demonstration room, educational programs, free hearing screenings, ASL interpreter program, tinnitus support, and more.

Special thanks to our sponsors and donors: AARP, CapTel, Cerf's Up, ClearCaptions, Diglo, HearingLife, Lesner Hearing Center, MED-EL, National Court Reporters Foundation, Otolaryngology Associates, Service Source, Sorenson, VA Hands & Voices, VA Relay, VDDHH, Wegmans, and WMATA.

Door prizes! Face painting for kids from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.! Photo ops with our Yellow Dog mascot! For more information, visit [nvrc.org/celebratecommunication](https://www.nvrc.org/celebratecommunication). Questions? Contact Bonnie O'Leary at boleary@nvrc.org. 🌟

Fairfax County Farmers Markets Continue Through the Fall

by Fairfax County Park Authority

If the hot summer weather prevented you from visiting your local farmers market as often as you wished, don't worry! Fairfax County Farmers Markets will continue through the fall, most running into November with a few continuing to December. See the schedule below for market dates, times and locations:

Wednesdays

- ◆ **Mount Vernon Farmers Market**, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, 8 a.m.-Noon. Final day is December 20.
- ◆ **Oak Marr Farmers Market**, Oak Marr Rec Center, 3200 Jermantown Rd, Oakton, 8 a.m.-Noon. Final day is November 8.
- ◆ **Wakefield Farmers Market**, Audrey Moore Rec Center, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale, 2-6 p.m. Final day is October 25.

Thursdays

- ◆ **Annandale Farmers Market**, Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale, 8 a.m.-Noon. Final day is November 2.
- ◆ **Herndon Farmers Market**, 777 Lynn Street, Herndon, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Final day is November 9.

Fridays

- ◆ **McLean Farmers Market**, 1659 Chain Bridge Rd, McLean, 8 a.m.-Noon. Final day is November 17.
- ◆ **Kingstowne Farmers Market**, 5844-5862 Kingstowne Center, Alexandria, 3-7 p.m. Final day is October 27.

Saturdays

- ◆ **Reston Farmers Market**, Lake Anne Village Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza, Reston, 8 a.m.-Noon. Final day is December 2.
- ◆ **Burke Farmers Market**, VRE Parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway, Burke, 8 a.m.-Noon. Final day is December 16.



Fairfax County Farmers Markets offer a wide variety of seasonal produce, baked goods and other prepared food. Photos courtesy Fairfax County Park Authority.

Sundays

- ◆ **Lorton Farmers Market**, 8994 Potomac Bend, Lorton, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Final day is November 19.



The extended farmers market season is a great opportunity to enjoy local fall produce, including apples, greens, pumpkins and winter squash. Several farmers market locations are also hosting fall harvest festivals featuring live music, free hot cider, and activities such as pumpkin painting. Farmers market fall harvest festivals will take place at these locations:

- ◆ **Oak Marr Farmers Market**, Wednesday, October 11, 8 a.m.-Noon
- ◆ **Annandale Farmers Market**, Thursday, October 12, 8 a.m.-Noon
- ◆ **McLean Farmers Market**, Friday, October 13, 8 a.m.-Noon
- ◆ **Lorton Farmers Market**, Sunday, October 15, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. ☀

Celebrate National Senior Center Month at a Fairfax County Senior Center!

by Karen Goff, Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

September is National Senior Center Month! The Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services invites you to celebrate by visiting one of its 14 senior centers. Facilities are located throughout Fairfax County, making it easy to get involved right in your neighborhood!

Fairfax Senior Centers offer recreational and social opportunities for adults ages 50 and over. Hundreds of active older adults from around the county have registered with the county's network of senior centers. Memberships offer an affordable way to explore hobbies, pursue fitness goals, develop friendships, and enjoy a wide variety of activities with your peers. Center programs and activities are as diverse as the needs and interests of the communities they serve.

Obtaining a senior center membership is easy. Members must be 50 and over, be able to participate independently and pay an annual membership fee (\$24-\$48 for Fairfax County residents, depending on

income). Non-residents may purchase a membership for \$100 annually. Further membership details may be found at bit.ly/3POhIqL.

