



# Golden Gazette

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

## Gail Ruf: Bringing Joy to Children Experiencing Homelessness

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

Gail Ruf is full of boundless energy. After raising three children while enjoying a successful career in television, she retired from work but didn't slow down. She has filled her retirement years with pursuits she is passionate about, devoting hours volunteering at Fairfax Public Access, using her experience and expertise to help others create TV shows from scratch. However, the bulk of her time is spent concepting, shopping for, assembling, and delivering customized bags full of arts and crafts supplies to children living in family shelters throughout the region. This project is purely her own, born out of a lifetime love of arts and crafts and the knowledge that creative expression can bring joy and relieve some of the stress experienced by children who are homeless.

Ruf was born in Washington, D.C. to Seymour and Mia Bennett. Her mother, Mia, worked as a chemist for the Naval Research Lab while her father, Seymour, was a supervisor at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Ruf recalls that her love of arts and crafts began when she

was a toddler. Her first art medium was Play-Doh, which entertained her for hours. Staff noticed her love of crafting at the sleep-away camp she and her brother attended every summer, so at age 13, they hired her

for the job of arts and crafts counselor. That same year, her family moved to Alexandria, VA, and Ruf's crafting turned entrepreneurial. She made giant flowers out of tissue paper, selling them at the local strip mall and using her profits to buy more art supplies.

Ruf's interest in video production originated with her father, who taught her how to process film and develop photos at home. He also invested in an 8mm film camera and let her use it to shoot her own movies, which included her own special effects. Ruf attended Syracuse University and planned to major in Biochemistry, but switched to a Bachelor of Science in Public Communications after working with the university's television equipment. While in school, she started producing a TV show called "S.U. in View" and became comfortable hauling and handling the heavy portable equipment.

After graduating, Ruf's first opportunity to join network news came from Willard Scott, who at that time was the local weatherman on WRC Channel 4. She wrote him

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Gail Ruf delivering bags of arts and crafts supplies to the children staying at Carpenter's Shelter in Alexandria. Photo courtesy Gail Ruf.

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

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

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## GOLDEN GAZETTE

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Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. Call **703-324-5411, TTY 711**. The TTY number for all contacts in this publication is 711 unless otherwise stated.

**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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a letter and he responded, inviting her to visit him at the station. After they met, he hired her to work as a page and she eventually moved up to the position of stage manager. During this time, she also attended technical classes to earn an FCC First Class Engineering License. Newly credentialed, she was hired by ABC News as a videotape editor and worked on Good Morning America and World News Tonight. ABC was eventually bought by Disney, where Ruf continued to work for 30 years.

While enjoying a successful career, Ruf was also a busy mom, raising three children, Laura, Katie, and Em, in Fairfax County. She shared her love of arts and crafts with her children, who she recalls enjoyed creating art nearly every day. The family also enjoyed baking and decorating cakes and cookies together to bring to special school events.

Ruf retired in 2014 after a long and rewarding career. Almost immediately, she began volunteering at Fairfax Public Access (FPA) because she loved working in television. "A lot of the shows I do are ideas that other people come up with and need help with the technical aspects," she shares. For several years, she enjoyed working on a show called "From the Painter's Palette," a Bob Ross-type show where artist Judy Wengrovitz demonstrated how to paint using watercolor techniques. (Episodes of "From the Painter's Palette" can be viewed on YouTube.) Ruf has also worked on a variety of talk, cooking, and fitness shows. Her volunteer work with FPA has led to work on local independent films, a fun new experience for her.

The decision to volunteer in her retirement was inspired in large part by her parents. After retiring, Mia Bennett volunteered as an usher at the Kennedy Center, starting when the center opened and continuing for 40 years. She also volunteered for the Smithsonian as a docent. Seymour Bennett put his vast knowledge of Washington D.C. to good use volunteering for Travelers Aid at Union Station, a service that provided directions and advice to visitors unfamiliar with the city.

Ruf first began teaching arts and crafts classes to children at Cornerstones' Embury Rucker Community Shelter. While parents were engaged in workshops, Ruf brought art supplies and led the children in creating a fun art project. The children loved her classes, which thrilled both parents and shelter staff. Word spread and soon Ruf was



*Gail Ruf volunteers several hours each week at Fairfax Public Access, helping others develop and produce TV shows.*

teaching classes to children at other family shelters. She continued teaching for three years before the COVID pandemic hit and all in-person activities came to a halt.

Ruf's idea of creating bags of arts and crafts supplies for children living in shelters was inspired by thinking about her own children. "There wasn't a moment in the day that my kids weren't reaching in some drawer and taking out craft stuff and doing something. Kids in the shelter can't just reach in a drawer and get all these things," she says. Ruf's child, Katie, a Head Start teacher, had moved home during COVID and helped devise the first distribution of arts and crafts supplies. The pair repurposed large empty yogurt containers, filled them with art supplies, and delivered them to a shelter for staff to distribute to the children. The containers were a hit, so Ruf continued buying supplies and transitioned to putting the supplies in gift bags.

Over time, Ruf has refined the arts and crafts bags to make them more customized. The shelters she works with provide the ages of the children, so each bag is filled with art supplies that are appropriate for that child. She also includes a page of simple project suggestions (in both English and Spanish) and decorates the bag with uplifting messages or seasonal themes. Since the end of the COVID pandemic, some of the shelters have asked if she wants to return to teaching classes, but she feels like she is having a greater impact now, saying, "In some ways, this (the bags) is even better because it gets to more kids than who might have shown up one evening."

