

THE RESTON
LETTER

Reston is back to school amidst FCPS changes

By Reston Letter staff

On Monday, Aug. 24, most Reston schools began fall classes. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) parents should note changes this year, many related to technology.

On the state level, all high school students are now required to put cell phones away in backpacks or lockers for the entire school day. Last year they were allowed in the cafeteria during lunch. This year, they are to be put away from the morning bell until the dismissal bell. Middle school rules are the same: “Away for the day.”

On the district level, prekindergarten and kindergarten students will no longer use FCPS-issued laptops or tablets except when needed for testing, documented accommodations, translation, or multilingual education support. Since the COVID-19 shutdown, these young students have had access to these devices.

In addition to cell phones, this year FCPS will not allow personal laptops or tablets in schools during the instructional day. Over the past few years, students have been able to bring their personal devices in place of the school-issued computers. Now they must use the FCPS-issued devices only.

FCPS has an updated version of ParentVUE, the app for parents to keep track of students’ grades, sign forms, and access other information. This update is designed for heightened security.

MealViewer is a new app that provides FCPS families with menus, food and allergy information and meal notifications.

Another change is student bus IDs have been issued to all FCPS students who bus to and/or from school. Students will tap their IDs when boarding and ex-



Lake Anne Elementary students Aletta (left) and Eleanor (right) greet each other on the first day of school as parents walk their children to school. LAES crossing guard, Anne Rodriguez, welcomes students back. Photos by Isadora Guerreiro

iting the bus to improve operations and provide families more information about bus trips.

In athletics, FCPS varsity football games will have weapons screening and a standard bag policy across high schools. The rollout of middle school sports at FCPS continues this year with volleyball, building on the success of track and field and cross country.

As of this year, all FCPS elementary

school students will have access to Robotics, Algebra 1 and extracurricular music opportunities.

Together, these changes are intended to address negative technology trends while harnessing technology for good. They are designed to give families more ways to participate in their students’ education, keep spectators safe and provide students with access to a wider variety of opportunities through their schools.

Removal of South Lakes High School crossing guard raises major concerns

By Ava-Grace Satterfield, staff writer

A car struck a South Lakes High School student crossing South Lakes Drive on the morning of Sept. 1, causing minor injuries. The accident occurred near an intersection where a school crossing guard had formerly directed traffic.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors eliminated funding for 10 high school crossing guards during the spring budget process, with the changes taking effect at the beginning of the 2026-27 school year. The county began discussing the guards’ removal in 2024.

At South Lakes, crossing guards helped protect students, buses and drivers at the intersection of South Lakes Drive, Tanbark Road and Se-

ahawks Drive. Without them, the congested intersection has become a “nightmare” for student pedestrians, according to Reston Association Board President Travis Johnson.

South Lakes student Vivian Smozynski witnessed the dangers during her first week of school. “With the main road not having any stop signs, people turning all ways, and a crosswalk connecting the nearby neighborhood and public bus stop to the school, it’s a recipe for disaster,” she said.

In response to the accident, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors temporarily restored crossing guards at all 10 high schools while safety assessments continue. On Sept. 15, the board will vote on how to spend its remaining



At the South Lakes Drive intersection across from the high school, vehicles continue to pass as student pedestrians attempt to cross. Photo courtesy of Melanie Meren

funds from the previous fiscal year. One option is to permanently restore funding for the guards. According to county evaluations, the board would need to allocate \$900,000 to do so.

Hunter Mill District Representative Melanie Meren,

an advocate for student safety, encourages FCPS students and community members to attend the Sept. 15 public budget hearing and urge the county to provide permanent funding for high school crossing guards.

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bulletin



Vertical Horizon to play Town Center at Rocktoberfest, Reston development news, Vintage Reston pop-up at Lake Anne, Shoe drive for kids, Boat Regatta pictures

education



South Lakes and Herndon High Theatre programs’ performances lineup for the season, Making an Impact, new Montessori middle school opens in Reston

kids



School buses cool buses, Cinnamon bites recipe, Find the differences at Totally Trucks, Acorn Art Magic, brand new Fair-Fox comic!

lifestyle

Phantom Foodie with fall football food ideas, Reston actress in new movie, TRL Teen Feed on your senior year

opinions

Prevalence of teens on e-motorcycles sparks personal story, advice on legal guardianship for your children

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THE BULLETIN

Mission Statement:
The Reston Letter seeks to inform the Reston community of local events and services, highlight local residents' accomplishments, and to provide a platform for residents to weigh in on local topics relevant to the majority of our readers.