Being involved at a senior center could help overall health, particularly mental health. A 2019 study in "The Journals of Gerontology" found that older adults who interacted with people beyond their usual social circle of family and close friends were more likely to have higher levels of physical activity, greater positive moods, and fewer negative feelings.

On any given day, Fairfax Senior Centers members are playing mah jongg, participating in book clubs, learning pickleball, brushing up on technology skills, creating art, singing, dancing and so much more. Visit bit.ly/ActivityCalendars to see what's in store at your nearest senior center.

Most senior center activities are free, but some, such as field trips, feature a small charge. Meals and transportation options are also available (eligibility and fees apply – please contact the senior center near you for details).

Fairfax County is also pleased to offer the Virtual Center for Active Adults (VCAA), a senior center without walls. We offer a diverse lineup of content for participants to take part from home, extended vacations or wherever they are. The goal of the VCAA is to enrich the lives of older adults and adults with disabilities in Northern Virginia while combatting isolation.

The VCAA is a wonderful place to connect with peers, engage in a variety of activities and discover useful resources. Content is delivered both live and prerecorded on-demand. Popular offerings include cooking demonstrations, exercise classes, current events discussions and more.

For more information, please call **703-324-4600**, **TTY 711**.

Have you used the VCAA? Do you want to know more about it? We are conducting a survey to better serve patrons and tailor content. Access the survey online at bit.ly/VCAAsurvey23. 🌟



Little River Glen Senior Center offers a variety of activities to engage its participants, including this painting class. Photo courtesy Neighborhood and Community Services.

Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help

by Allegra Joffe, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

Many family caregivers are often reluctant to ask for help. They know and understand their family members – their likes, dislikes, schedules, and medical and financial information. They may think to themselves, “No one can do it better than me,” which can be an accurate statement. However, without help, a family caregiver may experience burnout. Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that can lead to feelings of depression, isolation, and stress. When this happens to a caregiver, they are no longer able to provide the best care to their loved ones or themselves.

If you find it difficult to ask for help with caregiving tasks, take a moment to reflect on the long-term impacts of caring for someone alone and the positive benefits that might come from accepting support. Consider writing out caregiving tasks and who you could delegate some of the tasks to. It is helpful to remember that there are lots of ways to safely and accurately complete caregiving tasks, even if they are done differently than the way you usually do them.

Asking for support is not a sign of weakness or selfishness. It is an act of selflessness to make sure you and your loved one are getting the best care possible. If you wish to learn more about caregiving resources, call our Aging, Disability, and Caregiver Resource Line at **703-324-7948** or visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults**.

Best Practices When You are Chosen to Manage Someone Else's Money

Wednesday, September 20, Noon-1 p.m.

In this webinar, Tom West, Senior Partner from Signature Estate & Investment Advisors, will provide caregivers with information about managing someone else's assets. The presentation will focus on fiduciary roles for durable power of attorneys, trustees for a revocable living trust, Veteran Affairs fiduciaries, representative payees, guardians, and conservators. Tom will detail the important roles and duties of a fiduciary.



Finally, beyond the legal and financial aspects, Tom will address five decision-making steps that will help caregivers meet the fiduciary standard of care. Join us to learn what caregivers need to know when accepting fiduciary responsibility for someone else's money and property. Online registration: bit.ly/CAREWEB1 or call **571-407-6961**.

SPY with Me with the International Spy Museum

Wednesday, September 13, Noon-1 p.m.

This program is offered in collaboration with The International Spy Museum Access to Spy Program. Shana Oltmans, Manager of Museum Programs & Experiences, and Amanda Ohlke, Director of Adult Education, will host SPY with Me, an interactive, hour-long virtual program for individuals living with dementia and their care partners. Join SPY as we use music and artifacts to explore some of our favorite spy stories and to get to know each other. Online registration: bit.ly/FFXDementiaSeries or call **571-407-6961**.

Program Models for Loved Ones Living with Dementia

Friday, September 29, 2-3 p.m.

