

Golden Gazette



FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES

www.FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults

Learn to Recognize and Speak Out Against Ageism

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

October 7 is Ageism Awareness Day, an opportunity to reflect on ageism and its impact. To help us better recognize ageism, understand its wide-ranging and negative impacts, and learn strategies to combat it, we spoke to Dr. Tracey Gendron, Chair of the Department of Gerontology at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Gendron is a leading authority on the issues of age bias and discrimination and the toll they take on both individuals and society. She explores these issues, along with the history of age bias, in her book “Ageism Unmasked: Exploring Age Bias and How to End it.”

What is Ageism?

Ageism is reflexively forming opinions about people, and how we should interact with them, based on their age. It is something that we all do, often unconsciously, because ageism is so deeply infused in our thinking, language, and actions that it is nearly invisible. This

practice of age-based judgment leads to the creation of stereotypes, which leads to prejudice and discrimination.

Dr. Gendron believes that the ageism directed toward older adults begins with our fundamental misunderstanding of what aging is. “We tend to talk about aging as something that happens to older people instead of aging as a universal experience that we all participate in throughout our entire lives. There’s no such thing as someone who isn’t aging,” she says. We also tend to think about aging solely as a process of decline instead of recognizing it as the complex multi-directional and multi-dimensional process that it is.

Recognizing Ageism

Has anyone ever told you that you look younger than your actual age? If you took their comment as a compliment, you may be experiencing internalized (or

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Dr. Tracey Gendron, Chair of the Department of Gerontology at Virginia Commonwealth University. Photo courtesy Tracey Gendron.

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

READER SUGGESTIONS FOR CONTENT TO THE GOLDEN GAZETTE

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

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

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

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self-directed) ageism. “When we feed into this narrative of decline and feed into this narrative that my best years are behind me, when we reach a certain age or have a driving desire to look younger, feel younger, act younger, we are not only perpetuating ageism, but we are potentially manifesting the very things that we fear,” Dr. Gendron says. Studies show that negative thoughts and feelings about your own aging can be just as harmful to your health as social isolation, poor eating habits, and lack of exercise. Inversely, data shows that people with positive views of aging live longer, happier, and more fulfilling lives.

Another form of ageism, called benevolent or compassionate ageism, often goes unrecognized because it is disguised as being helpful. It can take the form of infantilizing older adults, sometimes by referring to older adulthood as a “second childhood.” This form of ageism leads people to make assumptions about what is best for an older adult. “Don’t assume that someone wants or needs your help because they look a certain way. Don’t assume that something they want to do is too dangerous for them when they probably have better decision-making capacity than you do. When we make assumptions about frailty or infantilize people, we are stripping away their agency in autonomy in the name of ‘but I’m doing a nice thing,’” says Dr. Gendron.

One driving force behind ageism is generational myths. Have you ever heard the phrase “OK Boomer”? It has been widely used on social media in recent years to mock the opinions of Baby Boomers, branding them as clueless and stuck in the past, two ageist myths about older people. Younger people must also contend with ageist myths. Millennials and Gen Z are branded as bad employees due to their supposed poor work ethic and need for constant praise. These generational myths draw on crude, ageist stereotypes, ignoring that we are all unique individuals shaped by life experiences that have nothing to do with the year we were born. “The concept of generations feeds into the myths. We’re taking people born into 15-to-20-year spans and saying that all these people have something in common, which isn’t possible,” Dr. Gendron points out.

Factors that Drive Ageism

One factor driving ageism in our society is ableism, the tendency to regard people with a disability as inferior to people without a disability. Dr. Gendron recently published a study examining how ableist views influence our negative feelings toward aging. “I asked people if they felt like they would be valued less if they had any kind of disability and found that the fear of disabilities was a significant contributor to fear of aging. It’s not just being older that we think of as a stage of life that is not valued; we clearly value certain abilities over others and when we lose those abilities, we feel as if we are less valuable in society and that there is less opportunity for us to contribute,” she says.

Underlying the fear of disability and growing older is the fear of losing one’s independence and becoming a burden. Dr. Gendron suggests that we need to reexamine this notion and challenge it, saying “The truth is we are never fully independent. We rely on each other and know that being socially disconnected is bad for us. Our brains need other people.” She also challenges the assumption that caring for older people is a burden but caring for children is a privilege. “Why is caregiving synonymous with burden and burnout but parenthood is thought of as exhausting but rewarding at the same time? That’s not in balance. Why did they become so disconnected instead of caregiving being thought of as something we do throughout our lives for multiple people that has challenges and benefits?” she wonders.

Another huge factor driving ageism is the general belief that younger is always better. We are bombarded with ads for products that promise to make us look, feel, and act younger. Until we start to recognize all the positives that come with aging, we will continue to believe these messages.