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Ruf prepares a supply of arts and crafts bags each month, rotating deliveries between six shelters. “If it’s something really fabulous like Halloween or Valentines Day, I will do two (shelters) at the same time which makes me crazy, but I know those bags are particularly exciting for the kids.” The number of bags requested by the shelters has increased over time, from 20-30 to 40 and more. To ensure that she has enough supplies to fulfill all the requests, she is a frequent shopper in every area Target and Dollar Tree and is on a first-name basis with many of the store managers. She knows that she can easily order all the supplies online but enjoys her shopping excursions. “Sometimes they (store managers) suggest certain things to me, which is above and beyond what I would have thought. They all think it’s wonderful what I’m doing for the kids,” she says.

If you’re wondering if Ruf has established a nonprofit to help cover the cost of the supplies, the answer is no. She purchases all the art supplies herself and is happy to do it. “I’m doing this because I can. It’s not like I’m a gazillionaire or money has been handed down to me. I’ve always felt comfortable saving, knowing I would use that money for something,” she says.

Despite the expense, hours of hard work, and her basement and garage being overtaken by arts and crafts supplies, Ruf absolutely loves what she is doing. Her reward is knowing that she is having a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of disadvantaged children by sharing something she loves – arts and crafts.

“I find it wonderfully amazing when one of the shelters writes back to me. They’re overwhelmed by everything they have to do to make the shelter work, so when someone emails a thank you to me it is above and beyond wonderful.” Some of the messages Ruf has received include:

“We are truly grateful for your dedication to our homeless families and to making the kids’ lives a little brighter.”

“I LOVE the Shine Bright and Dream Big signs on the bags. That is the message kids need.”

“Thank you so much for your generosity! The A&C bags have been a HIT!! Our kids were so excited and several of them said, ‘That’s for me!’ ...it made them feel so special to know that someone was thinking about them.” ☀

## Mature Living – Volunteering

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2024 Tax Relief Workshops

by the Department of Tax Administration

Staff from the Department of Tax Administration will be at the locations listed below to assist with completing the 2024 tax relief application form, as well as answering questions. To ensure that we are assisting individuals in a timely manner, all workshops will be utilizing appointment scheduling.

To request an appointment with our office at a designated workshop, please call **703-324-3747** or email **TaxRelief@FairfaxCounty.gov**.

### Braddock District

Hosted by Supervisor James Walkinshaw

**March 12 and March 26, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

Braddock Hall

9002 Burke Lake Road, Burke

### Dranesville District

Hosted by Supervisor Jimmy Bierman

**March 19 and April 2, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

McLean Governmental Center

1437 Balls Hill Road, McLean

### Franconia District

Hosted by Supervisor Rodney Lusk

**March 21 and April 5, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

Franconia Governmental Center

6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria

### Hunter Mill District

Hosted by Supervisor Walter Alcorn

**March 11 and March 25, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

North County Governmental Center

1801 Cameron Glen Drive, Reston

### Mason District

Hosted by Supervisor Andres Jimenez

**March 7 and March 8, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**April 19, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Mason District Governmental Center

6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale

### Mount Vernon District

Hosted by Supervisor Dan Storck

**March 13 and March 27, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Mount Vernon Governmental Center

2511 Parkers Lane, Mt. Vernon



### Providence District

Hosted by Supervisor Dalia Palchik

**March 15 and March 29, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Providence Community Center

3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax

### Springfield District

Hosted by Supervisor Pat Herrity

**March 14 and March 28, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

West Springfield Governmental Center

6140 Rolling Road, Springfield

### Sully District

Hosted by Supervisor Kathy Smith

**March 20 and April 3, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Sully District Governmental Center

4900 Stonecroft Boulevard, Chantilly ☀

## The Crisis Assistance Program Can Help with Heating Emergencies

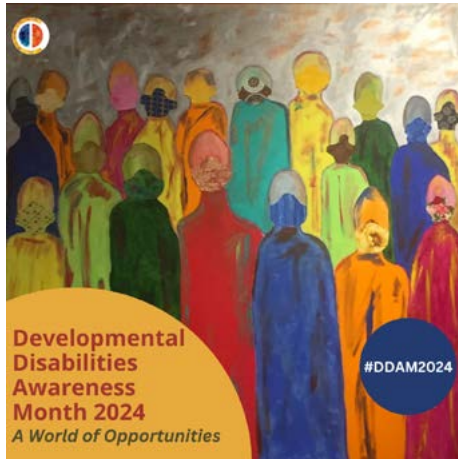
by the Public Assistance and Employment Services  
Division of DFS

Are you facing a “no heat” situation? The Crisis Assistance Program helps households overcome energy emergencies that cannot be met by other resources. An energy emergency is determined when a household has no heat or is in imminent danger of being without heat. The open application period for the Crisis Assistance Program closes on **March 15, 2024**. Learn more and apply for the Crisis Assistance Program at **CommonHelp.Virginia.gov** or by calling **1-833-522-5582**. ☀



## March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

by Ann Kim, Disability Rights and Resources



March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recent U.S. estimates show that about

one in six children aged 3-17 years have one or more developmental disabilities such as autism or cerebral palsy. Developmental disabilities occur among all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

Each year, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors proclaims March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month; a time to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all areas of community life, and to celebrate and showcase the excellent work that is being done around the country to improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The County also offers resources, information and an e-newsletter, Access Fairfax, for people with developmental and other disabilities. Visit the following websites:

- ◆ Fairfax County Disability Rights and Resources: **FairfaxCounty.gov/FamilyServices/disabilities**
- ◆ Subscribe to the free Access Fairfax E-Newsletter: **FairfaxCounty.gov/FamilyServices/disabilities**
- ◆ Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board: **FairfaxCounty.gov/community-services-board**
- ◆ Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services: **FairfaxCounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services**

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities encourages everyone to participate in National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. To find ideas on how you can participate, visit **nacdd.org**. ☀

### Fairfax Area Commission on Aging

by Linda Hernandez-Giblin, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

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



At the February 21 COA meeting, the COA continued discussion of the implementation of the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan and initiative development committees. SHAPE Initiative Development Committee meetings will be ongoing through the duration of the Plan. The COA also heard a presentation from the Office of the County Attorney, on the Freedom of Information Act.

