



Juli Verrier is Passionate About Helping Animals

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

Julianne (Juli) Verrier believes in finding your passion. A lifelong animal lover, she is passionate about caring for vulnerable animals. Following her retirement 10 years ago, Verrier began devoting much of her time to volunteering with the animal rescue group, Pets Bring Joy, to help cats without homes in the community. In June, her compassion for endangered cats led to her rescuing a mother cat and her five kittens from the parking lot at a local Starbucks, then fostering the feline family while working with other volunteers to place them in loving homes. While caring for these creatures can be exhausting, it is also a gratifying experience, one that provides Verrier with a deep sense of purpose and great joy.

Verrier grew up in the small town of Winterset, IA, a place she remembers fondly. Winterset is in Madison County, made famous by Robert James Waller's 1992 novel, "The Bridges of Madison County." Verrier and her younger brother Jim enjoyed an idyllic childhood raised by their parents Jim and Evelyn. Verrier recalls that she and her brother had pet rabbits and a dog. In 1954,



Juli Verrier comforting Tig, a recently rescued young female cat, while attending an adoption event. Photo courtesy Juli Verrier.

the family moved to Kansas City, KS, when Verrier was 12 years old.

After high school, Verrier attended the University of Kansas for three years. While at school, she became close friends with her sorority sister, Edda Buchberger, who was from Austria and attended school on a Fulbright scholarship. After Edda returned to Austria, Verrier decided that she wanted to visit her friend, so she left school and worked for a year to save enough money for the trip. She arrived in Austria in time to attend Edda's wedding to her fiancé, Wilhelm, in the scenic village of Gmunden, Austria.

Instead of returning home after visiting Edda, Verrier decided to stay in Europe, traveling from place to place. "I traveled wherever the jobs and people took me," she says. She recalls working a variety of odd jobs –

... continued to page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Beacon 50 + Expo	6
Venture Into Volunteering	7
Medicare 101 Training	9
Virtual Reality Training	10
Prevent Falls This Fall	12
Documenting Family History	14
Sponsors	17
Community Calendar	20

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.

SUBSCRIBE
NOW!

The publication is available in print, online and via email. Subscribe to the Golden Gazette online at **FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults** and click on "SIGN ME UP."



You can also "Unsubscribe" and change your contact information at this page. If you cannot access the internet, call **703-324-GOLD (4653)** and leave a message to subscribe or unsubscribe with your contact information.

The *Golden Gazette* is also read over the phone to subscribers who register with The Washington Ear. Go to **WashEar.org** or call **301-681-6636** to register for this **free** service.

GOLDEN GAZETTE

Adult and Aging Services
12011 Government Center Pkwy.
Suite 530
Fairfax, VA 22035
FairfaxCounty.gov/OlderAdults
DFSGoldenGazette@FairfaxCounty.gov
703-324-GOLD (4653)

Michael Becketts

Director, Department of Family Services

Trina Mayhan-Webb

Division Director, Adult and Aging
Trina.Mayhan-Webb@FairfaxCounty.gov

Gwen Jones

Editor, Golden Gazette
Gwendolyn.Jones@FairfaxCounty.gov

ADVERTISE

For information, please call **703-324-GOLD (4653)** or email **DFSGoldenGazette@FairfaxCounty.gov**.

Advertisements do not imply an endorsement for services and products by Fairfax County Government. For consumer concerns, please call Consumer Affairs at 703-222-8435.

DISCLOSURES

The names and addresses, including email addresses, of persons receiving the Golden Gazette are subject to disclosure pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, VA Code Sec. 2.1-340 thru 346.1a. Code § 2.2-3700 through 3714. Inquiries or complaints concerning this policy should be directed to the Adult and Aging Services, 12011 Government Center Pkwy., #530, Fairfax, VA 22035-1104.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request. Call **703-324-7948, 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**.

... continued from page 1

washing wine glasses at a train station in a little Swiss Village to working as a waitress in a restaurant on the Baltic Sea. She met new friends during her travels, including a German family that invited her to visit them for a week at their home in Bonn. Verrier traveled throughout Europe for three and a half years, only visiting the United States once to spend Christmas with her family.

Upon returning home, Verrier moved to Northern Virginia and got a marketing job at Riggs Bank. Noticing that she had completed three years of college, her supervisor encouraged her to complete her degree, even allowing her to attend classes at American University during work hours. Verrier graduated with a degree in Public Communications. Verrier's brother, Jim, also lived in Northern Virginia and worked for Riggs Bank, ascending to the role of Vice President.

Verrier's parents moved to Northern Virginia from Kansas City to be close to their children and Evelyn Verrier joined the ranks of Riggs Bank employees as well, working as an executive secretary. Wishing to stay active, she worked into her 80s before finally retiring.

Verrier eventually left Riggs Bank, working in public relations at various places before joining the corporate team at Long & Foster Real Estate. During her career with Long & Foster, she did public relations and special event planning for the company, which required her to travel extensively throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Outgoing and upbeat, Verrier enjoyed her job – planning events, taking photos and interacting with the agents. Throughout her career, she always had a pet cat or two, leaving them in the hands of her trusty cat sitter during her work trips.