Positive Aspects of Aging

Our tendency to focus on the negative aspects of aging distracts from the positive aspects of getting older. Many of these positives are the result of our brains continuing to grow in wisdom and knowledge from our lived experiences. One example of this is crystallized intelligence, which is the culmination of all our learning over time. As we age and accumulate new knowledge

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and understanding, crystallized intelligence becomes stronger, allowing us to be better at something because we've done it before or experienced something similar.

One overlooked benefit of aging is how we feel about ourselves. "As we age, we feel a greater sense of freedom to be authentically us. We don't care as much about what others think and are more comfortable in our own skin," says Dr. Gendron.

Another positive aspect of aging is the coping mechanisms that we continue to develop over time. Dr. Gendron cites the COVID-19 pandemic as an example, saying "If you look at the data from the pandemic, older people showed the most resilience. There is a tremendous amount of resilience we build over a lifetime."

Embracing Elderhood

Many older adults self-identify as "retired" during their later years, a term that Dr. Gendron takes issue with, saying "Part of what has led us to this ageist time and culture is that we don't have a term for development in later life. Retirement is not a life stage; it is a social institution. It is inherently a withdrawal – it tells who you used to be based on what you used to do. It is not strengths-based and does not describe how we continue to grow and evolve." She suggests referring to the developmental stage of life that encompasses older age as Elderhood, a period with its own defined goals and opportunities, just like all the other life stages. "If we had different goals and milestones, maybe it would be something we looked forward to as the next iteration as ourselves, as opposed to thinking of it as over the hill or decline. Elderhood is about becoming. The growth never stops," she says.

Combatting Ageism

Pushing back against ageism begins with each of us reexamining how we think, feel, and talk about aging. A first step is rejecting the notion of older age as a period of decline, instead recognizing it as another stage of life with both positive and negative aspects. Rejecting generational myths and making age-based assumptions about others is another way to combat

ageism. Dr. Gendron suggests being a role model for the age you are. "Recognize that you feel the age you are today because that is what it feels like for you. Stop stigmatizing the word old in preference over the word young. Say your age with pride instead of trying to cover it up. Recognize that it's okay to look the age you are. Change happens because everyday people do everyday things," she says.

Want to learn more? Copies of Tracey Gendron's book, "Ageism Unmasked: Exploring Age Bias and How to End it" are available at Fairfax County Public Library. ☀

National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2023

by Karen Kelly, Department of Family Services

Every October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) aims to recognize the essential role people with disabilities play in our nation's economic success through employment. This year's theme is "Advancing Access and Equity." According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, 21.3 percent of persons with a disability were employed in 2022, up from 19.1 percent in 2021.

Fairfax County Department of Family Services is proud to participate in NDEAM each year. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recognizes the contributions of workers with disabilities and introduces a proclamation to celebrate Disability Employment Awareness Month. Chairman Jeff McKay presents the proclamation on behalf of the board to acknowledge the importance of supportive, inclusive policies that benefit all employees and to help educate the public about disability employment issues. Fairfax County Government values the contributions of all people, including those of individuals with disabilities and celebrates in their accomplishments. ☀

In-Person and Virtual Medicare 101 Workshops

by the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program

Medicare 101 Workshops, led by the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP), are for individuals and their care partners who will soon be eligible for Medicare or have Medicare and would like to learn more about it. In-person workshops have limited seating. Registration is required. Registration for library events begins 30 days prior to the presentation date. Register online or call VICAP at 703-324-5851, TTY 711.

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

Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 N. Virginia Avenue, Falls Church

Visit mrspl.org/Medicare101 or call Marshall Webster at 703-248-5141.

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

Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Road, Reston

Visit bit.ly/3rVQ5Co or call 703-476-4500.

Tuesday, October 10, 6-7:30 p.m., In-Person and Virtual

Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10726995 or call 703-790-8088.

Monday, October 16, 1-2:30 p.m., In-Person

Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Highway, Lorton

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10751811 or call 703-339-7385.

Thursday, October 19, 10-11:30 a.m., In-Person

Providence Community Center, 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax

Call 703-865-0520.

Monday, October 23, 7-8:30 p.m., In-Person

Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Ln, Alexandria

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10667605 or call 703-765-3645.

Friday, October 27, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., In-Person

Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10641294 or call 703-339-4610.



Wednesday, November 1, 2-3:30 p.m., In-Person

Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10655374 or call 703-978-5600.

Monday, November 6, 5-6:30 p.m., Virtual

Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston

Visit bit.ly/3YnEHLL or call 703-476-4500.

Wednesday, November 8, 2-3:30 p.m., In-Person and Virtual

Thomas Jefferson Library, 7415 Arlington Blvd, Falls Church

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10708875 or call 703-573-1060.

Thursday, November 9, 2-3:30 p.m., In-Person

Centreville Regional Library, 14200 Saint Germain Drive, Centreville

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/11037110 or call 703-830-2223.

Monday, November 13, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Virtual

Virtual Center for Active Adults (VCAA)

Visit bit.ly/vcaaVICAP23 or 703-324-4600.