Vertical Horizon to headline Rocktoberfest at Reston Town Center

Contributed by Reston Town Center Association

Vertical Horizon will headline the second annual Rocktoberfest at Reston Town Center on Saturday, Oct. 10, joining two regional bands with strong local ties for a free evening of live music.

The concert, presented by the Reston Town Center Association and BXP, will begin at 6 p.m. with Virginia Coalition, followed by Everything at 7:30 p.m. Vertical Horizon is scheduled to take the stage around 9 p.m.

Vertical Horizon's 1999 album, "Everything You Want," was certified double platinum, and its title track was Billboard's most-played single of 2000.

All three bands have roots in the Washington area. Vertical Horizon's founders met as students at Georgetown University. Everything grew out of musicians who began playing together at James Madison University, while Virginia Coalition's five founding members formed the band while attending T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria.

"By bringing together a marquee, top-to-bottom lineup of DMV superstars with national cred, huge hits and dedicated followings," Rocktoberfest will build on the success of last year's inaugural event, said Robert Goudie, executive director of the Reston Town Center Association.

The concert will take place at the Pavilion at Reston Town Center. As with the center's summer concert series, Rocktoberfest will offer Sip & Stroll, allowing attendees to purchase beverages from 11 participating establishments surrounding the venue and bring them into the concert area, subject to event rules.

Free parking will be available throughout the day and evening in Reston Town Center's garages.

Alexandra Young, BXP's vice president of regional marketing, said the fall event is intended to build on the experience offered by the center's summer concerts. "This lineup takes it up three notches, with iconic hits, national acclaim and a celebration of local ties,"



Vertical Horizon will headline Rocktoberfest at Town Center on Oct. 10.
Photo contributed by RTC Association

Young said.

Rocktoberfest is supported by Hyatt Regency Reston as artist accommodations sponsor and Makers Union as artist hospitality sponsor. RTCA and BXP are partnering with Party DC for performer

booking while Meerkat Sound is providing lighting and sound.

For more information, including event details and Sip & Stroll rules, visit the Reston Town Center Association's Rocktoberfest webpage.

Reston's future: 'New Town' to a new town?

First in a multi-part series on how Reston's "Live, Work, Play" original vision is evolving as the town moves toward the 2030s and beyond.

By Gene Powell, staff writer

Reston—once again in its 62-year history—is at an inflection point. Major decisions are being made today on housing and commercial redevelopment, from housing density and the repurposing of commercial buildings into townhouse development to the future of one, if not both, signature golf courses.

Metro's Silver Line Phase 1 reached Reston in 2014, and Phase 2 added two more Reston stops, Herndon and Ashburn stops, and reached Dulles in 2022.

A 1964 article in The New York Times is reported to have praised newly founded Reston as "one of the most striking communities in the United States," noting a commitment to innovative design and diversity. Founder and developer Robert E. Simon said at the time he envisioned it as a place where people of all races and backgrounds could live in harmony.

Success came quickly to New Town. The first family moved into Reston in 1964, and all of the existing commercial spaces were leased by February 1965, according to the town's history as reported by the Reston Museum.

Simon was inspired by what had been named the "Garden City" urban design movement, with its emphasis on walkable neighborhoods within an urban area, green spaces and mixed-use residential, commercial and light industrial development. Simon prioritized residential amenities—pools, tennis courts and pedestrian pathways—intertwined with housing "Clusters" and commercial "Village Centers."

Simon also saw the need for a "Town Center," a relatively dense urban core with commercial outlets, restaurants, a plaza and park as prime features to draw the entire community together. In many ways, Reston holds true to Simon's vision of a vibrant, egalitarian, highly educated and socially conscious urban homestead—albeit in 2026 with a touch of outsized prosperity, soaring residential values and an aging population.

- A diverse population: The 2024 U.S. Census identified the town's 65,052 residents (up from 63,226 in 2020 and 58,404 in 2010) as 51% White, 16% Hispanic/Latino, 10% Asian and 7% Black, with 15.4%

identifying themselves as "two or more races." The report also noted Reston's "foreign-born population" stood at 23.4%.

- A median household income of \$154,151, about 1.3 times higher than the DMV area surrounding Washington, D.C.
- 96.1% of Reston's adults held a high school degree or higher.
- A poverty rate of 7.9%, less than the DMV's 8.3%, Virginia's 8.3% and the nation's 12.2%.
- An attractive mix of community, business and technology, creating what some call the "Silicon Valley of the East," now home to offices of Microsoft, Leidos, Oracle, Verisign, Google, Amazon Web Services, SAIC, CACI International and others.