### COA Meeting, Wednesday, March 20, 1 p.m.

#### In Person:

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

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

## Celebrate the Life-Changing Work of Social Workers in March

by DFS Adult and Aging Division

Every day, social workers in Fairfax County help improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our community. In the Adult and Aging Division of the Department of Family Services, social services specialists ensure that older adults and adults with disabilities are protected from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. They also work to assess the needs of older adults, work in partnership with adults and families to create care plans, and support adults and families to carry out those plans. Through compassion, collaboration and problem solving, these dedicated workers help to achieve favorable outcomes for the people they serve. Here are a few stories of their life-changing work.

### Joan\*

67-year-old Joan needed help securing housing after she was evicted from her apartment due to hoarding, bed bug infestation, and non-payment of rent. She began living in her car because she didn't want to lose her worldly possessions. She was in failing health and was frequently hospitalized because her health condition was poorly managed. The Adult Protective Services (APS) Worker assigned to Joan treated her with dignity and respect throughout their working relationship and connected her to community and County resources, including housing supports and advocating for Joan's access to a nutritional program to address food insecurity. Joan was referred to bedbug cleaning services to treat the possessions in her car, which allowed her to successfully enter an assisted living facility. The APS Worker was a pivotal partner in addressing Joan's care needs, resulting in Joan having a stable housing option, which allowed her to maintain her independence while receiving needed support.

### Isaac\*

Isaac, a 61-year-old male Home-Based Care client with multiple medical diagnoses, was evicted from his home and left homeless after an unfounded protective

order was filed against him by his former partner. After spending what little funds he had on a hotel room for several nights, his Adult Services worker partnered with agency colleagues, community-based non-profit organizations FACETS and New Hope Housing, and Isaac's medical care providers to ensure his basic needs – shelter, food and medical care – were met. Through collaboration with New Hope Housing and Adult Protective Services, Isaac was initially stabilized in temporary housing where he received additional support as he worked on a sustainable housing and care solution. Through the advocacy of community partners, DFS resources and his Adult Services worker's well-developed trusting relationship with him, Isaac achieved long-term housing in a local assisted living community where he is thriving.

### John\*

65-year-old John was a long-term Home Delivered Meals (HDM) client who needed assistance with maintaining stable housing. He received home delivered meals because he was homebound and lived alone in a subsidized senior apartment, struggling with multiple complex medical issues, including cancer, Parkinson's disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and arthritis. Along with his medical concerns, John faced an eviction notice and legal issues for property damage due to a small accidental fire in his apartment.

John's HDM social worker, in collaboration with colleagues from Aging Disability & Caregiver Resources (ADCR), Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), and Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV), worked to provide extensive coordinated services to stabilize his situation and to assist him in winning his court case against the eviction. John was grateful for the support he received during an incredibly stressful time, successfully stopping the eviction, reinstating his rental subsidy, and stabilizing his housing. 🌟

\*Names have been changed to ensure client privacy.



## Tips for Getting Through the Day

by Allegra Joffe, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

For some family caregivers, simply getting through the day is a challenge. Caregivers may struggle with a lack of time to complete tasks, feeling emotionally drained and grieving from seeing a loved one's health deteriorate, financial stress due to increasing costs of care, and lack of overall support. The number of stressors a caregiver has to sort through on a daily basis can be overwhelming and emotionally taxing.

Some tips for family caregivers who are struggling with getting through each day include:

- ◆ Practice self-compassion. Be kind and understanding with yourself and take moments to care for yourself.
- ◆ Make a list of priorities each day and instead of focusing on failures, celebrate the successes, even if it is just one item on your list that was completed.
- ◆ Adjust your expectations. Ask yourself if your daily expectations are attainable. If they are not, readjust and make new expectations.
- ◆ Have at least one person or community support in your life you can share your struggles with. This could be a trusted friend, family member, mental health provider, warm lines/peer support lines, and/or a family caregiver support group.
- ◆ Practice being present. Be engaged and focused in the moment. Don't worry about your next task.

If you are struggling to get through the day as a family caregiver, you are not alone. Family caregiving can be one of the most complex journeys an individual will go through. Seek support and resources to help manage your day-to-day life. If you wish to learn more about

caregiving resources, call our Aging, Disability, and Caregiver Resources Line at **703-324-7948** or visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults**.

### Dementia is Stressful

**Wednesday, March 20, Noon-1 p.m.**

In this virtual presentation, Jennifer Pauldurai, MD, MS, with Cognitive Neurology Inova Neurosciences Inova Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center (IPMDC) will educate caregivers on how neurodegenerative disease can be a very stressful time for the brain. When the brain experiences stress, it can manifest as depression, anxiety, insomnia, hallucinations, or delusions. Understanding why someone might be experiencing these behavioral changes can

help family caregivers better help them. Register online at **bit.ly/CAREWEB1** or call **571-407-6961**.