Thursday, November 16, 3:30-5 p.m., In-Person

Chantilly Regional Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly

Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/10836193 or call 703-502-3883.

Medicare 101 in Spanish

Friday, November 17, Noon-1 p.m., Virtual

Visit bit.ly/47BCxwj or call Hilda Naranjo at 703-324-5851. ☀

HOAs Encouraged to Apply Now for Charge Up Fairfax Pilot Program

by the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination



Is your homeowners or condominium owners association interested in installing electric vehicle charging stations but not sure where to start?

With more and more electric vehicles on

the road, Fairfax County's Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination is launching the Charge Up Fairfax pilot program to make installing shared charging stations easier and more affordable in multi-family condo, cluster and townhome communities.

Electric vehicles, or EVs, are better for the environment and less expensive to fuel and maintain than gas-powered vehicles. Rebate and incentive programs for the purchase of EVs – including federal tax credits of up to \$7,500 – are reducing the cost and driving up demand.

Electric vehicles are the fastest-growing segment of the auto industry, with record sales of 300,000 in the second quarter of 2023, a 48% increase from a year earlier. And EV sales in the U.S. are forecasted to reach 40 to 50% of total passenger car sales by 2030.

The convenience of at-home charging makes EV ownership more practical, but that can be a barrier

for residents of HOAs and COAs who may not have access to power near their parking space. Community associations that offer green amenities like EV charging stations are more attractive to homeowners and renters.

HOA communities that apply and are accepted into the Charge Up Fairfax pilot program will receive a site visit and assessment from an engineering firm, paid for by the county. If the HOA decides to proceed with the purchase and installation of Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations, they'll hire a contractor to perform the necessary permitting, electrical upgrades, installation of equipment, and final inspection.

Following installation, HOAs participating in the program can seek reimbursement for some of the costs. All HOAs will be eligible for one-third of eligible expenses, up to \$5,000. HOA communities classified as having high or very high vulnerability in the Fairfax County Vulnerability Index or classified as disadvantaged in the Federal Government's Justice40 Initiative, will be eligible for up to \$10,000.

The application period for the Charge Up Fairfax pilot program will close on **November 12, 2023**.

More information about the Charge Up Fairfax pilot program and how to apply can be found on the OEEC website at FairfaxCounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/charge-up-fairfax. ☀

Celebrating the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

October 12 is National Ombudsman Day, a day of recognition highlighting the valuable services provided by ombudsmen nationwide. In our community, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLT COP) assists residents and consumers to ensure quality of care and quality of life. These ombudsmen fulfill many roles – advocating for quality care for people receiving long-term care services, resolving complaints against long-term care providers, educating the public about long-term care issues, and providing training to long-term care staff. The Fairfax County Department of Family Services commends

NVLT COP staff and volunteers for their hard work and advocacy to ensure the health and safety of long-term care



residents in our community. For more information, visit FairfaxCounty.gov/FamilyServices/older-adults/long-term-care-ombudsman-program. ☀

Vote Early in the November 7 General Election

by the Office of Elections

Early voting for the Nov. 7 general election is underway, and you can cast your ballot now through Nov. 4, the last day to vote early.

Currently, three locations are available for early voting on weekdays:

- ◆ Fairfax County Government Center (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
- ◆ Mount Vernon Governmental Center (1-7 p.m.)
- ◆ North County Governmental Center (1- 7 p.m.)

Starting Thursday, Oct. 26, however, an additional 13 early voting sites will be offered on weekdays from 1 to 7 p.m.

Early voting will also be offered on two Saturdays: Oct. 28 and Nov. 4 with every site open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Once again, early voting will be offered on a Sunday: Oct. 29 with all sites open from 1 to 7 p.m.

Before you go to vote, please double check voting hours and find the complete list of locations at FairfaxCounty.gov/Elections/early-voting.



Local and state races are on the ballot:

- ◆ Board of Supervisors
- ◆ Commonwealth's Attorney
- ◆ Sheriff
- ◆ Virginia House and Senate
- ◆ School Board

Find a sample ballot online at FairfaxCounty.gov/Elections/sample-ballots.

On Election Day – Tuesday, Nov. 7 – every polling place will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For more information or questions, contact the Fairfax County Office of Elections at **703-222-0776, TTY 711**, on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ✨

October is Residents' Rights Month!

by Camden Doran, Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Residents' Rights Month is celebrated every October to honor residents in long-term care (LTC) facilities, such as nursing and assisted living facilities, and for consumers receiving LTC services in the community. Residents' Rights Month is an opportunity to focus on and celebrate the dignity and rights of every individual receiving long-term services and supports. Residents' rights are guaranteed by federal and state laws and are critical components of quality care and of life for all residents.

This year's theme for Residents' Rights Month is "Amplify Our Voices." As residents' voices are the most important at the decision-making table, this year's theme emphasizes communities of LTC residents coming together to make their voices heard and to share their

experiences. To learn more information about and to participate in activities related to Residents' Rights Month, visit National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care's website at National Consumer Voice (theconsumervoices.org).