After retiring 10 years ago, Verrier joined Pets Bring Joy after a woman she knew who was involved in animal

rescue suggested that she join a rescue group because caring for cats required a team effort. Verrier began working with other volunteers to feed cats at various community cat colonies. She also transported rescues and fostered cats while they awaited permanent homes. As she became more involved in the work, she had an epiphany, "I remember going out and feeding one day and saying to myself, I really enjoy this because it's not stressful and it's very needed. I'm happy doing this and helping them," she recalls. Pets Bring Joy also introduced Verrier to like-minded people (primarily women), and together they've formed a friend group of community cat ladies.



Juli Verrier's car filled with cat carriers while transporting adoptable rescued cats from rural shelters to the DMV, where they found their forever homes. Photo courtesy Juli Verrier.

At age 82, Verrier has little family besides her niece and nephew. However, she and Edda Buchberger have remained friends for over 60 years, visiting each other periodically. "It's hard when you get my age because you do lose a lot of your friends. So, animal rescue is what fills my life. You need the excitement of something like this that gets you out of bed in the morning," she shares.

Verrier had been trying to scale back some of her animal rescue activities until this past June, when a little brown tabby cat upended her plans. While returning home from a doctor's appointment, she stopped for a latte at the Starbucks in the Bradlick Shopping Center in Annandale. In the parking lot, she caught sight of the tabby darting under cars. Concerned for the cat's welfare, she returned to the parking lot every morning to put out food and water. After several days, a man confirmed that the tabby was eating the food, so she decided to attempt to trap it.

To keep the number of community cats down, animal rescuers often trap cats to be spayed or neutered before releasing them back into the community. "It is called catch-neuter-return when you put the cat back and I have trouble with the R part," Verrier says, laughing. After setting the trap and hoping for the best, she

... continued to page 4

... continued from page 3

returned the next day to find that she had successfully trapped the tabby.

Because the cat feared people, it took Verrier several days to get close enough to see that the cat's nipples were engorged with milk, indicating that she had recently given birth. Worried, Verrier rushed back to the shopping center and scoured the lot, trying to

spot the kittens. She finally located them in the sewer and with the help of several young Starbucks employees and a helpful bystander, was able to remove all five kittens and reunite them with their mom. Thankfully, mother Nugget and kittens, Bean, Brew, Mocha, Matcha and Cappuccino, were all healthy. While Verrier has no regrets about rescuing the cats, the rescue and the work required to foster them were exhausting.

Verrier isn't planning any future cat rescues. She is content to continue with her work feeding community cats. Currently, she visits five sites three days a week to feed and water the cats. She also hopes to scale back fostering so eventually the only cats living in her home are her own. Decorating is Verrier's other passion, so she plans to devote more time in the future to decorating projects.

Verrier hopes that by sharing her story she'll inspire others to discover purpose and joy in animal rescue. There are many ways to get involved, including fostering, feeding community cat colonies, transporting rescue cats to vet appointments, or building shelters so cats have a safe and warm place to sleep during the winter. To learn more about Pets Bring Joy, the rescue group Verrier volunteers with, visit their website at petsbringjoy.org. 🌟



Verrier rescued and fostered mother cat, Nugget, and her five kittens this summer. Photo courtesy Juli Verrier.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

by Ashley-Ann Waaldijk, Disability Rights and Resources

Fairfax County Department of Family Services welcomes the month of October with their annual Employment Mentoring Day event in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). NDEAM was created by Congress in 1945 to honor the contributions and achievements of people with disabilities in the workforce, and to reaffirm the commitment to addressing disability-related employment disparities.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 75.2% of the working-age population (aged 16 to 64) without disabilities were employed in July 2024, compared to only 36.9% for persons with a disability. These statistics encourage the conversation on how we might improve job prospects for those with a disability. This year's NDEAM theme is "Access to Good Jobs for All," to highlight the importance of increasing the quantity and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Employment Mentoring Day is hosted by the Disability Rights and Resources (DRR) unit in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools. This event provides students with disabilities opportunities to explore potential career paths that exist within local government, gain insight from current employees and former interns on their experiences, and find out the next steps to take toward employment.

In addition, DRR oversees several initiatives throughout the year designed to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in county employment. This includes their John Hudson Internship Program and their Employment Development Training Program, two paid internship programs for students with disabilities.

We believe that these initiatives will empower those with disabilities to identify a trove of opportunities and pursue their passions. 🌟

Statistics were sourced from the Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

October is Residents' Rights Month!

by Katie Patterson, 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 to ensure high-quality care and the best life for all residents. The 2024 theme for Residents' Rights Month is, "The Power of My Voice." This month, celebrate the power of residents' voices to speak out about their rights and desires for themselves. 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 theconsumervoice.org/events/2024-residents-rights-month.