This panel conversation will explore program models that are available for family caregivers who are caring for a loved one with dementia and are struggling to find respite and support. Explore the benefits of day programs that can provide a safe and consistent space to meet the physical, social, and nutritional needs of a loved one while providing a peace of mind to the caregiver. In addition, it will address a new home approach to working with challenging behaviors in loved ones with dementia. Panelists include Andre Atkins, Director of Growth & Enrollment, Cherry Blossom, Melissa Long, Director of Education and Support, Insight Memory Care Center, Leora Raskas, RAFT Dementia Education and Outreach Coordinator, Northern VA RAFT, Marjorie Burris, Adult Day Health Care Program Manager, Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services. Online registration: bit.ly/FFXDementiaSeries or call 571-407-6961.

Dignified Aging-Envejecimiento Digno

Friday, September 22, 2-3 p.m.

Meet Dr. Monica Fracachan, an Alzheimer's expert at the University of Kansas. This virtual presentation will be in Spanish and includes topics on what dementia is, how to improve brain health, how to detect Alzheimer's, and what to do if someone has memory and thinking problems. Dr. Fracachan will provide information in Spanish about support studies for loved ones with memory and thinking problems. Online registration: bit.ly/CharlasEducativas or call 703-324-5484.

Free Resources from the National Institute on Aging

The National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health, provides online information on dozens of health topics for older adults and caregivers. The resources are informed by research and reviewed by experts to help you learn about healthy aging and health conditions affecting older adults, including Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. NIA also offers print publications to download or order for free at order.nia.nih.gov

For more information, visit the NIA website at nia.nih.gov or contact the NIA Information Center at 800-222-2225 or niaic@nia.nih.gov. ☀

Emergency Preparedness in Long-Term Care Facilities – What You Need to Know

by Camden Doran, Long-Term Care Ombudsman

All nursing and assisted living facilities should have a comprehensive emergency plan in place, so that people can be protected and supported in times of crisis. A nursing home, by federal law, is required to have evacuation plans in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. Emergency preparedness plans should be tailored to a facility's geographic location and should take into consideration the residents' levels of care. Each facility must also review the evacuation plan with residents, train new employees in emergency procedures, and hold drills and periodic reviews with staff. Assisted living facilities are required by the state to have a similar emergency preparedness plan in place as well. Residents and families

should inquire with their specific facility about their plans and ask questions if needed.

As a mandated program under the Older Americans Act, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (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 long-term care facilities emergency preparedness requirements, 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. ☀

Volunteer to Help Your Community

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator

Are you searching for new ways to help your community? Check out the volunteer opportunities below or go to bit.ly/FFXVOLUNTEER to explore other options.

As a mandated program under the Older Americans Act, the **Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLTCOP)** is often called on to assist residents and consumers to advocate for their rights to ensure quality of care and quality of life. Empathetic volunteers are needed to advocate for the rights of residents in long-term care facilities and help them with concerns they are unable to resolve alone. If you have skills in listening, diplomacy, communicating, and problem-solving, consider becoming a Volunteer Ombudsman.

Volunteers must complete an initial three-day training, commit to a minimum of one year of service, and approximately four hours per week assisting residents at assigned facilities close to home or work. There are also enriching training opportunities. For more information about volunteering, or other nursing or assisted living concerns, call the NVLTCOP at **703-324-5861, TTY 711**, or contact Claire Yeomans at Claire.Yeomans@FairfaxCounty.gov.

Mount Vernon at Home is a non-profit organization serving older adults in the Alexandria region of Fairfax County. They need volunteers for grocery shopping, minor home repairs and assistance, and computer and technical support. Licensed and insured drivers (who have their own cars) are especially needed to transport people to medical and other appointments. Mount Vernon at Home can provide a donation receipt for mileage. Schedules are flexible and background checks are conducted. Please contact them at info@mountvernonathome.org, or **703-303-4060**.

Volunteer Solutions offers various opportunities to provide support to older adults, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers, one-on-one, or in senior and adult day healthcare centers. Drivers, grocery shoppers, social visitors, and skilled volunteers are needed. Especially in the Alexandria and Falls Church/Annandale regions. Bilingual volunteers are needed, too. Create new connections and help decrease social isolation. To learn more and register go to bit.ly/FXVSVOL, email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov, or call 703-324-5406.