### Virtual Social Visitor Program

Family caregivers are invited to sign up for the virtual social visitor program, provided by the Department of Family Services Volunteer Solutions Program. Our vetted volunteers provide support through regular phone calls made to family caregivers, many of whom are or have been caregivers themselves. A few benefits from this program include alleviation of loneliness and isolation and an opportunity to chat with a volunteer about lighthearted topics and share journeys and stories. Sign up today by sending an email to **VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov** or calling **703-324-5406**.





## Inova Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center (IPMDC)

Care partners play an important role in caring for the person with Parkinson's at home and in the community. This monthly series for care partners is geared towards brainstorming practical ways to best deal with functional issues regarding caring for someone with Parkinson's. The series addresses limitations in gait, transfers, fine-motor, daily living activities, communication, swallowing, and more. Each session includes an explanation of the underlying difficulty and practical details on how to manage it. To register for this program or to view recordings of the series to date, please visit [bit.ly/IPMDCcarepartners](https://bit.ly/IPMDCcarepartners). 🌟

## Individualized Care Matters!

by Katie Patterson, Long-Term Care Ombudsman

A person receiving long-term care services has the right to receive individualized care. Services and activities should strive to attain or maintain a person's highest practicable physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being. Often this can be addressed in a person's initial assessment and plan of care (POC). As each individual is assessed for services, many things should be taken into account, to include their life history, strengths, functional abilities, and nutritional status. Preferences regarding food, communication, and daily routines should also be honored to enhance quality of life. Staff, family members, and the person receiving the services should work together in creating the POC to ensure all medical and non-medical issues are discussed and agreed upon. A POC can be updated at any time as an individual's preferences or condition changes.

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 in order to ensure quality of care and quality of life. For more information about care planning, or other nursing facility and assisted living concerns, please call the NVLTCOP at **703-324-5861**, or contact by email at [NVLTCOP@FairfaxCounty.gov](mailto:NVLTCOP@FairfaxCounty.gov). 🌟



## Seniors in Action

### McLean Community Center's Seniors in Action Program

by Sabrina Anwah, McLean Community Center

The McLean Community Center's (MCC) **Seniors in Action** (SIA) Program is a recreation program with a yearly membership designed for independent adults age 50+. Membership is \$100 per year/\$48 for MCC district residents. Participate in a variety of programs designed to keep you healthy, active and having fun! Build relationships and foster a sense of community while enjoying fitness classes, games, speakers and social activities. Seniors in Action Program Coordinator Samah Habayeb will help make your time at the MCC fulfilling and fun! Learn more at [McLeanCenter.org/seniors-in-action](https://McLeanCenter.org/seniors-in-action).

### Upcoming SIA Special Event

SIA special events and speakers' series typically occur on Wednesdays. SIA Program members receive weekly and monthly updates with detailed information, which also includes registration links for activities that require advance sign-up and where space may be limited. The following special event is open to the community.

**"Saving Claire" Documentary. Presented in Partnership with Marymount University**  
**Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 11 a.m.–noon at the McLean Community Center's Alden Theatre.**  
 "Saving Claire" is an innovative new tool for fall prevention that tells the story of denying gravity. "Saving Claire" works. It is tested, repeatable and a scalable model. There will be a panel discussion following the documentary viewing. Learn more at [McLeanCenter.org/seniors-in-action](https://McLeanCenter.org/seniors-in-action). 🌟

## Serve Your Community as a Volunteer

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator

Are you feeling tired of the same old routine? Consider volunteering! Check out the volunteer opportunities below, or the various options found on [bit.ly/FFXVOLUNTEER](http://bit.ly/FFXVOLUNTEER).

**Volunteer Solutions** is searching for skilled volunteers to share their talents with older adults at Fairfax County senior centers. The centers need weekday volunteers who are available to lead groups in fitness, dance, art, sewing, gardening, piano, languages (including ASL, Spanish, French, Italian, ESOL), and more. If you have some free time during daytime hours, consider sharing your passion with others. Entertainers (all types) and piano tuners are needed, too. Volunteer Solutions is a partnership between the Fairfax County Department of Family Services and Neighborhood and Community Services. There are one-on-one opportunities, as well. For more information, go to [bit.ly/FXVSVOL](http://bit.ly/FXVSVOL), or contact [VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov](mailto:VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov), or call 703-324-5406.

**Haven of Northern Virginia** is committed to offering support, compassion, information, and resources to the bereaved and seriously ill. Volunteers provide individual and group support to those experiencing a loss. Volunteers complete 30 hours of training over a two-week period and are expected to commit to a weekly shift of 2.5 hours for the first year. Contact Haven at 703-941-7000 or [havenofnova@verizon.net](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net). Learn more at [HavenofNova.org](http://HavenofNova.org).

Do you enjoy thrifting? **Inova Fair Oaks Hospital Thrift Shop**, (9683 Fairfax Blvd, Fairfax, 22031), needs volunteers. Volunteers help with receiving, sorting, pricing and merchandising donations, along with customer service such as cashiering and bagging. They are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. They ask volunteers for at least 4 hours, one day a week and many choose to do more. Contact Jessie Johnston at [jessamyn.johnston@inova.org](mailto:jessamyn.johnston@inova.org) or call 703-273-3519 and speak to Jessie or Veronica.

**Inova Fair Oaks Hospital Gift Shop**, (3600 Joseph Siewick Dr., Fairfax), also needs volunteers. Shifts are during weekdays, between 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thrift

shop and gift shop proceeds are donated to Inova Fair Oaks Hospital and used for purchasing equipment and funding hospital projects. If interested, contact Jessie Johnston at [jessamyn.johnston@inova.org](mailto:jessamyn.johnston@inova.org).