But can the "green" community marked by tree-lined residential streets that see a mix of single-family, townhouse and multifamily dwellings retain its identity with newer housing projects focused on townhomes, low-rise "stacked townhomes" or high-rise condo or apartment buildings?

The most visible sites among new housing options: Skymark Reston Town Center, a 40-story apartment building that is the highest mixed-use structure in the D.C. area, and the J.W. Marriott at Reston Station, a 28-story building with 240 hotel rooms and 48 condominiums—one of which sold this summer for nearly \$11 million. Both opened in 2025 and faced criticism from some who said they were not compatible with Reston's original residential designs.

The most-visible conflict: A long-running battle over the future of Reston National Golf Course. Will it remain one of the town's major green spaces, or will it become a site for new housing? On one side are what a county planner called "the pioneers," who fear the loss of what brought them and others to Reston decades ago. On the other is a developer who sees an underused, if valuable, community asset as a prime candidate for new housing in a booming urban area.

A recent county-sponsored preview aimed to spark community comment on redevelopment from commercial buildings to residential use of an 112-acre area



One of the many development sites is near Isaac Newton Square looking toward Hidden Creek Country Club and Town Center in the distance. Photo by Benjamin Burgess

called "Reston East," between the Dulles Toll Road and Sunrise Valley Drive. County planners and developers displayed charts and drawings of what might happen to the area's rapidly aging commercial buildings.

But the Restonians attending the session were largely focused on how changes would impact their property and lives, from increased traffic to demands on schools and recreational areas. One couple, who said they were longtime homeowners, asked aloud if this "will look like Reston?"

Next: As residential projects and long-planned expansions such as Reston Town Center North unfold, can Reston sustain Simon's dream?

THE BULLETIN

Vintage Reston pop-up opens beside Lake Anne Brew House

By Holly Weatherwax,
staff writer

Lake Anne is a beloved and ever-changing part of Reston. For many who grew up here in the early days of Reston, it was a playground, a babysitter and a favorite gathering place.

Melissa Romano was one of those children. She spent her younger years hanging out at Lake Anne and wandering the paths of Reston. More recently, Melissa and her husband, Jason, have become familiar faces at Lake Anne as the owners of Lake Anne Brew House. She also co-owns Nordic Knot. Every day, she walks from her nearby home to the spaces and businesses they have created.

“This place was built for the community. The entire nature of Lake Anne was that Robert E. Simon wanted a space where people could live, work and play,” Romano said.

Last fall, the Brew House announced plans to expand into the space vacated by Chesapeake Chocolates. The permitting process has taken longer than expected, creating an opportunity for Romano to share her passion for Danish modern and mid-century modern furniture and accessories.

Romano studied architecture and has long been fascinated by design. A trip



Melissa Romano's pop-up Vintage Reston is temporarily in Lake Anne Brew House's additional space. For hours, visit the brew house's Facebook or Instagram account. Photo by Isadora Guerreiro

to Denmark cemented her interest in Scandinavian design, and she began collecting Danish modern pieces with simple lines. She later added some mid-century modern pieces.

Over time, she began sourcing and refinishing pieces for her own enjoyment. As her collection grew, it became more than she could keep in her home. The Brew House expansion plans gave her a place to use some of her overflow pieces, while the unexpected delay created an opportunity to share some of her favorites with the public.

Vintage Reston is a temporary pop-up featuring mid-century modern furni-

ture, decor and art, alongside zero-proof beverages. The space is designed to be less like a traditional retail store and more like a place to sit and enjoy the surroundings. Visitors can order a zero-proof beverage, sit down and look through the pieces, with most items available for purchase.

The collection will continue to evolve, with new consignment furniture, home goods and artwork added alongside Romano's own pieces. A small number of original art pieces by Romano herself will also be available.

The space is designed to resemble a series of lived-in rooms rather than a tradi-

tional resale store. Visitors are encouraged to sit on the furniture and experience the pieces as they were intended—as beautiful, functional objects meant to be used and enjoyed.

Romano expects to continue Vintage Reston even after the Brew House expansion is completed. The idea is for the new space to have more of a lounge atmosphere, with items continuing to be available for purchase.

In the meantime, the pop-up's hours vary and can be found on Lake Anne Brew House's Instagram account, @lakeannebrewhouse, and Facebook page, Lake Anne Brew House.