As a mandated program under the Older Americans Act, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (NVLTCOP) is often called on to assist residents and consumers to advocate for their rights to ensure quality of care and quality of life. For more information about residents' rights, or other nursing facility and assisted living concerns, please call the NVLTCOP at **703-324-5861**, TTY 711, or email NVLTCOP@fairfaxcounty.gov. ☀

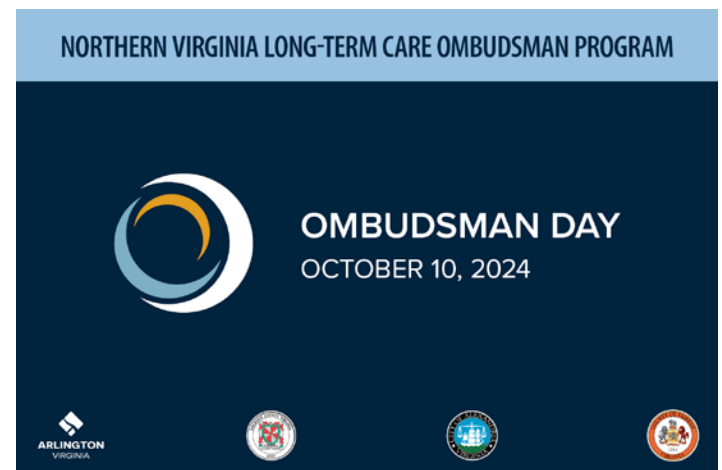
Celebrate the Vital Work of the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

October 10 is National Ombudsman Day, an annual recognition that celebrates the work of ombudsman while also raising awareness of their work and encouraging greater use of their programs and services.

For residents and family members of residents living in nursing and assisted living facilities in the City of Alexandria, Fairfax County, Arlington County and Loudoun County, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program serves as a focal point where they can voice their concerns and have their complaints addressed formally. The LTC ombudsman investigates and works to resolve concerns through complaint counseling, negotiation, and complaint investigations.

LTC ombudsmen also advocate for improving the quality of life for people receiving LTC services, provide information about LTC providers to help consumers make an informed decision, educate the community about LTC issues, train LTC staff, and consult with providers. Additionally, LTC facilities are visited quarterly by ombudsman staff and weekly by LTC ombudsman volunteers.



If you feel strongly about improving the quality of life of people residing in LTC facilities, consider volunteering with the LTC ombudsman program. To learn more about the program and how to volunteer, visit FairfaxCounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/long-term-care-ombudsman-program. You can also call **703-324-5861**, TTY 711, Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or email NVLTCOP@fairfaxcounty.gov. ☀

The Beacon's 50+ Expos Celebrate 25 Years

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

For the 25th year in a row, *The Beacon*, a free monthly newspaper dedicated to serving the interests and needs of the 50+ community in the Metro Washington, D.C. area, will host 50+ Expos in Maryland and Virginia. Older adults and their families are invited to attend these free, in-person events to learn about a range of services and resources, listen to informative speakers, participate in health screenings, and more. Dates and locations of the 50+ Expos are as follows:

Sunday, October 20, Noon-4 p.m.

Silver Spring Civic Building, 1 Veterans Place,
Silver Spring, MD

This 50+Expo features a "Keynote Conversation" between *The Beacon's* publisher and popular writer Laura Stassi, author of "Romance Redux: Finding Love in Your Later Years" and host of the "Dating While Gray" podcast.

Sunday, November 3, Noon-4 p.m.

Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall,
Springfield, VA

In addition to the expansive 50+Expo, *The Beacon* is partnering with the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging to offer "Venture into Volunteering," featuring more than 35 agencies and nonprofits offering exciting volunteer opportunities.

Exhibitors include government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses offering information on housing options, home remodeling, home care,



financial planning, insurance, healthcare, fitness, travel, senior resources and more. Collette Tours will also give a travel presentation showcasing special trips to Hawaii and Iceland for Beacon readers.

Free health screenings will include blood pressure, glaucoma, blood glucose and cholesterol tests. Vaccines will also be available, including the latest COVID-19 and RSV vaccines, regular and high-dose flu shots, Shingrix (shingles), pneumonia and tetanus vaccines. Please bring your Medicare and/or insurance card, if applicable.

For more information, or to exhibit, sponsor or volunteer, call **301-949-9766**, email **info@thebeaconnewspapers.com** or visit **thebeaconnewspapers.com/50expos**.

The 50+ Expos are made possible through the generous support of local sponsors. Gold Sponsors include AARP Virginia and Giant Pharmacy. Silver Sponsors are Adventist HealthCare, Johns Hopkins Health Plans, Pepco, Asbury Methodist Village, The Fairfax and Collette Tours. Bronze Sponsors include Maryland Relay, Xfinity, the Housing Initiative Partnership, The Leggett, Montgomery County Aging & Disability Services and the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging. Additional sponsors are welcome. 🌟

Stay Warm This Winter: Fuel Assistance Opens October 8

by Stevie Kelly, Department of Family Services

Crisp fall air and changing leaves can be refreshing after the heat of summer. It also hints at the cold to come over the winter months. Cold weather can strain heating systems and increase costs, which can be difficult for anyone on a limited income. The Fuel Assistance program helps pay heating costs for eligible households. Some people will be pre-approved and others will need to apply. Applications will be accepted from October 8 until November 8 this year.

The Crisis Assistance program is another option for households in need of heating assistance this winter. Crisis Assistance helps those who are in a "no heat" situation, such as broken equipment or receiving a disconnection notice. Crisis Assistance applications will be accepted starting November 1 until March 15.