**ACCA** provides day care, food, rental assistance, furniture, and other services to low-income families in the Annandale and Bailey's Crossroads region. Individual volunteers perform nearly all of ACCA's work and are always needed. Schedules are flexible. Many tasks can be done from home. All recipients of these services are screened and referred to ACCA by social service agencies. Learn more about opportunities at [accacares.org/volunteering](http://accacares.org/volunteering) or email [volunteers@accacares.org](mailto:volunteers@accacares.org).

If you wish to submit volunteer opportunities for a future column, contact Tanya Erway at [Tanya.Erway@FairfaxCounty.gov](mailto:Tanya.Erway@FairfaxCounty.gov). ☀

## Volunteer Instructors Needed for Dads Parenting Groups



The Department of Family Services' Father Engagement Unit promotes positive parenting and fathering skills by offering 13-week Dads Parenting Groups for Fairfax County fathers and father figures. Bilingual volunteer

facilitators (English/Spanish) are needed to help lead these Dads Parenting Groups. If you are a father or father figure who is available one evening a week for three months, we would love to hear from you. Learn more about the program and how to get involved on our website at [FairfaxCounty.gov/familyservices/children-youth/volunteer-partner-services/father-engagement](http://FairfaxCounty.gov/familyservices/children-youth/volunteer-partner-services/father-engagement), email Samantha Carrico at [Samantha.Carrico@FairfaxCounty.gov](mailto:Samantha.Carrico@FairfaxCounty.gov) or call 703-324-7576. ☀

## Do You Enjoy Teaching Children? Volunteer with the Body Safety Program

Help facilitate pre-K through sixth grade classes in Fairfax County Public Schools during the school day. **We will train you to teach children how to recognize and prevent abuse.**

Volunteers must:

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



Our next training is Friday, August 16 but get started with onboarding and observations now! Bilingual (Spanish/English) volunteers are encouraged.

Call **703-324-7459**, email **DFSBodySafety@FairfaxCounty.gov**, or visit **bit.ly/DFS-VPS-BS-V**. ☀

## National Consumer Protection Week 2024

*by Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Division*

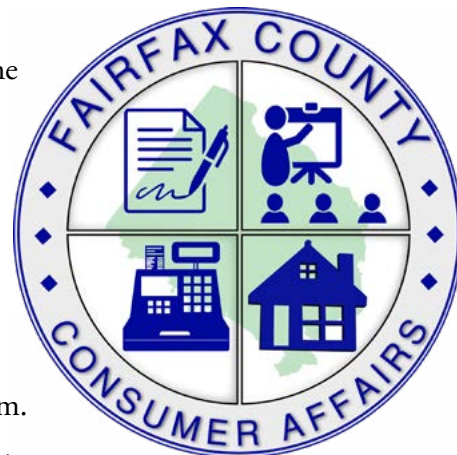
Join Fairfax County Consumer Affairs in celebrating National Consumer Protection Week from March 3 to 9. Consumer Affairs is committed to ensuring that Fairfax County consumers have the tools and resources they need to understand their consumer rights, navigate the marketplace, and make informed decisions.

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Day will be held on Thursday, March 7, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax.

Join us in the Board Auditorium for presentations on these topics:

- ◆ **9-9:30 a.m.** - Welcome and Consumer 101
- ◆ **9:30-10 a.m.** - Tenants and Landlords: Understanding Lease Agreements
- ◆ **10-11 a.m.** - Tenants and Landlords: Dealing with Maintenance Issues
- ◆ **11-11:30 a.m.** - Vehicle Purchase and Maintenance issues
- ◆ **11:30 a.m.-noon** – Scams

You can also visit exhibit booths in the lobby from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. as well as the Virginia Department of Treasury, Unclaimed Property Booth from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



This is a free event, but registration is requested. Please call **703-222-8435**, TTY 711 or email **consumer@FairfaxCounty.gov**. For more information, visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/cableconsumer/csd**.

This event will be available via live stream at **FairfaxCounty.gov/cableconsumer/channel-16/stream** and broadcast live on Fairfax County Channel 16 (Cox/Verizon/Comcast). ☀



## Artificial Intelligence and Deepfake Videos: What You Need to Know

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

Until recently, it was difficult to create a fake video that was convincing without considerable time and expertise. With the evolving capabilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI), that is no longer the case. AI generated videos, called deepfakes, are challenging our ability to tell what is real and what is fake, empowering bad actors to spread misinformation. Deepfakes are also being used by scammers to steal money and personal information.



### What is a Deepfake?

According to the University of Virginia Information Security office, a deepfake is an artificial image or video (a series of images) created using deep learning, a subset of machine learning, a branch of AI that configures computers to perform tasks through experience.

The process of producing complex deepfakes involves two algorithms. One algorithm is trained to produce the best fake replicas possible of real images. The other model is trained to detect when an image is fake and when it's not. The two models iterate back and forth, each getting better at their respective task. By pitting models against each other, you end up with a model that's extremely adept at producing fake images; so adept, in fact, that humans often can't tell that the output is fake. This is what makes deepfakes dangerous.

### Uses of Deepfakes

The main purpose of a deepfake is to influence people into believing something happened that didn't. Anyone with the capability to create deepfakes can release

misinformation and influence us to behave in a way that will advance their agenda in some way. Deepfake-based misinformation could wreak havoc on both a small and large scale.