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Reston Museum's Boat Regatta draws thousands to Lake Anne



On August 8, people crowded onto Lake Anne Plaza to watch cardboard creations traverse the waters in friendly competition to raise money for Reston Museum. This was the 8th boat regatta at Lake Anne, which started in 2017 but took a two-year hiatus in 2020 and 2021. Photos by Isadora Guerreiro

PUBLIC HEARING

Attention Reston Association Members
Share your thoughts at a public hearing on the proposed 2027 budget and assessment.

Thursday, October 8, 6:00 p.m.
Reston Association HQ – 12001 Sunrise Valley Drive.
Join the meeting in person or online via Zoom.



Scan to view
meeting materials
and links.



THE RESTON LETTER

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THE BULLETIN

Shoe drive helps local students step into success

Contributed by
NWFCUF

As students prepare to head back to school, the Northwest Federal Credit Union Foundation (NWFCU Foundation), the charitable arm of Northwest Federal Credit Union, is helping local children with an often-overlooked need: new athletic shoes.

Through its annual Step Into Success program, the Foundation distributed more than 2,100 pairs of new athletic shoes and socks to elementary school students in Reston and Herndon. The initiative was supported by community partners Eleccion, Koons Automotive, Konica Mi-

nolta and Toth Financial, along with school staff and NWFCU employee volunteers.

“At the Foundation, we’re always looking to identify unmet needs in our community,” said Taralyn Kohler, vice president and director of the NWFCU Foundation. “We realized that while many wonderful organizations provide school supplies, very few provide new athletic shoes. Yet something as simple as a new pair of properly fitting shoes can impact a student’s ability to fully participate in school, feel included and focus on learning.”

For some children, proper footwear can mean the difference be-

tween participating in gym class, recess and after-school activities or sitting on the sidelines. According to Shoes That Fit, educators reported improvements in self-esteem (92%), confidence (94%), physical activity (74%) and social interaction (85%) after children received new shoes.

“One of the most rewarding parts of our work is leveraging our resources and networks to address these often-unnoticed needs together,” said Jeff Bentley, president and CEO of Northwest Federal Credit Union and chairman of the NWFCU Foundation. “When we remove barriers, whether it’s a pair of shoes, a winter coat or access to educational opportunities, we help students thrive both inside and outside the classroom.”

NWFCU employee volunteers also helped children select the correct shoe size during back-to-school nights and distributed financial education books about saving, spending and sharing wisely.

Parents and caregivers said the new shoes helped



A girl tries on her new shows at Dranesville Elementary's Resource Night.
Photo contributed by NWFCUF

ease financial stress and ensure their children were ready for the first day of school. Many children laced up their new sneakers on the spot.

“The NWFCU Foundation’s presence and generosity continue to build deep, supportive connections with our students and families,” said

Jamie Gadley, principal at Dranesville Elementary School. “Receiving a new pair of sneakers and socks makes them feel truly valued. We have seen that when students feel cared for and equipped from head to toe, it empowers them to ‘step into success’ as they begin a new school year.”

The NWFCU Foundation will continue working with Title I schools and community partners to address local students’ needs throughout the year.

To learn more about the NWFCU Foundation and its programs, visit www.nwfcufoundation.org.

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RESTON HOME TOUR

Saturday, October 17, 2026

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Submit your event to our online calendar at therestonletter.com/events

WEEKLY MARKET LINEUP

Farmers Market

SATURDAYS
ALL FALL

8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Lake Anne Plaza

SUNDAYS
ALL FALL

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Parking lot of
Halley Rise



12
SEPT

REGGAE
ON THE LAKE

FREE FESTIVAL

WITH JAMAICAN FOOD, LIVE MUSIC,
ARTS AND CRAFTS, VENDORS 12-9 P.M.

LAKE ANNE PLAZA

13
SEPT

HopeCam 5K

9 a.m.

Race to benefit kids with cancer
Register at hopecam.org
Starts at 1890 Preston White Drive

16
SEPT

Pups in the Pavilion

5-7 p.m.

Pop-up dog park with vendors
Reston Town Center Pavilion
Happening every Wed. in Sept.

19
SEPT

Reston
Multicultural Festival

11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Performances, food, wares
Reston Town Center

23
SEPT

Senior Movie Day 55+

Coffee at 9 a.m. movie at 10 a.m.