Food Donations Needed

Food For Neighbors raises awareness, mobilizes communities, and partners with local middle and high schools to connect vital resources with food-insecure students. Sign up today to donate one bag of food five times a year via the **Red Bag Program**. Go to FoodForNeighbors.org/red-bag-program to learn more.

If you wish to submit volunteer opportunities, email Tanya Erway at VolunteerSolutionsRecruitment@FairfaxCounty.gov. ☀



Both Mount Vernon at Home and Volunteer Solutions are in need of volunteers to perform a variety of tasks for older adults, including shopping for groceries.

September is National Emergency Preparedness Month

by Courtney Arroyo, Department of Emergency Management and Security

September is National Emergency Preparedness Month! All around the nation, people will be taking action to build stronger, more resilient, and prepared communities. This is an opportunity to look around and find ways to prepare yourself and others in your community for disasters. Taking action to prepare for an emergency before it strikes can lead to better outcomes and provide peace of mind.

Fairfax County's Department of Emergency Management and Security has a lot of great tools that are designed to aid the community in becoming more prepared for disasters. Take some time to think about ways you can make a difference during this year's Emergency Preparedness Month, as well as tools to help you:

- ◆ **Prepare yourself and your family!** The Community Emergency Response Guide has information on the types of threats and hazards local to Fairfax County, as well as tools to help you build an emergency plan and kit. It also has information on how to sign up for Fairfax Alerts so that you will receive alerts and warnings in the event of an emergency or disaster.
- ◆ **Prepare your neighborhood!** Once you have prepared yourself for an emergency, don't stop there! You can be a leader in your neighborhood and organize a group of neighbors to help plan for how your neighborhood will help each other during a disaster. The 5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness is a guide which lists easy steps neighborhoods can take to organize themselves to be ready for an emergency or disaster.
- ◆ **Prepare your business!** Whether you own a business or work at a place you think needs an emergency plan, the Business Disaster Resilience Guide can help. This guide explains why it is crucial for businesses to have a continuity of operations plan and provides tools to help set the business up for success in the event it is effected by a disaster.



- ◆ **Make an emergency kit!** Emergency kits include basic supplies and are tailored to every person's need. Fairfax County recommends every household keep three to five day's worth of food, water, and supplies in their shelter-in-place kits for each member of the household.

Read or download the Community Emergency Response Guide: [FairfaxCounty.gov/EmergencyManagement/cerg](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cerg). 🌟

Metro Lift Reduced Fare Program

Metro Lift is a reduced fare program for Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia customers enrolled in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). The program is designed to expand access, increase affordability, and advance equity for people across the region. SNAP enrollees can receive 50% off all Metrobus/Metrorail trips.

Customers who qualify will need their SmarTrip® card, an active SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, a current government-issued photo ID card, and a phone number. Visit [wmata.com/metrolift](https://www.wmata.com/metrolift) or call 888-SMARTRIP to learn more. 🌟

Rebuilding Together Arlington/Fairfax/Falls Church Improves Lives Through Home Repair

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

On a hot and humid Friday morning in July, a volunteer team from the nonprofit organization Rebuilding Together Arlington/Fairfax/Falls Church was hard at work replacing the rotten boards surrounding a bay window on a home in Burke. This was just one of a series of repairs Rebuilding Together-AFF volunteers had made to the home of Mr. and Mrs. C.

Rebuilding Together-AFF serves low-income homeowners by making repairs and modifications 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 determining what projects to complete, Rebuilding Together-AFF's goal is always to improve the health, safety and accessibility of the home.

Mrs. C learned about Rebuilding Together-AFF while visiting a Fairfax County facility. During her visit, she saw a flyer advertising their services and called to learn more. After her application for assistance was approved, a staff member from Rebuilding Together-AFF visited the home to determine what repairs and modifications would benefit the couple most.