To apply for Fuel or Crisis Assistance, or other food and medical benefits, visit **CommonHelp.Virginia.gov** or call **855-635-4370**. 🌟

Venture into Volunteering Fair

EXPLORE A WIDE VARIETY OF OPPORTUNITIES!

Sunday, November 3
12pm – 4pm

Beacon
50+EXP 2024
ORANGE COUNTY

Springfield Town Center

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 *upper level*, **Sunday, November 3, 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. Go to bit.ly/VOLFAIR for more details.

This will be the second year that Venture into Volunteering is happening in conjunction with the Beacon 50+ Expo. The 50+ Expo offers a wide array of information on local resources for older adults, as well as health screenings, flu shots, and vaccines. The event is free and there will be door prizes! ☀

What Inspires You to Volunteer?

by Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator

From the moment you meet Volunteer Solutions volunteer, Tracy Griggs, it's easy to see why the accolades have been coming in regarding the support she has provided to several older adult clients receiving case management from the Department of Family Services (DFS). Tracy has a palpable energy and a passion for helping others improve their quality of life.

She started volunteering with Volunteer Solutions in 2018, after she retired from a federal agency, where she worked for 30 years. It's unsurprising that during her career, she was a senior administrator and is used to organizing events and managing teams. As a volunteer, among other roles, she has taken people grocery shopping, driven them for errands, to medical appointments, sorted mail,



Standout volunteer Tracy Griggs.

decluttered, and helped them get nourishment - including nourishing their spirits with the power of human connection and compassion.

Tracy explained that as her divorced parents aged and faced their health challenges, they had their own local support networks (in their respective states), as well as her help, and she continues this caring role for the DFS clients who live in Fairfax County. She shared, "I love forming relationships. Many people are painfully lonely. We can

all do our part to make the world a little less lonely."

If you'd like to learn more about Volunteer Solutions, go to bit.ly/FXVSVOL, email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov, or call 703-324-5406. ☀

Family Caregiver Support: Caregiving and Mental Health

by Katherine Hall, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

Caring for older adults and people with disabilities is a noble and rewarding task, but it often comes with significant emotional and physical challenges. Caregivers frequently find themselves managing a multitude of responsibilities, ranging from daily personal care and medical appointments to dealing with the complexities of chronic illnesses. This constant demand can lead to caregiver burnout, characterized by physical exhaustion, emotional stress, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Research shows that caregivers are at a heightened risk for anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Recognizing these risks is the first step toward addressing and mitigating them. It is essential for caregivers to prioritize their own mental health to maintain their well-being and provide the best possible care for their loved ones.

Fairfax County offers a robust array of mental health support services specifically designed to assist caregivers. The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging provides educational resources, support groups, and consultation services to help alleviate the pressures on caregivers. The county organizes regular caregiver support group meetings, which can be a valuable space for sharing experiences and gaining emotional support. For those who prefer the convenience of remote participation, these support groups allow caregivers to connect from their own homes. Furthermore, the county's Human Services Resource Guide (HSRG) is an excellent tool for finding local mental health services, including counseling and therapy options. The HSRG can be found at fairfacportal.fairfaxcounty.gov/resource-guide. Fairfax County also provides respite care services, giving caregivers the opportunity to take necessary breaks and focus on their own mental health. By utilizing these comprehensive programs and services, caregivers in Fairfax County can better manage their mental health, ensuring they



remain resilient and effective in their caregiving roles. 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**.

Family Caregiver Learning Opportunities

Virtual Dementia Friendly Information Session

Wednesday, October 9, Noon-1:15 p.m.

Join this presentation and learn how to become a dementia friend. Turn your new understanding of dementia into practical action that can help someone living in your community. Presented by Allegra Joffe, Supervisor with the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, and Diane Watson, Dementia Friends Champion Volunteer. Register online at bit.ly/DementiaFriendlyFairfax or call **571-407-6961**.

Medicare 101

Wednesday, October 16, Noon-1 p.m.

In this virtual presentation, hosted by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, Bill Vaughn, Volunteer with Virginia Insurance Counseling & Assistance Program (VICAP) will share information 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 (Medigap). Register online at bit.ly/CAREWEB1 or call **571-407-6961**.

Medicare 102

Wednesday, October 23, Noon-1 p.m.

In this virtual presentation, hosted by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, Bill Vaughn, Volunteer with

Virginia Insurance Counseling & Assistance Program (VICAP) will share information for individuals who are interested in learning more in-depth details regarding 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 with an opportunity to ask more complex questions. The latest Medicare updates for 2025 will be discussed. Register online at bit.ly/CAREWEB1 or call **571-407-6961**. ☀

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**.

Tuesday, October 8, 2-3:30 p.m., In-Person

Mary Riley Styles Public Library, 120 North Virginia Avenue, Falls Church. For more information, contact Peter Sullivan at **703-248-5030**.

Tuesday, October 15, 6-7:30 p.m., In-Person

Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria. For more information, contact Jeffrey Snavely at **703-765-3645**.

Tuesday, October 22, Noon-1:30 p.m., In-Person

Reston Community Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. For more information, contact Cassie Lebron at **703-476-4500**.