LOOK Movie Theater
Movie: Reminders of Him

25
SEPT

Swing for Freedom
Golf invitational

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Hidden Creek Country Club
Fundraiser for USO

26
SEPT

Reston Association's
Fall Yard Sale

8:30 a.m. - 1.30 p.m.

Location on website soon
Sell your extras, browse items for sale
Register to sell on Reston Association site

2
OCT

Virginia Wine Month
Tasting

4-7:30 p.m.

Taste wine from Virginia's Barboursville Vine-
yards and celebrate Virginia Wine Month
The Wine Cabinet

2
OCT

Baron-Cameron Bowl
Herndon Hornets vs. South Lakes Seahawks
Varsity football game

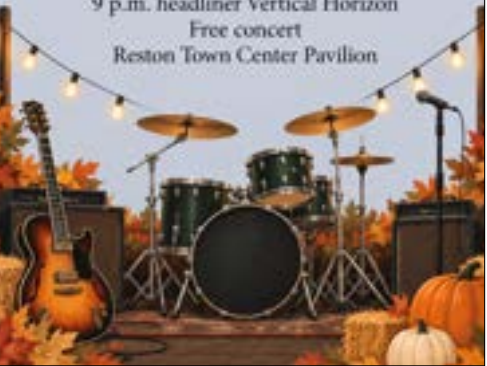
7 p.m.

South Lakes High School
Tickets on eTix or at gate
\$5 students \$7 adults

Oct.
10

Rocktoberfest

6 p.m. opening band: Virginia Coalition
7:30 p.m. Everything
9 p.m. headliner Vertical Horizon
Free concert
Reston Town Center Pavilion



4
OCT

Friends of Reston
Fall 5K

8-10 a.m.

Includes Pumpkin Dash free for kids 10 & under
Brown Chapel Park
Register at Friends of Reston online

4
OCT

Runway to the Cure

1-4 p.m.

Fashion show to benefit breast cancer research
Reston Town Center Pavilion

17
OCT

Reston Home Tour

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Explore Reston architecture up close
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What my daughter’s dance recital taught me about aging

By Taruna Rijhwani,
Health Watchers PT

Have you ever noticed that children expect to get better, while many adults expect to get worse? That thought came to me as I watched my daughter perform at her dance recital.

I wasn't just watching a performance. I was seeing months of practice, perseverance and courage. There were routines she struggled to learn, days when she felt unsure of herself and moments when she wanted to quit. But she kept showing up.

Children seem to understand something many adults forget. They expect to improve. They don't assume they'll master something on the first try. They know learning takes practice, mistakes are part

of the process and confidence comes from doing, not from waiting until they feel ready.

Somewhere along the way, many of us lose that mindset.

As adults, especially after 50, we often begin expecting the opposite. We assume stiffness is simply part of aging. We accept aching knees, sore backs or declining balance as inevitable and quietly lower our expectations for what our bodies can do.

While aging brings changes, many limitations people accept as “just getting older” can also be influenced by how much we move. When discomfort makes activities more difficult, we may begin avoiding them. Over time, moving less can lead to weakness, stiffness, declining balance and less confidence.

Your knee hurts, so you stop taking your daily walk. Your back aches, so you avoid gardening. The stairs become uncomfortable, so you take the elevator. Little by little, your world can become smaller, not because you chose it to, but because your body no longer feels as capable as it once did.

Ironically, the activities we avoid are often important for maintaining physical capacity. When we move less, muscles become weaker. Joints can become stiffer. Balance can decline. Confidence can fade.

The encouraging news is that our bodies are adaptable.

Throughout my career, I've had the

privilege of working with people in their 50s, 60s, 70s and even 80s who believed they had reached their limit. Many have been surprised to discover they could walk farther, climb stairs more easily, return to gardening, travel more comfortably or play with their grandchildren again.

Not because they became younger, but because they gave their bodies an opportunity to become stronger.

Healthy aging isn't about trying to do everything you could at 25. It's about continuing to challenge your body in ways that are safe, meaningful and consistent so you can keep doing the things that bring you joy.

As I watched my daughter walk off the stage with a huge smile on her face, I realized something. She never questioned whether she could improve. She simply trusted that if she kept practicing, she would.

Somewhere along the way, many of us stop believing that about ourselves.

So I'd like to leave you with one question:

What would you be doing today if you believed your body could still get stronger?

Maybe you'd take that hiking trip you've been putting off, play on the floor with your grandchildren, travel without worrying about your back or simply get up from a chair with confidence instead of hesitation.