As a mandated program under the Older Americans Act, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLT COP) 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 residents' rights, or other nursing facility and assisted living concerns, please call the NVLT COP at **703-324-5861, TTY 711**, or email NVLT COP@fairfaxcounty.gov. ✨

Age is Just a Number to these “Abuelas” who Recently Adopted a Son from Foster Care

by Angela Folly Morlu, Department of Family Services

When you first meet Gina Marquez-Rey and Antoinette Robilliard D'Onofrio, the first thing that strikes you is their shared warmth and open personalities. These Latina women have a lot of love to share with others around them and it shows particularly in the way they care for their young son Alejandro.

You see, Alejandro – or “Ale” as his moms affectionately call him – is only 2 years old, and he has been through more struggles in those two years than many people experience in a lifetime. His mothers, Antoinette and Gina relish in every accomplishment and milestone that he achieves. At 50 and 58 years old, the time when many are winding down their parenting journey, these two are just embarking on the journey of a lifetime.

The couple decided to become foster parents and started the process in March 2017. Gina is a social worker by profession and while she did an internship in Child Protective Services, she was deeply impacted by the cases she encountered. Gina shared some stories with Antoinette about the children and families she met through her work. Antoinette was so moved by learning of the hundreds of children who had been abused or neglected and who needed support that she wanted to do something, to be a foster parent to help make a difference for the children and families.

Gina has two grown children from a previous marriage, but for Antoinette, parenting would be a new experience. Two years after they wedded, Antoinette told Gina, “There are so many kids out there who are already in need.” Gina warned Antoinette that it would be hard, and probably temporary, but that’s when they decided to help and be a part of this group of people that provide foster care.



(L-R) Gina, Alejandro, and Antoinette share smiles, hugs and kisses.

“In Peru, where we both come from, too often you find out about these cases after something fatal happens and it’s in the news,” said Antoinette. Both were eager to get involved here, so “We looked around and found Fairfax County social services, then we started the application process,” said Antoinette. Ultimately through the training process, they heard again and again that it would be hard, but they knew, “It’s not about us, it’s about giving a little bit of hope and a better life to these kids for at least six months, four months, two months or so,” said Antoinette.

Once they were certified, they quickly got their first placement, a little boy. For six months they cared for him from the age of 18 months, and as Gina said, “It’s one thing to be a social worker, or working in the system and be on one side of the table, and another thing when you are on the other side as a foster parent.” He went home to his biological mother, and a few months later he was back in foster care with a baby brother who Gina and Antoinette took in as well. It was such a beautiful time for them to care for a newborn, and the older child they had grown to love.

However, it was a disappointing experience for them, too. At the time Fairfax County Foster Care and Adoption was seeking a long-term placement for the boys, and Gina and Antoinette did not want to get their hopes up, so they wanted to wait for the judge to decide if the brothers would be legally adoptable. The children were ultimately placed with other families, and while they are able to still keep in touch, it was a difficult loss for them, and it took some time to heal and be open to another placement.

They started back tentatively by answering the call to go daily to hold and comfort a baby boy in the hospital NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit). The child, Alejandro, had been born substance exposed, and he required a lot of specialized care. Antoinette and Gina visited him every day in the NICU for the first three months of his life until he was discharged in November 2021 and came home with them. For almost a year, they cared for him while his biological father tried to get himself to a place that he could be responsible for Alejandro.

Tragically, just a few weeks before going to court, the father passed away due to an overdose, and at that time the biological mother signed away her parental rights. Antoinette and Gina were asked to consider adopting Alejandro. They were at a crossroads. Gina's grown daughters had made them grandparents twice over in 2020 and they wanted time to dote on those babies. They knew adoption would be difficult and require a lot of them, because Alejandro had significant developmental delays requiring treatments and therapies to help him learn to walk, talk, and

eat. Antoinette and Gina were afraid, but they were committed to giving Alejandro the best life possible.

They compromised by taking him everywhere and raising him alongside those grandbabies. In the process, Alejandro has accomplished things the doctors doubted he could. They were told that he would never walk if he hadn't started by age 2, but he is still

making strides. He is sitting up, standing on his own, and getting stronger every day.

According to Gina, "Now we are at a point in our lives that we love to travel and go everywhere, and he's part of it. Alejandro's the reason, he's not an excuse not to do things. He enjoys the trips as much as we do, and the therapists and doctors have commented that Ale comes back from vacations in a much better mood, more relaxed and willing to learn or practice more exercises."

The adoption was finalized on July 25, 2023, and it was a very emotional ceremony. The couple is excited to legally call him their son. Gina said, "The foster care workers assigned to

this placement have been amazing. Each of them has helped us during all the process, making our journey, especially Alejandro's, smoother and easier." He is just a part of the family now. Gina's adult daughters, Aurora (35), and Claudia (33), have been a great support group, present in every step of Alejandro's development. "They have also given us three wonderful grandsons who love Alejandro very much and are always going to be part of Ale's life," she said.