Although deepfakes can (and have) been used for humor and entertainment purposes, according to NortonLifeLock they can be used for a number of malicious purposes, including:

- ◆ Phishing scams
- ◆ Data breaches
- ◆ Hoaxes
- ◆ Celebrity pornography
- ◆ Reputation smearing
- ◆ Election manipulation
- ◆ Social engineering
- ◆ Automated disinformation attacks
- ◆ Identity theft
- ◆ Financial fraud
- ◆ Blackmail

### How to Spot a Deepfake

Although deepfakes are often convincing, there are ways to spot them. Here are 15 things to look for if you think a video is fake, according to the cybersecurity firm NortonLifeLock:

- 1. Unnatural eye movement.** Eye movements that do not look natural — or a lack of eye movement, such as a lack of blinking — are red flags.
- 2. Unnatural facial expressions.** When something doesn't look right about a face, it could signal facial morphing.
- 3. Awkward facial-feature positioning.** If someone's face is pointing one way and their nose is pointing another, you should be skeptical.
- 4. A lack of emotion.** You may be able to spot facial morphing if someone's face doesn't seem to exhibit the emotion that should go along with what they're saying.

5. **Awkward-looking body or posture.** If a person's body shape doesn't look natural or there is awkward or inconsistent positioning of the head or body.
6. **Unnatural body movement.** If someone looks distorted or off when they turn to the side or move their head, or their movements are jerky and disjointed from one frame to the next.
7. **Unnatural coloring.** Abnormal skin tone, discoloration, weird lighting, and misplaced shadows are all signs of a fake.
8. **Hair that doesn't look real.** You won't see frizzy or flyaway hair because fake images won't be able to generate these individual characteristics.
9. **Teeth that don't look real.** Algorithms may not be able to generate individual teeth, so an absence of outlines of individual teeth could be a clue.
10. **Blurring or misalignment.** If the edges of images are blurry or visuals are misaligned (e.g. where someone's face and neck meet their body.)
11. **Inconsistent noise or audio.** Look for poor lip-syncing, robotic-sounding voices, strange word pronunciation, digital background noise, or even the absence of audio.
12. **Images that look unnatural when slowed down.** If you watch a video on a screen that's larger than your smartphone or have video-editing software that can slow down a video's playback, you can zoom in and examine images more closely. Zoom in on lips to see if they're really talking or if it's bad lip-syncing.
13. **Hashtag discrepancies.** There's a cryptographic algorithm that helps video creators show that their videos are authentic. The algorithm is used to insert hashtags at certain places throughout a video. If the hashtags change, then you should suspect the video has been manipulated.
14. **Digital fingerprints.** Blockchain technology can also create a digital fingerprint for videos. While not foolproof, this blockchain-based verification can help establish a video's authenticity. Here's how it works. When a video is created, the content is registered to a ledger that can't be changed. This technology can help prove the authenticity of a video.
15. **Reverse image searches.** A search for an original image, or a reverse image search using a computer, can

unearth similar videos online to help determine if an image, audio, or video has been altered. While reverse video search technology is not publicly available yet, investing in a tool like this could be helpful.

## How to Verify that a Photo or Video is Authentic

When checking authenticity of photos or video we must take several factors into consideration. MUO, (Make use of), one of the largest online technology publications on the web has provided a few tricks to help us distinguish between AI-generated images and real ones.

### Check the Source

This can be hard to do when a video or photo goes viral on social media, but it's essential if you want to know if you're looking at a fake. Try to trace the photo back to the original post to see who shared the image or video and why they shared it. If it shows shocking political events or messages, question why it is on social media but not mainstream media. If mainstream media is hesitant to pick up a story, it probably means that it is fake news corroborated by AI-generated images and videos.

Besides the title, description, and comments section, also check the original poster's profile page to look for clues. Keywords like Midjourney or DALL-E, the names of two popular AI art generators, are enough to let you know that the images you're looking at could be AI-generated.

### Look for a Watermark

Another important clue for identifying an AI-generated image is a watermark. DALL-E 2 places one on every photo you download from its site, though it may not be obvious at first. You can find it in the bottom right corner of the picture, and it looks like five squares colored yellow, turquoise, green, red, and blue. If you see this watermark on an image you come across, then you can be sure it was created using DALL-E 2. Unfortunately, it's easy to download the same image without a watermark. Midjourney doesn't use watermarks.

### Search for Anomalies in the Image

You may not notice them at first, but AI-generated images often share odd visual markers that are most obvious when you take a closer look. Here are a few

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of the markers that you might find in AI-generated images of faces:

- ◆ Missing or mismatched earrings.
- ◆ A blurred background that looks more like a texture.
- ◆ Text in the background is indistinguishable.
- ◆ Asymmetry in the face (teeth off center, eyes are different sizes).
- ◆ Patches of the photo that look like they have been painted.
- ◆ Objects like glasses blending into the skin.

Remember, scammers continuously evolve their techniques, including the use of AI, so it's crucial to stay informed, exercise caution, and trust your instincts. If you suspect an AI scam, report it to the appropriate authorities or the organization being impersonated to help prevent others from falling victim to the scam. ☀

## Scam Jam 2024

The Fairfax County Silver Shield Anti-Scam Campaign and AARP Virginia will be hosting the 2024 Scam Jam on Friday, April 19, 2024, from 9 a.m.-noon at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. The focus will be on scams and how artificial intelligence is aiding in their evolution.