We can't stop the calendar from mov-



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ing forward. But we can choose how we move through the years ahead. Maybe that's the lesson children understand so naturally. They don't expect improvement to happen overnight. They simply believe it will happen if they keep showing up.

Perhaps we should, too.

Health Watchers PT & Wellness offers a complimentary Discovery Visit to help identify the root cause of what's slowing you down and develop a clear plan for moving forward. Call or text 571-308-8252 to schedule yours.

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OPENING**



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**What Do You Think
of The Reston
Letter?**

Let us know your
thoughts!



Why not an island in Maine?

By Scott Parkin,
staff writer

Within five minutes of my wife's 911 call, six EMTs and firefighters were in our apartment with a gurney. They transported me by ambulance to Reston Hospital. Within 15 minutes of that call, I was in the emergency room.

For years, my retirement dream location was Maine. I longed to live on or near the water, perhaps even on an island. However, we decided to stay in Reston. A major reason was easy access to quality health care.

The last few summers, we've vacationed on Orrs Island in Maine. The island is where my paternal grandfather, a Methodist minister from Newcastle, England, first settled in the United

States along with my grandmother and my one-year old father 104 years ago.

From most parts of the island, a trip to the Maine Health Mid Coast Hospital is about 25 miles. It's in Brunswick, the nearest big town. If this same emergency that had happened to me occurred there, the Orrs and Baileys Island Volunteer Fire Department would have to have arrived at our cottage door within minutes. Having lived in Maine towns with volunteer departments, I know gathering dedicated volunteers who need to get to your location quickly, especially if you are isolated, can take a while. And transport to a hospital on a winding, two-lane road can take far longer

than 10 minutes.

In Reston, we have Fairfax County-paid firefighters and EMTs. Not only does an ambulance respond to a medical emergency like mine in a hurry, but usually a fire engine is dispatched as well. In my case, it was a hook and ladder from Fire Station 425.

We keep our County-provided medical information form (File of Life) in our entrance area bench. My wife was able to provide the team with it. The form lists my medications, medical history in brief, any allergies and emergency contact phone numbers. The form can also be helpful to hospital staff who may not be familiar with you (if you've never been there before).

If you don't have a



Restonians have access to quick hospital care that islanders do not have. AI generated image

form at or near your entrance or posted on your refrigerator door (where EMTs are trained to look), maybe think about getting one and doing that soon. A downloadable form is on the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue website.

In any case, for those of us in our 60s and older who live in Reston, we can take comfort in knowing that we have fast access to urgent medical care when and if we need it.

Scott L. Parkin is a staff writer for The Reston Letter, and co-founder and director of Reston for a Lifetime (www.RestonforaLifetime.org), a nonprofit with a mission to educate and inform Reston residents about how to age in place and stay independent as long as possible.



EDUCATION

Making an Impact

Bethy Was Horta

By Chuck Cascio, author and former South Lakes teacher

Her grandparents ran flower shops in Warren, Ohio, that were eventually passed down to other family members. Her mother is a teacher who has an inherent love of flowers, and her father is an architect. So when Bethy Was Horta says, “Flowers and art are in my genes, and design was a part of my childhood,” she is not exaggerating.

A 1991 graduate of South Lakes High School, Bethy says her love of nature’s art was enhanced by growing up in Reston. “Terraset Elementary, Langston Hughes Middle School and South Lakes High School were close to the homes we lived in,” she says. “My brother, Ben, and I walked most years, and I can still recollect trees en route to Terraset, the school set in the earth.”

Exploring her surroundings and observing nature impacted Bethy deeply, fueling her creative instincts. She recalls taking “nature walks and biking the paths that run like veins and arteries connecting Reston’s neighborhoods. I adored the freedom those forest bike rides offered. Creating was a happy habit for as long as I can remember. I loved visiting my dad’s office at the Reston International Center and getting to color with a vast collection of architectural pens and markers.”

Bethy also cites her summers from ages 10 to 13 as influential. During that time, she took art classes in the basement of renowned Vermont artist Anne Cady, who was living temporarily in Reston: “I would walk to her house in an adjacent neighborhood and create works at her direction. I loved those classes and retain the friendship with her to this day.”

Not surprisingly, Bethy’s life has led to a career in floral design, artistry and decoration, talents recognized early: “I

won first prize in a Bloomingdale’s drawing contest when I was seven years old, and I received an honorable mention in the Washington Regional Scholastics Art Awards exhibition in high school for a painting of a tree with deep roots.”