Antoinette and Gina were excited to finally call Alejandro their son on July 25, 2023, the day his adoption was finalized.

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These ladies truly feel that age is just a number, and that they are blessed to have the opportunity to care for Alejandro. Antoinette has put her catering business on hold to be Alejandro's primary caregiver. She said, "We think that with love everything is possible! Every time we were informed about any issue or possible challenge that Alejandro could experience during his life, it made us more sure that God has brought Alejandro in our lives to live and take care of him, and make sure he has all the tools he needs to have the best life, be always loved by us and our extended family, and always be happy."

"You know, you don't have to be blood related if you really care, and I think he, even though he's struggling ... you know he's thriving because of his environment," said Gina.

The family just celebrated Alejandro's second birthday. Relatives including Antoinette's mother, sister, and nephew all came to visit from Peru for the adoption and birthday celebrations. The entire family including grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins speak Spanish to Alejandro to keep him grounded in his heritage. (He understands English through his various therapies.) His biological dad was of Columbian descent and really wanted Alejandro to be raised by a Latin American family.

They have taken him to Peru twice as well, and Gina and Antoinette go out of their way to help him understand aspects of Latin culture, religion, language, and heritage. They can tell that he understands more and more, because he now makes eye contact, grabs the hands of those caring for him, gives hugs and kisses. These are milestones that doctors were not sure he would reach. Gina summed it up well, "It's amazing to see what love can do."

Fairfax County Foster Care and Adoption is always looking for families with room in their hearts and homes to become foster parents. To learn more visit bit.ly/DFS-FCA or email BeAFosterParent@fairfaxcounty.gov. ✨

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. ✨

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day Aids in Reducing Opioid Overdoses

by Angela Bates, Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board

You can participate in helping reduce the number of opioid overdoses on October 28. National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is a nationwide event aimed at reducing the number of expired, unused, or unwanted medications available to vulnerable individuals who may seek to misuse or abuse these substances. As opioid overdoses continue to impact individuals of all ages and backgrounds, one way to reduce access to these substances is to properly dispose of prescription medications. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, prescription drugs thrown in the trash can be retrieved to be abused or illegally sold, and drugs flushed down toilets contaminate the water supply.

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board supports Prescription Drug Take Back Day by coordinating collection sites and education throughout Fairfax County. Raymond Paden, Behavioral Health Prevention Program Manager shares that, “Drug Take Back Day is an effective way for community members to participate in keeping our communities safe, particularly for vulnerable populations such as youth, older adults and individuals with mental health or substance use disorders.”



What to do next:

- ◆ Locate all medications in your household that are no longer being used. Securely store them away from children and pets.
- ◆ Clearly label these medications to indicate disposal. Cross out any identifiable information (names, doctor's names, etc.).
- ◆ Take collected medications to a collection site on October 28 between 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Collection Sites:

1. **Fair Oaks District Station**, 12300 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax
2. **Franconia District Station**, 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria
3. **Mason District Station**, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale
4. **Mount Vernon District Station**, 2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria
5. **Reston Hospital Center**, 1850 Town Center Parkway, Reston
Outside Pavilion 1 (REAR ENTRANCE), across from Parking Garage B
6. **Sully District Station**, 4900 Stonecroft Boulevard, Chantilly
7. **Tysons Emergency**, 8240 Leesburg Pike, Vienna
8. **West Springfield District Station**, 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield
9. **Town of Vienna Police Department**, 215 Center Street South, Vienna

To find year-round disposal options, visit [FairfaxCounty.gov](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov) and search “medicine disposal.”

Missed Take Back Day? Use the collection site locator at dea.gov/TakeBackDay to locate the closest authorized collector for year-round disposal. ☀

Discovering the Rewards in Caregiving

by Allegra Joffe, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

Reflecting on the rewards of caregiving can be helpful for family caregivers during difficult times. Family caregiving can be overwhelming and stressful at times and caregivers can sometimes find it difficult to see the positive and rewarding aspects of caregiving.

Rewards in caregiving may include:

- ◆ Creating a unique bond with the loved one you care for.
- ◆ Spending quality time with your loved one.
- ◆ Finding a deeper purpose in life.

Consider taking time each day to practice gratefulness by reflecting on the rewards. Consider making a list of what you find rewarding. Journal, meditate, and share what you find rewarding with trusted friends or a support group. It can be helpful to your emotional wellbeing to bring the rewards to the forefront of your mind each day. 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.

Medicare 101

Wednesday, October 4, Noon-1 p.m.