Monday, October 28, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., In-Person

Kingstowne Library, 6500 Landsdowne Centre, Alexandria. For more information, contact Roxanna Ringer at **703-339-4610**.

Friday, November 1, 9:45-11:15 a.m., In-Person

Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Boulevard, Fairfax. For more information, contact Jason Scadron at **703-385-1695**.

Wednesday, November 6, 6-7:30 p.m., In-Person

Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. For more information, contact Lisbeth Herer at **703-790-8088**.

Thursday, November 7, 2-3:30 p.m., In-Person

Thomas Jefferson Library, 7415 Arlington Blvd, Falls Church. For more information, contact Rebecca Wolff at **703-573-1060**.

Friday, November 8, 3:30-5 p.m., In-Person

Chantilly Regional Library, 4000 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly. For more information, contact Stephanie Hutchins at **703-502-3883**. Register at librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/12519932.

Tuesday, November 12, 2-3:30 p.m., In-Person

Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Road, Burke. For more information, contact Emily Swain at **703-978-5600**.

Wednesday, November 13, 10-11:30 a.m., Virtual

Virtual presentation hosted by ServiceSource. For more information, contact Taylor Johnson at **703-461-6000**. Register at bit.ly/3WostSp.

Wednesday, November 13, 5-6:30 p.m., Virtual

Virtual presentation hosted by the Reston Community Center. For more information, contact Cassie Lebron at **703-476-4500**. ☀

Using Virtual Reality to Explore Elder Safety & Well-Being in Older Adults

by Lauren Elcesser, ElderLink

It's not always easy for people to understand the challenges and frustrations of older adults, even when they work with them, or are a caregiver, close family member, or friend. However, a new training series has been created to address this issue. *Exploring the Dimensions of Aging through Virtual Reality*, offered and facilitated by ElderLink, a partnership program between the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging and Inova, allows participants to “see through the eyes” of older adults to better understand what it is like for them while they encounter daily challenges.

The free 75-minute facilitated virtual sessions are held via Microsoft Teams and utilize virtual reality simulations developed by Embodied Labs to highlight challenges commonly faced by older adults. Topics include how social isolation impacts an older adult, how to navigate caregiver burnout, how to support someone with PTSD, de-escalation techniques and more.

The Dima Lab | Parkinson's Disease and Lewy Body Dementia

The Dima Lab allows participants to embody Dima, a Lebanese American immigrant living with symptoms of both Parkinson's Disease and Lewy Body Dementia, as she transitions from life at home to a residential community. Through this experience, participants learn to identify the differing symptoms of these two conditions and how to manage care as symptoms evolve.

Module 1: A Changing Brain & Body: How Symptoms of Lewy Body Dementia & Parkinson's Disease Affect Daily Life

- ◆ Early warning signs.
- ◆ Strategies to support older adults experiencing visual disturbances and difficulty with motor functions.
- ◆ The differences between Alzheimer's and Lewy Body Dementia.

Module 2: Progression of Lewy Body Dementia



- ◆ The importance of routine and consistency for people living with Lewy Body Dementia.
- ◆ Strategies to promote independence and preserve dignity.
- ◆ How to proactively manage the older adult's environment to reduce over stimulation.

Module 3: Transitioning to a Care Facility

- ◆ Providing culturally competent care by prioritizing elder preferences and honoring dietary restrictions.
- ◆ Supporting families through the transition process by communicating effectively with family members and older adults to build relationships and provide reassurance.
- ◆ Identifying situations which may cause over-stimulation and support older adults in preserving dignity.

The Dima Lab | Participant Experience Data

Participants were asked to respond to statements before and after experiencing The Dima Lab to gauge its effectiveness. Some of the statements included:

I am confident in my ability to help a person expressing agitation, stress, combativeness, hallucination, or sensory overload as a result of their progressing dementia and/or Parkinson's disease.

- ◆ After completing the Dima Lab, **participants experienced a 32% increase** in confidence in their ability to manage challenging behaviors related to Parkinson's Disease and Lewy Body Dementia.

I feel confident that I am able to positively affect the quality of life of a resident, client, or loved one experiencing the later stages of Parkinson's Disease and Lewy Body Dementia.

- ◆ After completing the Dima Lab, **participants experienced a 27% increase** in confidence in their ability to positively impact the quality of life of someone experiencing symptoms of later stage Lewy Body Dementia or Parkinson's Disease.

The Dima Lab has been provided to human service workers, family caregivers, community members with a vested interest in the needs of older adults, and professionals who work with older adults including medical professionals. One hundred percent of participants report feeling satisfied with their experience with The Dima Lab and report that they are likely or very likely to recommend The Dima Lab based on their experience.

Recent participants shared feedback regarding how the Dimensions of Aging through Virtual Reality: The Dima Lab made a positive impact on them:

- ◆ “Literally seeing the problems through the eyes of the person experiencing symptoms was highly effective!”
- ◆ “I learned more about LBD and how to care for elders!”
- ◆ “I experienced what the person with dementia would experience and become more understanding about their behavior.”