When she was 15, Bethy’s parents took her to the Georgia O’Keeffe retrospective at the National Gallery of Art’s East Wing, where “I was captivated by her organically expressive flowers, bones and landscapes. The 8-foot-high by 24-foot-wide ‘Sky Above Clouds IV’ had me spellbound as I walked up the stairs and was greeted by it in the exhibit.”

Bethy carried those experiences with her to Arizona State University in 1992, where she studied painting and studio art. En route to her BA cum laude degree, Bethy explored the uniqueness of Arizona and surrounding areas.

“I was in the Southwest and felt akin to Georgia O’Keeffe’s organic terrain and painted my own mountains and lemons,” she says. “Flowers beckoned, and I began working in flower shops. I couldn’t get enough.”

After graduating from ASU, Bethy crisscrossed the country, working in shops and studios. She also took her fascination abroad to India, France, Mexico and elsewhere, exploring art while “teaching and helping create the floral story in weddings.” She has chronicled those travels in her blog, titled Sweet Sabelle, on her site, sweetsabelle.com, named after her daughter, Isabella, who is a college student in Paris.

In 2001, Bethy took a brief sabbatical from her job as the in-house florist for the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Laguna Niguel, California, and traveled to New York City. “I was there for 9/11 and fled the next day with a friend to her mom’s home on Long Island,” Bethy says. Her father and brother drove to New York to pick



Bethy Was Horta

her up: “It was such an uncertain time for all. I didn’t want to be in California and so far from home again. Six months later, I moved back to New York.”

Since then, Bethy has lived in New York, where she and her husband, Marcelo, have raised Isabella and their son, Thiago. She says New York’s artistic energy and the city itself impact her daily work: “Walking and biking to essential places are part of my daily routine, so my choice of living in New York replicates Reston in that way.”

She also embraces the city’s access to the arts: “I felt lucky to visit the Lois Dodd painting retrospective three years ago at the Bruce Museum just north of New York in Greenwich, Connecticut. I wrote about it in a blog post, ‘Lois Dodd: Natural Order at The Bruce Museum.’”

The impact of the many art-related influences in Bethy’s life is clear as her dedication to floral design and other artistic endeavors continues: “In an age where we’re unsure of humanity’s path with the advent of AI, it feels pertinent that we continue in our drive to create. I want to be Lois Dodd with a retrospective at age 95 of a life spent recording the world in painting form. It is a dream of mine to return to capturing the trees and flowers that were planted so naturally in my youth in Reston.”

Reston Montessori launches middle school program

By Ellyn Wexler, staff writer

Seven students make up the inaugural class of Reston Montessori School’s Secondary I Program, which extends Montessori education into the middle school years.

The idea grew out of a vision Head of School Eliana Jaoude developed while teaching Upper Elementary students.

“Since I became Head of School a decade ago, my mission has been to grow our school and ensure every child leaves ready to tackle whatever comes next,” Jaoude said. “My true passion is teaching.”

Throughout her tenure, Jaoude has remained involved in the classroom. As an Upper Elementary teacher, she saw how the Montessori approach supported students’ academic and personal growth and began considering what it could offer adolescents.

“I saw firsthand what the

program could offer students: the growth, the breadth of the curriculum, and the way it truly speaks to the adolescent child,” she said.

That experience led Jaoude to envision a Montessori middle school. She spent years researching the idea, observing other schools and looking for teachers who shared her vision.

Three years ago, the school laid the groundwork through research, family surveys and community input. Jaoude said the school needed to build the right team and ensure its members received appropriate Montessori adolescent training.

In its inaugural year, the school included sixth- and seventh-graders. Beginning next year, enrollment will be limited to seventh- and eighth-graders.

The small, multi-age setting encourages collaboration and mentorship. Extended, uninterrupted work periods



The 2026-27 class is the inaugural class at Reston Montessori Middle School. Photo by Isadora Guerreiro

allow students to concentrate on projects. They manage their time, set goals, help make classroom decisions and take responsibility for their work.

One distinctive feature is the Entrepreneurship and Microeconomy initiative. Students partner with local farms and markets to develop sustainable business projects. They plan, budget, implement

each one and evaluate the results.

Core subjects include language arts, mathematics, science and humanities. An interdisciplinary curriculum aligns instruction with Fairfax County Public Schools’ seventh- and eighth-grade content standards. Teachers use whole-group, small-group

Continued on page 9

PRESENTS

Everything Christmas

The Closet's Annual Holiday Sale

Friday, October 16
3:00 - 7:00 p.m.

and

Saturday, October 17
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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1900 RESTON METRO PLAZA

Receive wireless headphones in exchange for your driver’s license. Choose from three different genres of music spun by three different LIVE DJ’s and dance the night away.