This webinar is presented by Bill Vaughan, volunteer, Virginia Insurance Counseling & Assistance Program (VICAP). This training is for individuals who will be eligible for Medicare and want to learn about their options. The session will provide an overview of the many components of Medicare: Part A (inpatient hospitalization/skilled nursing), Part B (outpatient hospital/doctors/labs/radiology), Part C (Medicare Advantage Plans), and Part D (prescription drugs), as well as how to cover the gaps in Medicare benefits through Medicare Supplement Plans. Register online at bit.ly/CAREWEB1 or call **571-407-6961**.

Virtual Dementia Friendly Information Session

Wednesday, October 11, Noon-1:15 p.m.

Join this presentation and learn how to become a



dementia friend and turn your new understanding of dementia into a practical action that can help someone living in your community. 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**.

Medicare 102

Friday, October 18, Noon-1 p.m.

This training is for individuals who are interested in learning more about Medicare coverage. The session will provide an overview of advanced Medicare details, such as the Medicare.gov website, the latest regulatory changes and key legislative proposals, as well as provide individuals an opportunity to ask more complex questions. Register online at bit.ly/CAREWEB1 or call **571-407-6961**.

The Latino Heart Health- What Sets Us Apart? La Salud del Corazón del Latino- ¿Qué Nos Diferencia?

Friday, October 20, Noon-1 p.m.

In this presentation, Dr. Max Luna, M.D., associate professor of medicine at the University of Virginia, will talk about the importance of recognizing cardiovascular health needs and the most important causes of heart disease in Latinos. In addition, he will explore ways to reduce and prevent heart disease. This

presentation will be in Spanish. Register online at bit.ly/CharlasEducativas or call 703-324-5484.

Exploring Kinship Caregiver Support

Friday, October 27, 2-3 p.m.

If you are raising a relative's child, you are a Kinship Caregiver. Nearly three million children in the United States, about 70,000 children in Virginia, and close to 4,000 children in Fairfax are being raised in kinship care by grandparents, relatives, or close family friends when their parents are unable to do so. The 2020 American Community Survey indicates that over 3,800 grandparents are raising grandchildren in Fairfax County. Join this panel to discuss unique challenges and how rewarding kinship caregiving can be. Explore how to handle family dynamics and boundaries, and how to find support and resources. Panelists include Robyn Wind, GRAND Voices Support Coordinator, Generations United, Mary Elizabeth S. Fleming, MS, Parent Education Program Coordinator, Fairfax County Department of Family Services, Sarah Smalls, Kinship Family Consultant, Formed Families Forward. Register online at bit.ly/AAAPanel call 571-407-6961.

37th Annual Caregiver's Conference: When Caregiving Calls: Building a Framework for Resilience

The Northern Virginia Dementia Care Consortium has been educating caregivers since 1986. This year's conference keynote speaker is Dr. Aaron Blight, an international speaker and consultant on caregiving, aging and healthcare, and the founder of Caregiving Kinetics. Join us to become better prepared to provide care and support at home or in a facility, learn new ways to engage individuals with dementia, and visit with exhibitors who offer supportive services. Topics include Building Caregiver Resilience: A Framework for Care, Understanding Dementia for Caregivers, Practical Tips in Caregiving, From Confusion to Clarity: Demystifying Advance Care Planning & the Essential Documents for Advocacy, Caring for the Spirit of the Family Caregiver, Simple, Delicious & Nutritious, and A Patriotic Celebration Honoring our Veteran's with the Sentimental Journey Singers.

The conference will be held in-person on **Friday, November 10, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.** at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church, 15451 Lee Hwy, Centreville. To learn more about this conference, each day's sessions, speakers, and registration, visit nvdcc.com or call 703-578-7431. ✨

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 Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of the City of Fairfax and the City of Falls Church.

At the September 20 COA meeting, the COA continued discussion of the formation of the Initiative Development Committees as part of the implementation of the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan. Each SHAPE Committee team is facilitated by two Fairfax Area COA commissioners, or "COA Advocates," and is comprised of citizens and representatives from community-based organizations. They have each met and reviewed SHAPE recommendations to determine short, medium, and long-term goals to complete as part of the five-year SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan. SHAPE Initiative Development Committee meetings will be ongoing through the duration of the plan.

COA Meeting, Wednesday, October 18, 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. ✨

Venture into Volunteering Fair

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator

The annual Venture into Volunteering Fair is returning in-person in 2023 and you won't want to miss it!

Have you been thinking about volunteering? Are you looking to add new and enriching activities to your life? Looking for a purposeful way to spend your free time and create new connections?

Come to the Venture into Volunteering Fair at the Springfield Town Center on the lower level, Sunday, October 15, 2023, noon-4 p.m.! Representatives from county and nonprofit organizations will be there to share information about a wide variety of volunteer opportunities throughout the region. There's something for

everyone! Whether you have an hour or two to give, or you're looking for a bigger commitment, you're likely to find an opportunity that works for you. Go to bit.ly/VOLFAIR for more details on this event.