The Department of Family Services Adult and Aging Division is hosting a table at Scam Jam 2024. Visit us to learn more about our programs and services and meet staff from the Golden Gazette, Adult Protective Services, and more. ☀

## Land Development Services Staff Available for In-Person Customer Service

by Danielle Badra, Land Development Services

Land Development Services (LDS) offers many customer service opportunities, both in-person and virtually. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any pertinent land development-related questions or concerns. We are happy to assist you!

If you prefer face-to-face interactions with staff, in-person customer service is available every day at the Herrity Building, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA. Here are the office locations, services and hours for in-person customer service:

**Want to know what land development projects are possible on your property? Need to talk to someone about your plans?**

- ◆ Speak to the engineer of the day about building permits or site-related plans at the **Customer Information Center** in Suite 111.
  - ◆ Hours: 8 a.m.-4 p.m. (Mon-Thurs); 9:15 a.m.-4 p.m. (Fri)

**Need help applying for a permit and navigating the Planning and Land Use System (PLUS)?**

- ◆ For questions about the building and site-related permitting process, head up to see the **Customer Experience Team** in **Suite 324**.
  - ◆ Hours: 8 a.m.-4 p.m. (Mon-Thurs); 9:15 a.m.-4 p.m. (Fri)

**Do you need to pay for LDS-related fees?**

- ◆ If you are depositing LDS checks, money orders or cash for LDS-related services, you can do so at the **Cashier's Office** in **Suite 636**.
  - ◆ Hours: 8 a.m.-4 p.m. (Mon-Fri)

Please note that visitors may not be added to in-person queues past 3:45 p.m. Please plan to arrive before that time.

If you prefer the convenience of calling, emailing or meeting virtually from the comfort of your home or office, our virtual customer service options are detailed on our Meet With Staff web page: [FairfaxCounty.gov/LandDevelopment/meet-staff](https://FairfaxCounty.gov/LandDevelopment/meet-staff). ☀



## Emergency Preparedness for People with Lung Disease

by Liza Sabine, Preparedness Coordinator at Fairfax County Health Department

Preparing for emergencies looks different if you live with or care for someone with lung disease. Here are five key steps you can take to prevent worsening of symptoms, and prepare to manage lung disease during an emergency:



1. Be aware of environmental triggers in your region, such as extreme heat, pollen, and poor air quality. Take appropriate measures to protect your breathing:
  - ◆ Avoid breathing smoke, fumes, high winds, mold, and cleaning products.
  - ◆ If outside during these events, wear an N95 respirator mask that covers your nose and mouth.
  - ◆ Limit outdoor physical activity and avoid over-exertion.
  - ◆ Stock up on replacement HVAC filters and change them more frequently during periods of decreased air quality.
2. Fill out a COPD or Asthma Action Plan to track symptoms and recommended actions to help manage your condition.
  - ◆ Templates are available on the American Lung Association's website ([lung.org](https://www.lung.org)).
  - ◆ Keep an eye on your symptoms and know when to seek medical attention. The first symptoms can appear as late as 24-48 hours after exposure.
3. Know how to check air quality:
  - ◆ Stay aware of the air quality where you live and where you may travel. Check the local news and weather reports for information. Check the Air Quality Index available at [airnow.gov](https://airnow.gov) to see about current forecasts for unhealthy air.
  - ◆ If you can remain in your home, use air purifiers, and keep doors and windows closed.
4. Put together an emergency kit to ensure you have all the medication and instructions you need in one easily accessible place when you leave home. Consider including:
  - ◆ Prescription and over-the-counter medications, a 30-day supply if possible
  - ◆ Applicable medicine delivery devices (nebulizer, spacer, portable oxygen, mobility devices, etc.)
  - ◆ Insurance card and an extra written prescription in case medication is lost or destroyed
  - ◆ Contact information for your medical providers, oxygen/medical equipment providers, pharmacy, home health agency, utility companies, and support network
  - ◆ A peak flow meter, if prescribed by your healthcare provider
  - ◆ List of all medications you take, including names and dosages
  - ◆ List of allergies
  - ◆ N95 respirator masks
  - ◆ A copy of your COPD Action Plan
5. Have a plan for power outages:
  - ◆ Alert your power company and fire department about any medical equipment you have that needs

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power, such as oxygen concentrator, nebulizer, ventilator, CPAP, or BiPAP.

- ♦ If you receive oxygen therapy, make sure you have a backup tank and backup power source. Check the instructions or manufacturer to make sure the backup power source will work for your device. Ask your provider how to make sure you have enough equipment and supplies during and after a disaster or emergency. Do not reduce your oxygen flow rate to extend the life of your battery or oxygen supply without talking to your healthcare provider.
- ♦ Many newer nebulizer models can be battery powered or used with a car adaptor. Additionally,

consider asking your healthcare provider if a similar medication can be used when your nebulizer does not work.

### Additional Resources

- ♦ American Lung Association: [lung.org/clean-air/emergencies-and-natural-disasters](https://lung.org/clean-air/emergencies-and-natural-disasters)
- ♦ Air Quality Index: [airnow.gov](https://airnow.gov)
- ♦ Lung HelpLine: **1-800-LUNG USA (1-800-586-4872 and press 2)**
- ♦ COPD Disaster Preparedness Plan: [bit.ly/ggCOPDdisasterplan](https://bit.ly/ggCOPDdisasterplan)
- ♦ My COPD Action Plan: [bit.ly/ggCOPDPlan](https://bit.ly/ggCOPDPlan) ☀

## Flood Safety for People with Access and Functional Needs

by Moriah Kitaeff, Department of Emergency Management and Security

To keep yourself safe during floods, it's crucial to know the difference between a Flood Watch and a Flood Warning. A Flood Watch means conditions are right for flooding, while a Flood Warning means flooding is happening or about to start. If you are alerted that there is an active Flood Warning for your area, the time to act is NOW.