Mrs. C had suffered a series of recent falls in her home, resulting in a broken hip, broken shoulder, and a spinal injury. Her injuries were severely impacting her mobility, so the first accessibility modification volunteers made was to install a chair lift in the home, making it safer and easier for Mrs. C to reach her second-floor bedroom and bathroom. "After my accidents, my

lifestyle changed a lot. That is why I appreciate the help," said Mrs. C.

The crew also installed grab bars in the bathrooms, installed smoke and carbon monoxide detectors throughout the home, and provided fire extinguishers



(Top, l-r) a Rebuilding Together-AFF volunteer installs a grab bar in a bathroom. The stair lift installed by Rebuilding Together-AFF volunteers makes it safer and easier for Mrs. C to access the second floor of her home. (Bottom) Mr. and Mrs. C in their kitchen with two of the Rebuilding Together-AFF volunteers who performed safety modifications to their home. Photos courtesy Rebuilding Together-AFF.

to the homeowners. They also repaired the backyard fence and fixed an improperly draining front gutter, which had led to the wood rot around the bay window. The final modification the team plans to make is to install railings along both sides of the front steps. Navigating the steps is a huge challenge for Mrs. C, especially during inclement weather, so she is looking forward to the new railings.

The Rebuilding Together-AFF volunteer team working on the home was led by Lander Allin, who began volunteering 14 months ago following his retirement. Although he joined the team in possession of substantial home improvement skills, Allin says volunteers without previous construction or building skills are always welcome, noting that not all projects require special skills. Rebuilding Together-AFF also offers training to existing volunteers who want to build their skillset. Projects are also scheduled on Saturdays to allow more working adults to volunteer.

Another team member, Bill Marshall, has volunteered for several years and has served on Rebuilding Together-AFF's board for five years. Marshall is amazed at what Rebuilding Together-AFF can accomplish, saying "In five or six hours, we can make a world of difference for folks." He finds projects that improve home accessibility especially rewarding, recalling a recent project for a family with two brothers with muscular dystrophy who used wheelchairs. The family's only bathroom wasn't accessible, so the boys' older brother was needed at home to help his siblings access the bathroom. The Rebuilding Together-AFF team modified the bathroom, allowing the boys to access the bathroom without assistance. Because of this, their older brother was able to leave home to attend college.

To qualify for assistance from Rebuilding Together-AFF, homeowners must reside in Arlington or Fairfax County, the Cities of Fairfax or Falls Church, or the towns of Herndon and Vienna, and meet income eligibility requirements. For more information, visit RebuildingTogether-aff.org, email info@rebuildingtogether-aff.org, or call 703-528-1999.

Interested in volunteering? Visit RebuildingTogether-aff.org/volunteer to learn more. ☀

Mature Living – The Importance of Animals

Animals – especially dogs – are an integral part of our lives, and the roles they fill are varied. They can guide a blind person, serve on a search and rescue mission, work with police departments, or can simply calm an anxious person.

Host Anne Hall is joined by Wendy Mayer, Director of Communications for Fairfax Pets on Wheels, and Leslie Horton, owner of Most Fine Canine. They explore the difference between service and therapy dogs, and discuss how visits from animals benefit those in senior centers, hospitals, etc. The Channel 16 crew also visited the Fairfax County Animal Shelter and met with Director Reasa Currier. She reveals the many opportunities for people of all ages to bond with the animals. Finally, Jodi Smith with Fairfax County's Volunteer Solutions discusses the increasing popularity of robotic pets and the joy they bring their owners.

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

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

The Power Before Our Eyes: Empowering Seniors to Practice Observational Skills and Situational Awareness

by the Fairfax County Health Department's Division of Emergency Preparedness and Response

September is National Preparedness Month and this year's theme is preparing older adults for emergencies. This month, the health department will focus on an important but often ignored preparedness step to mitigate personal impacts of an emergency. This key step is awareness and active observation of your community.