This year, the volunteer fair will happen in conjunction with the Beacon 50+ Expo which will be on the upper level. The 50+ Expo offers a wide array of information on local resources for older adults, as well as health screenings, flu shots, and vaccines. Both events are free and there will be door prizes! ✨



Volunteer Drivers Needed

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator



Think about all the errands you have. What if you couldn't drive to get these completed? If you own a car, your help is needed for local older adults who need rides to medical

appointments, grocery shopping, food banks, and more. The non-profit Shepherd's Centers are sponsored by local area congregations, corporate partners, community groups, and individuals. They offer free transportation to community members (50 and older) who live in their center's service area and can independently get in and out of a car. Volunteers are vital to this program's operations. Please consider helping to sustain these important programs by signing up to drive your neighbors. Schedules are flexible. Even a few hours per month can make a meaningful difference.

Contact the center in your area for more information:

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

50+Expos Return this Fall in Virginia and Maryland

by Stuart Rosenthal, Editor of *The Beacon* newspaper

The Beacon newspaper is pleased to announce the return of its in-person 50+Expos this October. Thousands of older adults and their families are expected to attend the free annual events, featuring a range of valuable resources, informative speakers, health screenings, volunteer opportunities and entertaining activities tailored to their interests and needs.

This year's 50+Expos will be held at two locations:

- ◆ Springfield Town Center, Springfield, Virginia – Sunday, October 15, noon-4 p.m.
- ◆ Silver Spring Civic Building, Silver Spring, Maryland – Sunday, October 22, noon-4 p.m.

In Springfield, the Beacon is proud to partner with the Fairfax County Area Agency on Aging's annual "Venture into Volunteering Fair", featuring more than 35 government agencies and nonprofits offering exciting volunteer opportunities.

At the Silver Spring Expo, hear a captivating "Keynote Conversation" between the Beacon's publisher and veteran journalist, radio host and TV news anchor, Tony Perkins, renowned for his work with NBC4 and MAJIC 102.3.

Both locations will host a diverse array of exhibitors, including government agencies, nonprofits and local businesses. Attendees will be able to obtain valuable information about pertinent topics such as retirement communities, home remodeling, financial planning, healthcare, travel, fitness, senior services and much more. Parking is free at or near both venues.

Ensuring the health and well-being of attendees is also a top priority. The Expos will provide a number of important vaccines, including the latest Covid vaccine, the newly-approved RSV vaccine, regular and high-dose flu shots, Shingrix (shingles), pneumonia and tetanus vaccines (as available). Bring your Medicare card if you have one.



To encourage proactive health management, free health screenings for blood pressure, glaucoma, blood glucose and cholesterol will also be offered.

The 50+Expos would not be possible without the generous support of our local sponsors. Gold Sponsors are AARP Virginia and Brandywine Living at Potomac; Silver Sponsors include Giant Pharmacy, Johns Hopkins Health Plans, Maryland Relay, Adventist HealthCare, Pepco, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Asbury Methodist Village; and Bronze sponsors are AARP Maryland, Harmony Senior Living, Westminster-Canterbury on Chesapeake Bay, Housing Initiative Partnership, Five Star Premier Residences of Chevy Chase, United Healthcare Medicare, Xfinity, Autumn Lake Healthcare, Montgomery County Recreation, Montgomery County Aging & Disability Services, and Fairfax Area Agency on Aging.

For additional information, or to inquire about sponsorship, exhibiting or volunteering opportunities at either Expo, please contact us at **301-949-9766** or visit **TheBeaconNewspapers.com/50expos**.

Join us this fall as we celebrate and empower older adults and their families with a wealth of resources, connections and support at the 50+Expos in Virginia and Maryland! ✨

How to Show Support for the LGBTQ+ Community

by Abby Picard, Domestic and Sexual Violence Services

Wednesday, October 11, is National Coming Out Day, a day which celebrates lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) people being open about their sexuality and gender identity. The day was first celebrated in 1988 and is often recognized by LGBTQ+ people by sharing their stories of “coming out” – when they first told individual people about their identity or started living as openly LGBTQ+ in their lives and communities.

The LGBTQ+ community is diverse, and many people make the choice to come out or keep their identity private for different reasons. Some people may choose to come out because of their life circumstances, such as a transgender person who wants to go by a different name and pronouns or a gay person who starts dating someone of the same gender. But many LGBTQ+ people who choose to come out do so because they want to share who they are, either with their loved ones or with everyone in their life.

Even if you do not think you have a family member or loved one who is a part of the community, it is important for everyone to show their support for LGBTQ+ people. You will also be showing people in your life that you are a safe person for them to ask questions, be open with about their identity, and talk to if they experience bullying or discrimination.

Whether or not someone chooses to come out is a very personal decision, and no one should be forced to come out or have someone out them against their wishes. Here are some ways you can show your support for the LGBTQ+ community and respond if someone in your family or community comes out to you – whether that person is a teenager, in their 70s, or anywhere in between.

How do you show support for LGBTQ+ people?