Register online for Exploring Dimensions of Aging Labs at: tinyurl.com/exploring-aging. To inquire about a private training session for a community organization, please contact Deme Warner, **703-237-6027, Demetra.Warner@fairfaxcounty.gov.** 🌟

Spotting Scams: Navigating Law Enforcement Impersonators

by the Fairfax County Police Department

Fairfax County Police Department's (FCPD) Financial Crimes Unit is working to ensure that community members never fall victim to scams of impersonators claiming to be law enforcement officers.

What is the Scam?

This common financial scam involves a suspect contacting victims by phone or email, posing as police or government agents. The suspect informs the victim they have outstanding legal obligations, such as unpaid fines for fictitious traffic and arrest violations. The suspect demands the victim to pay to resolve the obligation by purchasing gift cards and cryptocurrency, initiating bank wirings, and providing payment through financial applications. The suspect then uses intimidation tactics, such as threats of arrest or legal consequences, to coerce victims into complying with their demands and receiving payment.

How Do I Prevent the Scam?

The police will NEVER ask you for money or demand immediate payment in the form of gift cards, cryptocurrency, or other financial options to resolve the issue.

- ◆ If you receive a suspicious call, ask for the caller's name, badge number, and department. Hang up and independently verify their identity by calling

our non-emergency line at **703-691-2131**. Scammers will spoof real government phone numbers in an attempt to legitimize their scheme.

- ◆ Approach these calls with caution, especially those prompting immediate action or requesting sensitive information. Legitimate authorities will not rush you into making payments or divulging personal information.
- ◆ Stay informed about common scamming techniques and share this information with family members and friends, especially those who may be more vulnerable to scams.
- ◆ If you suspect a scam or have fallen victim to one in Fairfax County, report it to FCPD's Financial Crimes Unit through our online portal at **FairfaxCounty.gov/police/HowDoI/FinancialCrimes** or call our non-emergency line at **703-691-2131**.
- ◆ Don't share personal information over the phone unless you initiated the call and are certain of the recipient's legitimacy.
- ◆ Consult with trusted family or friends before making any financial decisions, especially those involving large sums of money or unfamiliar technologies.

For ongoing updates, please read our blog and follow us on social media at [@FairfaxCountyPD](https://twitter.com/FairfaxCountyPD). 🌟

Prevent Falls This Fall: Take Steps to Reduce Your Risk

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

Falls are a significant health threat for older adults. More than one in four older adults fall each year. One out of 10 falls among older adults results in an injury that restricts their activity or has other medical implications. Whether you're navigating daily activities or facing an emergency, the Fairfax County Health Department encourages you to have a plan in place for preventing falls so you can stay safe and active.

Fall Prevention

- ◆ **Modify your environment.** Use non-slip mats in your bathtub or shower. Tape down or remove loose rugs. Assess your home for trip hazards such as boxes, electrical cords, or loose papers, and relocate those items as needed. Turn on the lights in low-light conditions and before using the stairs and utilize stairway handrails.
- ◆ **Take medications as prescribed and be aware of side effects.** Missing your medicine can cause lightheadedness or dizziness depending on the medication. Also, take note of whether dizziness, lightheadedness, or similar symptoms are a potential side effect of your medications.
- ◆ **Wear appropriate shoes.** Shoes with non-slip soles and good ankle and arch support can help you maintain your stability. Wearing slippers or socks alone can contribute to falls, so opt instead for supportive footwear.
- ◆ **Utilize supportive devices.** Canes, walkers, and other assistive devices can help you maintain your balance and your mobility.
- ◆ **Have routine health screenings.** Visit your primary care provider and eye doctor routinely to screen for and address any impairments that could increase your fall risk. Discuss your fall risk with your health care provider and follow their guidance.



- ◆ **Have a plan.** Make sure you have a way of calling 9-1-1 and getting help if you do experience a fall and need medical support or other assistance. Keep your cellphone charged and on your person, and/or utilize a medical alerting device.



Cold Weather Preparedness

Fall weather brings changing leaves and wetter conditions. Rain, sleet, and snow can make sidewalks and other walkways slick. Monitor the weather and avoid walking outside in these conditions. If you own a dog, coordinate with a neighbor or loved one to have someone walk the

dog for you during these times.

Evacuate Safely

In the event of an evacuation, have a plan in place that accounts for any mobility needs you may have. Keep a pair of supportive, non-slip shoes readily accessible. Bring any assistive mobility devices that you need with you. ☀

Cybersecurity Awareness Month

by Moriah Kitaeff, Department of Emergency Management and Security

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, dedicated to educating the public on the importance of online safety. Unfortunately, cybercriminals often attempt to steal sensitive information or deceive people into sending money under the mask of legitimate situations. While we can't stop or catch every cybercriminal, there are steps we can take to protect ourselves and reduce the risk of becoming a victim:

- ♦ **Recognize phishing schemes:** Be cautious of emails that seem suspicious, such as those with multiple spelling errors, promises of too-good-to-be-true prizes, or notifications about missed deliveries when you haven't ordered anything. Delete such emails and avoid clicking on any links.
- ♦ **Use strong passwords:** Avoid using easily accessible information, like details shared on social media, for your passwords. For instance, if you've posted about your daughter Samantha's 5th birthday on Facebook, a cybercriminal could easily figure out her birthdate and use it as a password to access your accounts.
- ♦ **Enable multifactor authentication:** Although it can seem redundant, multifactor authentication adds an extra layer of security to your online accounts, making it harder for unauthorized individuals to gain access. Depending on your phone settings, it might be called two-factor authentication, two-step verification, or multifactor verification.
- ♦ **Activate automatic software updates:** When your devices, apps, or software notify you of available updates, there's usually a reason behind it, such as fixing a security issue or improving functionality. Enabling automatic updates helps ensure your systems stay secure.