It is not uncommon for places, whether homes or businesses, to lose power when a flood is taking place, as trees and other large objects can fall and create downed power lines. Because of this, it is important to include power outage supplies when preparing for a flood such as:

- ♦ Flashlight
- ♦ Extra flashlight batteries
- ♦ Shelf-stable food
- ♦ Can opener – if your kit includes canned food
- ♦ Extra batteries for any electric assistive devices



If you make the decision to evacuate before a flood, whether directed by emergency officials or by your judgement, there are important things to consider with driving when there is a flood risk:

- ♦ Never drive through flood waters. **Turn Around, Don't Drown.**
- ♦ Never drive around barricades.
- ♦ Stay off bridges over fast-moving water.

Ensure that you have an emergency kit with you in your car in case you become stranded within your vehicle. To learn more

about emergency kits, and what you should include in them, visit **FairfaxCounty.gov/emergency/readyfairfax/makeanemergencykit** or by scanning this QR code. ☀



## How to Report Potholes

by Fairfax County's Office of Public Affairs



Potholes are a way of life on the roads, especially as temperatures fluctuate, water causes damage or some asphalt simply ages. Please report potholes you encounter! Your car and fellow drivers will thank you.

### Report Most Potholes to VDOT

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) maintains most primary and secondary roads in the county and fixes potholes. You can look up who maintains every road in the county at [FairfaxCounty.gov/news/find-out-who-maintains-roads-fairfax-county](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/find-out-who-maintains-roads-fairfax-county).

VDOT's online reporting tool makes it easier to pinpoint exactly where you see a pothole. You can report potholes directly from your mobile device and include images at [my.vdot.virginia.gov](https://my.vdot.virginia.gov).

You also can call VDOT at **1-800-FOR-ROAD (1-800-367-7623)** to report potholes or to ask who maintains a road.

### Potholes on Roads VDOT Does Not Maintain

VDOT does not maintain all major roads in the area, however. If you see potholes on these roads:

- ◆ Dulles Toll Road, contact the Washington Metropolitan Airports Authority [mwaa.com](https://www.mwaa.com).
- ◆ GW Parkway, contact the National Park Service at [nps.gov/gwmp/contacts.htm](https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/contacts.htm).
- ◆ Many private roads are maintained by businesses, apartment/condo complexes, homeowner/civic associations or residents. If you know there's a pothole on a road that's privately maintained, contact your HOA or the business that's responsible. ☀

... *Community Calendar continued from back cover*

at Insight Memory Care Center – Fairfax, 3955 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax

By taking part in research, volunteers play a vital role in helping scientists understand more about the complex diseases that cause dementia. This means new ways to diagnose, prevent and treat these diseases can be developed and tested. Progress in dementia research just wouldn't be made without the contributions volunteers make by participating in research. Learn more about the why and how of dementia research. Register online at [InsightMCC.org/events](https://InsightMCC.org/events).

### Saving Claire: The Story of Denying Gravity

**Thursday, March 19, 7 p.m.**

Insight Memory Care Center, 3955 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax

"Saving Claire" explores the complex nature of aging, resistance to change and all the relatable patterns that increase fall risk. The film explores Claire's attitudes and actions, the spiral after her fall, and the dramatic events that follow. Join us for a screening of the movie and a discussion with the Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance after the film. Register online at [InsightMCC.org/events](https://InsightMCC.org/events).

### Burke Historical Society: Author Joyana Peters

**Sunday, March 24, 3 p.m.**

Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke

In March, the Burke Historical Society will venture beyond strict historical facts. Our guest will be Joyana Peters, local author of the historical novels *The Girl from Saint Petersburg* and *The Girl in the Triangle*. She'll discuss the genuine events and settings on which her works are based, her techniques for historical research, and her personal approach to inspiration and writing. For more information, visit [burkehistoricalsociety.org](https://burkehistoricalsociety.org).

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



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Adult and Aging Services  
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## March Community Calendar

### Softball Players Wanted

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

### Love to Play Basketball? Join NOVA United!

NOVA United Senior Women's Basketball Association seeks new players 45+ to join the league. Have fun, stay fit and make new friends while playing three-on-three half-court basketball. The annual fee is \$35 and practice takes place at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church. For more information, email Marianne Simonton at [Mrsimonton1@gmail.com](mailto:Mrsimonton1@gmail.com).

### Join the Lifetime Learning Institute

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

### Dementia Support Group

**Monday, March 4, and April 1, 7-8 p.m.**

This in-person group is held on the first Monday of the month at Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Hwy, Lorton. All are welcome to attend this support group for family and friends of those with dementia and other memory impairments. This group allows care partners to problem-solve, discuss issues, and connect with each other. This group will also include practical resources and guest speakers. Contact [support@insightmcc.org](mailto:support@insightmcc.org) for more information.

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

**Saturday, March 9, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.**

Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Boulevard, Fairfax  
Shop and enjoy friendly company while supporting the Green Acres Senior Center annual fundraiser. Our vendors will provide a memorable shopping experience whether you are interested in art, crafts, food or jewelry. For more information, please call Diana Osinski at **703-889-0115**, send an email to [CRAFTV2024@gmail.com](mailto:CRAFTV2024@gmail.com), or call the Green Acres Senior Center at **703-273-6090**.

### Contributing to Dementia Research

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

This class will be held both virtually and in-person

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