Are there roads near your home that flood during heavy rainfall events? Identifying potential hazards like this is an important part of emergency preparedness.

home and your immediate neighborhood. Take a moment to understand the potential emergencies your area faces regularly. In Fairfax County, we are subject to heavy rain and flooding during the spring and summer. So, it would be important to observe local roads and the routes you often travel. Are these roads low level? Do they cross over any bodies of water? Along with roads, observe property entrances

and exits. Are these entrances open or gated? Are they manual or electronic? Which streets are one-way, and which are cul-de-sacs? This valuable knowledge will help you make informed decisions about travel during an emergency.

Take time to identify assets in your community. An asset is anything or anyone that would help respond to an emergency. Assess which spaces can serve as havens in an emergency. Where is your local fire station located? Where is the nearest hospital, recreation center, or school? Can you access these places by foot and are they wheelchair accessible? Do they accommodate pets? All of these are vital questions, with critical answers. You will not have time during an emergency, but you have time now. Take the time now to answer these questions.

In an emergency, knowledge is valuable and can save your life. Begin to practice the art of observation by finding meaning in what appears to be mundane. Get to know your community and feel empowered to protect what matters most. Preparedness starts with awareness, and awareness starts with you.

Challenge: This month, we challenge you to answer the following to identify essential aspects of your community. First, where is your local fire station? And second, how many specialty traffic control street signs are in your neighborhood (i.e., Deaf Child Sign, Children Crossing, Blind Person Warning sign)?

Share your insights and observations with Fairfax County Health Department's Division of Emergency Preparedness and Response – hdepr@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Engage with your health department to access general readiness information – especially content tailored to older adult awareness and preparedness at [FairfaxCounty.gov/health/emergency](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/emergency). 🌟

Free Tools and Resources to Help Prevent Falls

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

September is Falls Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness about the dangers of falls and ways to prevent them. Unfortunately, falls are common among older adults. One in four older Americans experiences a fall each year, according to the National Council on Aging. Despite these high numbers, falls are not a normal part of getting older and can be prevented. Doing things like getting regular health checkups and making simple home improvements, such as brighter lighting and installing grab bars in the bathroom, can help prevent falls. Another way to guard against falls is by participating in a strength and balance exercise program. In Fairfax County, there are many programs and resources available to help residents prevent falls.



ElderLink

ElderLink is a non-profit partnership between Inova Health System and the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging. ElderLink offers an array of free programs aimed at helping participants live a healthier and more engaged life, including these falls prevention programs:

- ◆ **A Matter of Balance** is an eight-week evidence-based falls prevention program that offers a structured group intervention coupled with exercise and emphasizes strategies to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels.
- ◆ **Bingocize** is a 10-week class, meeting two times per week. This program combines a bingo-like game with exercise, fall reduction and health education. The program includes goals to improve mobility and independence, learn and use health information, and provide social engagement.
- ◆ **A Walk with Ease** is a six-week self-management education program created by the Arthritis Foundation for adults who want to be more physically active. The goal is to learn how to safely make physical activity part of your everyday life, while building confidence to be physically active.

Sessions of these classes will be offered in the fall. To learn more about ElderLink programs, including dates and times of the classes, please contact the ElderLink intake line at 703-324-5374 or visit [FairfaxCounty.gov/FamilyServices/older-adults/elderlink](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/FamilyServices/older-adults/elderlink).

Fairfax County Senior Centers

Fairfax County residents, age 50 and older, are welcome to become a senior center member, provided they meet eligibility requirements. Fees range from \$24 to \$48 annually based on household income. Members have access to all 14 senior center locations. For information about senior centers, including locations, policies and guidelines, visit [FairfaxCounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/senior-centers](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/senior-centers).

Senior centers offer a variety of in-person activities and fitness classes, including S.A.I.L. (Stay Active and Independent for Life) classes. S.A.I.L. is a strength, balance, and fitness class for adults 65 and older, designed to prevent falls. Class schedules for all senior center locations can be found at [FairfaxCounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/calendars](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/calendars).

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Virtual Center for Active Adults

The goal of the Virtual Center for Active Adults is to enrich the lives of older adults and adults with disabilities in Northern Virginia while combatting isolation. Adults can participate in live, interactive programs, including S.A.I.L. classes, virtually via Zoom. To view the full list of VCAA classes and activities, visit FairfaxCounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/virtual-center-active-adults.