Cybersecurity is important year-round, not just in October. Take a moment to review your account settings: Are automatic software updates enabled? Are your passwords linked to personal details? Does that email seem too good to be true? While the internet has revolutionized our lives, it still carries risks. Learn more about cyber risks at FairfaxCounty.gov/emergency/readyfairfax/cyberattack. 🌟

Mature Living – Dementia

Have you ever misplaced your keys or forgotten someone's name? Incidents like these happen to many of us, but is it just a lapse in memory... or could it be something more serious?

The Alzheimer's Association reports that "Dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life."

Having memory loss alone doesn't mean you have dementia. Memory loss can have different causes, and depending on the cause, some dementia symptoms might even be reversible. Dr. Jennifer Pauldurai from Inova Neurology gives an overview of this disease. Allegra Joffe, Supervisor of the Caregiver and Support Services Unit at the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, shares resources available in Fairfax County for those with dementia and their caregivers. In addition, a local family caregiver shares her personal experience with a family member with dementia and offers words of wisdom and encouragement.

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. 🌟

Simple Ways to Document Your Family History

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

Many of us have that one relative who is passionate about genealogy. Perhaps you are that relative. Genealogy enthusiasts are often deeply devoted to their hobby, spending long hours combing through archives and other sources to fill in the branches of their family tree. However, genealogical research is not for everyone. If you are interested in documenting your family history, there are ways to capture stories and memories without combing through digital archives or purchasing a subscription to ancestry.com.

Document Your Story and the Stories of Family Members

How often do we know the names, birth dates, occupations, and other details of an ancestor's life without really knowing their lived experiences? In 1973, at the age of 62, my great-grandmother wrote several pages in her shaky cursive and titled the document "This is My Life." In the pages, she recounts her life, from her birth in rural Kansas in 1911, to her marriage in 1929 and her family's struggle to survive during the Great Depression and beyond. Reading the document as an adult was an eye-opening experience, providing insight into the circumstances and history that shaped the hard-working and stoic woman I knew as a child.

Documenting our own lives and experiences and asking our family members to do the same can create an invaluable record for future generations. If writing isn't your strong suit, many of us now own a smartphone or tablet, making it easy to record audio or videos of our stories and the stories of loved ones.

To document the life of a loved one who is deceased, consider asking family members and friends to share a favorite story or things they remember about that person, for example, their favorite books, hobbies, travels, or holiday traditions.

If you aren't sure what to write or talk about, consider using prompts. StoryCorps has several lists of prompts on their website – [storycorps.org/participate/great-questions](https://www.storycorps.org/participate/great-questions). Some of their prompts include:



- ◆ How would you like to be remembered?
- ◆ What have been some of the happiest moments in your life? The saddest?
- ◆ What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?

Another useful tool available to Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) cardholders are the Family History Kits, which includes interview prompts, a digital voice recorder, and instructions on how to get started. Learn more at research.fairfaxcounty.gov/genealogy/family-history.

Organize and Label Family Photos

While photo albums aren't as popular as they once were, you may have albums you created or that you inherited from a relative. As you flip through the pages, do you recognize all the people in the photos? Will you children and grandchildren know who they are? The answer to the second question is probably no, so it is important to document as much as possible about each photo – who, what, when, where – for future generations.

You can do this manually by writing or typing a list that corresponds to the photos. Another option is to scan your photos to create a digital archive. Names, dates, locations and other important information can be added to the metadata of the photos, ensuring that identifying information cannot be separated from the photos. If you don't own a photo scanner, there are businesses you can hire to digitize your photos. DIYers

can also scan their photos at one of FCPL's Memory Depot stations. Learn more at research.fairfaxcounty.gov/memory-depot.

Organize, Digitize and Archive Old Family Letters

Like photos, you may possess a collection of old letters sent to you or inherited from a loved one.

While it may feel intrusive to read someone else's correspondence, letters can provide wonderful insight into the thoughts, feelings and relationships of deceased loved ones. Letters may also give a glimpse of events in history as they were witnessed by the letter writer.

Best practice is to organize correspondence chronologically if possible. If the letter writer didn't date the letter, look for a postmark on the envelope. Once letters are organized, you can scan the letters to create a digital archive. Finally, archivists recommend storing old letters this way:

- ◆ Unfold letters to prevent wear along fold lines.
- ◆ Put each letter in a clear sleeve along with its envelope.
- ◆ Put the sleeves in an archival file folder, which can then be stored in an archival box.
- ◆ Store boxes in a cool, dry location (not a hot attic or dank crawl space).