- ◆ Educate yourself about LGBTQ+ people and



identities using resources such as The Trevor Project and Human Rights Campaign. By reading this article, you have already started this step!

- ◆ Talk openly about your support for LGBTQ+ rights when stories come up in the media or LGBTQ+ public figures – musicians, celebrities, athletes, or politicians – come out.
- ◆ Use visual signs that show you support the community such as displaying a rainbow flag magnet on your refrigerator or car.
- ◆ Push back against hateful speech or anti-LGBTQ+ comments by family and friends. Some examples of how to do this might include: “I do not feel comfortable with that language; please do not use it in my home” or “You might not realize this, but that is a very hurtful thing to say about people in the LGBTQ+ community.”
- ◆ Talk to others in your community about your support and share resources you find helpful.

How do you respond to someone coming out to you?

- ◆ Thank them for telling you and for trusting you with this information.
- ◆ Tell the person you care about them and their

identity does not change how you feel about your relationship or friendship.

- ◆ Ask whether it is OK for you to talk to others about their identity. If they ask you not to tell others, avoid pushing them to share with anyone else until they are comfortable.
- ◆ Ask if they would like to talk about what their identity means to them and let them share in their own words.
- ◆ If they are transgender, ask what name and pronouns they would like you to use to refer to them and practice using them.
- ◆ Be open to new information about their identity and be willing to be corrected. There are many different words people use to describe who they are, and they might not be what you expect.

Want to learn more about these topics? Register for an upcoming, free Unpacking Gender workshop. To find a workshop near you, visit Fairfax County Public Library's event webpage at FairfaxCounty.gov/library/events and search for "Unpacking Gender." ✨

Learn to Manage Your Ongoing Health Conditions

Don't let ongoing health problems stop you from living the life you enjoy. **Fairfax County's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program** is a FREE six-week group interactive workshop series for individuals who are interested in learning how to live better by effectively managing their ongoing health conditions. Learn positive strategies for better overall health, such as managing pain & fatigue, sleeping and eating better, increasing physical activity and so much more! Connect with others managing similar concerns. Take control of your health and improve your overall happiness! Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., October 19-November 30 (no class on Nov. 23). Space is limited, and preregistration is required: tinyurl.com/CDSMP123. For more information, please call Kristin Martin, 703-324-7577, TTY 711, or email Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov. ✨

... *Community Calendar continued from back cover*

Beacon 50+Expo

Sunday, October 15, noon-4 p.m.

Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield
Attend this free event for older adults featuring valuable resources, informative speakers, health screenings, and entertaining activities. Vaccines for Covid, RSV, the flu, shingles, pneumonia, and tetanus will be available. Learn about volunteer opportunities at the "Venture into Volunteering Fair," featuring more than 35 government agencies and nonprofits offering exciting volunteer opportunities. For additional information, call 301-949-9766 or visit TheBeaconNewspapers.com/50expos.

George Mason Friends Book Sale

Thursday, October 19-Sunday, October 22, 10 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.

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

Friends of the Centreville Regional Library Fall School Book Sale

Friday, October 20, 1-5 p.m.; Saturday, October 21, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, October 22, noon-4 p.m.

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

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.

COUNTY OF FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA
Adult and Aging Services
12011 Government Center Pkwy.
Suite 530
Fairfax, VA 22035-1104

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October Community Calendar

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

Computer Literacy Series

Fridays in October, 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

Hosted by the Virtual Center for Active Adults.

Oct. 6-Understanding and Using Email: Setting it up, sending and receiving email, managing email safely, email etiquette.

Oct. 13-Social Media Part 1: Making an account, understanding profiles and their impact, posting on the timelines.

Oct. 20-Social Media Part 2: Managing posts, sending private messages, sharing posts, staying safe.

Oct. 27-Information Literacy: Steps for online research, effective internet searches, analyzing and evaluating results, organizing research, using research to make informed decisions.

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

Medications and Older Adults

Wednesday, October 11, 1-2:30 p.m.

Free hybrid event will be held virtually and in-person at Insight Memory Care Center, 3955 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax

Mind your Meds educates and raises awareness around medication safety and drug abuse prevention. Medical errors are the eighth leading cause of death in the United States, and a critical subgroup of these errors is that of patients who are harmed by pharmaceuticals that are intended to help them. Some mistakes occur in a hospital or other facility, yet a significant number take place at home. Learn more and register at InsightMCC.org/events.

We Danced: Our Story of Love and Dementia

Thursday, October 12, 6-7:30 p.m.

Free hybrid event will be held virtually and in-person at The Kensington Falls Church, 700 W Broad Street, Falls Church

AARP Virginia and Insight Memory Care Center present this Author Spotlight with Scott Rose. "We Danced" is Rose's loving and thoughtfully written tribute to his wife and their years together, including her journey with frontotemporal dementia and his experiences as a care partner. Join us for this free, open discussion to learn about the dementia journey from a care partner's perspective. Register online at InsightMCC.org/author-spotlight.

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