Additional falls prevention information and resources are available from:

- ◆ National Council on Aging: ncoa.org/older-adults/health/prevention/falls-prevention
- ◆ Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance: NovaFallsPrevention.com. ☀

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 COA are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of the City of Fairfax and the City of Falls Church.

The COA was in recess in August.

COA Meeting, Wednesday, September 20, 1 p.m.

In Person: Pennino Building, 12011 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax, Room 200 & 206

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. ☀

... Community Calendar continued from back cover

Burke Historical Society Meeting

Sunday, September 24, 3-4 p.m.

Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Rd, Burke
Kenena Spalding from the Lucy Burns Museum at the Workhouse Arts Center will speak on her new book "Lorton Prisons." No registration required. For more information, visit burkehistoricalsociety.org.

New Alzheimer's Treatments Virtual Q&A

Wednesday, September 27, 4-5 p.m.

Hosted by Insight Memory Care Center. You've probably seen the headlines about Leqembi, the new FDA approved treatment for those with early Alzheimer's disease. But what does Leqembi do differently? Is it better than older treatments? R. Scott Turner, MD, Director of the Georgetown Memory Disorders Program will join us for a live discussion and Q&A about new Alzheimer's treatments. Get your questions answered and learn more about the current state of Alzheimer's research and treatments. Register at InsightMCC.org/events.

Medicare 101 – Public, In-Person Classes

Medicare 101 training is for individuals and their care partners who will soon be eligible for Medicare or have Medicare and would like to learn more about it. Presenters are part of Fairfax County's Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP). Registration is required. More Medicare 101 classes TBA in the October Golden Gazette.

Monday, October 2, 2-3:30 p.m.

Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 N. Virginia Avenue, Falls Church
Register at mrspl.org/Medicare101

Tuesday, October 3, Noon-1:30 p.m.

Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Road, Reston
Register at bit.ly/3rVQ5Co

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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September Community Calendar

Sing With Us This Fall!

Encore Creativity invites older adults to register for a new season of rehearsals beginning September 5 and running through late December, culminating in a holiday performance. Ensembles are led by professional conductors and meet for 90 minutes per week. Registration for the entire rehearsal season is \$190 per person. For more information or to register, visit EncoreCreativity.org, email info@encorecreativity.org, or call 301-261-5747.

John Weber Senior Bowling League (55+)

New and experienced bowlers, both men and women, are welcome to join this full handicap, noncompetitive senior bowling league. We bowl at the Falls Church Bowl America on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. from Labor Day week to early May. Enjoy fellowship and recreation while you maintain an active lifestyle. For more information and to sign up, contact league president Jim Allison at 703-323-8132.

Love to Play Soccer?

Players 50+ are invited to join the Fairfax Over 50 Soccer League. We play outdoor, year-round, full-field, 11 vs. 11 with paid, licensed referees on Fairfax County fields. We play competitively while staying safe. We are also adding an Over 60 Division this season. We are members of USASA. Dues are required to join. For more information, visit leaguelineup.com/welcome.asp?url=fo5sl

T.H.A.Y. (Three and a Half Acres) Yoga

**Mondays, September 11, 18 and 25,
10:15-11:15 a.m.**

Hosted by the Virtual Center for Active Adults. This mat-based yoga class is designed for older adults or anyone interested in gentle yoga session. Yoga poses can easily be modified to fit your comfort level and physical ability. All levels are welcome. Please check with your doctor before starting this or any exercise program. For more information, visit bit.ly/novaVCAA; To join the virtual presentation on Zoom, visit bit.ly/VCAAzoom2; Meeting ID: 905 123 5932; Passcode: 3636

Frontotemporal Dementia

Wednesday, September 13, 1-2:30 p.m.

Free Hybrid Event - virtual and in-person at Insight Memory Care Center – Fairfax, 3955 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax

What is frontotemporal degeneration (FTD)? Did you know it is the most common form of dementia for people under the age of 60? Learn more about FTD, including the signs and symptoms, how it differs from other dementias, and the resources available locally and through AFTD. Register at InsightMCC.org/events.

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