Create a Family Recipe Archive

Food often holds a central role in family traditions. It is one way we connect with our culture and plays a big part in family celebrations. Creating a family recipe archive is a great way to document and pass recipes and stories along to future generations. Here are a few tips for creating an archive:

- ◆ For recipes without a written record, ask the keeper of the recipe to demonstrate how they prepare the dish step-by-step so you can observe the process. Make sure you measure or weigh each ingredient, time each step, note cooking temperatures, and

document it all in writing. Then using the written recipe, prepare the dish to see how well you were able to duplicate the original, and fine tune it as needed.

- ◆ If you have old recipe cards, scan each card, then type the recipe to create a digital version that can be easily shared.
- ◆ Encourage family members to contribute recipes to the archive. Ask them to include favorite stories or memories related to the dish along with the recipe.
- ◆ Is a recipe culturally significant? Document this in the archive.
- ◆ Ask younger generations to submit recipes that hold special meaning to them and encourage them to continue the tradition with later generations. 🌟

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 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 18 COA meeting, the COA met and discussed visioning for the continued work of the SHAPE Initiative Development Committees. At the October 16 meeting, the COA will continue to work on the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan and there will also be a presentation on the Countywide Strategic Plan.

COA Meeting, Wednesday, October 16, 1 p.m.

In Person: Pennino Building, 12011 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax – Room 505

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



... *Community Calendar continued from back cover*

Consumer Affairs Presents: Sleigh Safe This Holiday Season: How to Avoid Holiday Scams

Tuesday October 29, 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Hosted by the Virtual Center for Active Adults.
For more information, visit bit.ly/novaVCAA;
To join the virtual presentation on Zoom, visit
bit.ly/VCAAzoom2; Meeting ID: 905 123 5932
Passcode: 3636

SPARK Movie Screening and Q&A

Wednesday, October 30, 7-9 p.m.

Join us for a special virtual viewing of the film *SPARK - Robin Williams and his Battle with Lewy Body Dementia* followed by a live panel discussion with the Lewy Body Dementia Association. Register at insightmcc.org/get-involved/events/event_calendar.html.

The Beacon 50+ Expo and Venture into Volunteering

Sunday, November 3, Noon-4 p.m.

Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield
Older adults and their families are invited to attend this free, in-person event to learn about a range of services and resources, listen to informative speakers, participate in health screenings, and more. In addition to the 50+ Expo, *The Beacon* is partnering with the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging to offer "Venture into Volunteering," featuring more than 35 agencies and nonprofits offering exciting volunteer opportunities. Learn more at thebeaconnewspapers.com/50expos.

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.

Venture into Volunteering Fair

EXPLORE A WIDE VARIETY OF OPPORTUNITIES!

Sunday, November 3
12-4PM

The Beacon
50+EXPO 2024
OUR 20th YEAR

Springfield Town Center

Come to the **Venture into Volunteering Fair** at the Springfield Town Center, on Sunday, November 3, 2024, from 12-4 p.m. Learn about various volunteer opportunities from nonprofit and county representatives.

The Beacon 50+ Expo and Venture into Volunteering will take place on the upper level.

For more information and to check out the participating organizations:

bit.ly/VOLFAIR

Scan the QR code for details.



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

Presorted Standard
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MERRIFIELD, VA
PERMIT NO. 1808

October Community Calendar

Lifetime Learning Institute of Northern Virginia's Fall/Winter 2024 Class Catalog Now Available

LLI, affiliated with the NOVA-Annandale campus, is a non-profit, member-run organization offering stimulating educational, cultural, and social pursuits to adults ages 50 and over. Classes are in-person or online. For the class catalog, information on membership, and how to enroll, visit llinova.org. For questions, email admin@llinova.org.

Fiesta Fairfax! Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month!

Saturday, October 5, 2-7 p.m.

Old Town Square, 10415 North Street, Fairfax
Free event featuring a variety of cultural performances, music, food and educational exhibits highlighting the contributions and experiences of the Hispanic community. Area non-profits will be onsite to share information about services and opportunities to work with our growing Latino community. For more information, visit fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/special-events or call 703-273-6097.

SAGE Table Event

Tuesday, October 8, Noon-2 p.m.

The Landing Alexandria, 2620 Main Line Blvd, Alexandria
SAGE Table is an initiative launched in 2017 to

fight isolation in the LGBTQ+ community through the power of intergenerational connections. The transformative relationships formed around a SAGE Table can alleviate social isolation and its consequences. Members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies are encouraged to attend. Meals will be provided. Space is limited - sign up at insightmcc.org/get-involved/events/event_calendar.html.

Free Northern Virginia Virtual 50+ Employment Expo

Thursday, October 10, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Attend two morning workshops created for age 50+ jobseekers to help you with your job search. From noon to 3 p.m., hear area employers talk about their companies and openings and answer questions from jobseekers. Register for free at VirtualExpos.AccessJCA.org.

Memory Screenings

Monday, October 21, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Wellness Center for Older Adults, 4027B Olley Lane, Fairfax
Insight Memory Care Center offers free confidential memory screenings and educational materials to people with concerns about their memory or who want to check their memory now for future comparison. Call to reserve a 30-minute appointment at 703-970-3601.