NIGHT OF NICKS

STEVIE NICKS, FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE BAND

SEPTEMBER 18
7:30PM - 9:00PM
1800 RESTON ROW PLAZA

Win summer memories by a Landslide with the incredible Stevie Nicks & Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band. Enjoy sip-and-stroll drinks, a pop-up bar, photo booth fun, and family-friendly festivities. This is sure to be an evening Dreams are made of.



KAREN AS DOLLY

A TRIBUTE TO DOLLY PARTON

SEPTEMBER 25
7:30PM - 9:00PM
1900 RESTON METRO PLAZA

Workin’ 9-5 is rough so kick back with this dazzling Dolly Parton tribute band! Enjoy sip-and-stroll drinks, a pop-up bar, photo booth fun, and plenty of family-friendly fun.

EDUCATION

Nourish Your Neighbor set for Sept. 26

Contributed by
Reston Farmers Market

The Reston Farmers Market will sponsor Nourish Your Neighbor Day on Sept. 26 from 8 a.m. to noon at the market in the Lake Anne Plaza parking lot.

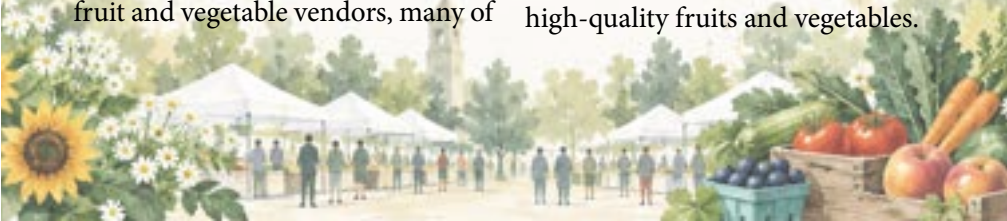
Shoppers are encouraged to purchase extra fruits and vegetables during their visit and donate them to the Cornerstones Food Pantry.

The donations will provide fresh, nutritious produce to families in the Reston and Herndon communities while also supporting the market's fruit and vegetable vendors, many of

whom suffered significant crop losses during a late hard freeze in mid-April.

Several vendors lost most or all their stone fruit crops, including peaches, plums, apricots, cherries and nectarines, as well as much of their apple harvest. To help offset those losses, affected vendors have been permitted to sell fruit from neighboring farms that escaped the freeze.

Purchasing additional produce on Nourish Your Neighbor Day helps sustain local farmers until next year's harvest while providing area families with access to fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables.



Montessori,
cont'd from page 7

and individual instruction based on each student's progress.

French is a yearlong core course. Rotating STEM electives include Introduction to Engineering and Basic Coding, while the curriculum incorporates art and music into interdisciplinary projects.

Socratic seminars and community meetings give students opportunities to exchange ideas with classmates. Work plans, checklists and portfolios help them organize their work, reflect on their progress and stay accountable.

Through Montessori Model United Nations, students research global issues, represent countries and develop public speaking and diplomacy skills. Twice-yearly overnight trips and monthly visits to partner Montessori schools allow students to work collaboratively and independently.

Beyond the classroom, service learning, field studies, environmental projects and outreach connect students with local organizations and businesses.

The approach reflects Maria Montessori's view that adolescence is an important period of personal development, Jaoude said. During ado-

lescence, students develop greater independence while building critical-thinking and decision-making skills.

As students progress toward high school, RMS staff help them navigate the admissions process, prepare for interviews and develop their portfolios. The school plans to grow the program gradually while keeping the setting small.

"We are not simply building a middle school," Jaoude said. "We are building a community."

For more information, visit restonmontessori.com or call 703-481-2922.

Crossword Corner

By Reston crossword constructor, Joe O'Neill

Joe O'Neill, a 40-year Reston resident, is a retired English professor and IT executive who recently began writing and submitting crossword puzzles to major U.S. daily newspapers. He is also a published poet.

Joe's puzzles have appeared in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. This is O'Neill's 38th crossword puzzle creation, made specifically for The Reston Letter readers!

Sloppy-Sounding but Silky Smooth

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8				
9				

ACROSS

1. Deadly African reptile
6. Brainstormer's outputs
7. Sloppy
8. Milk carton mascot
9. Many an American founding father, religiously

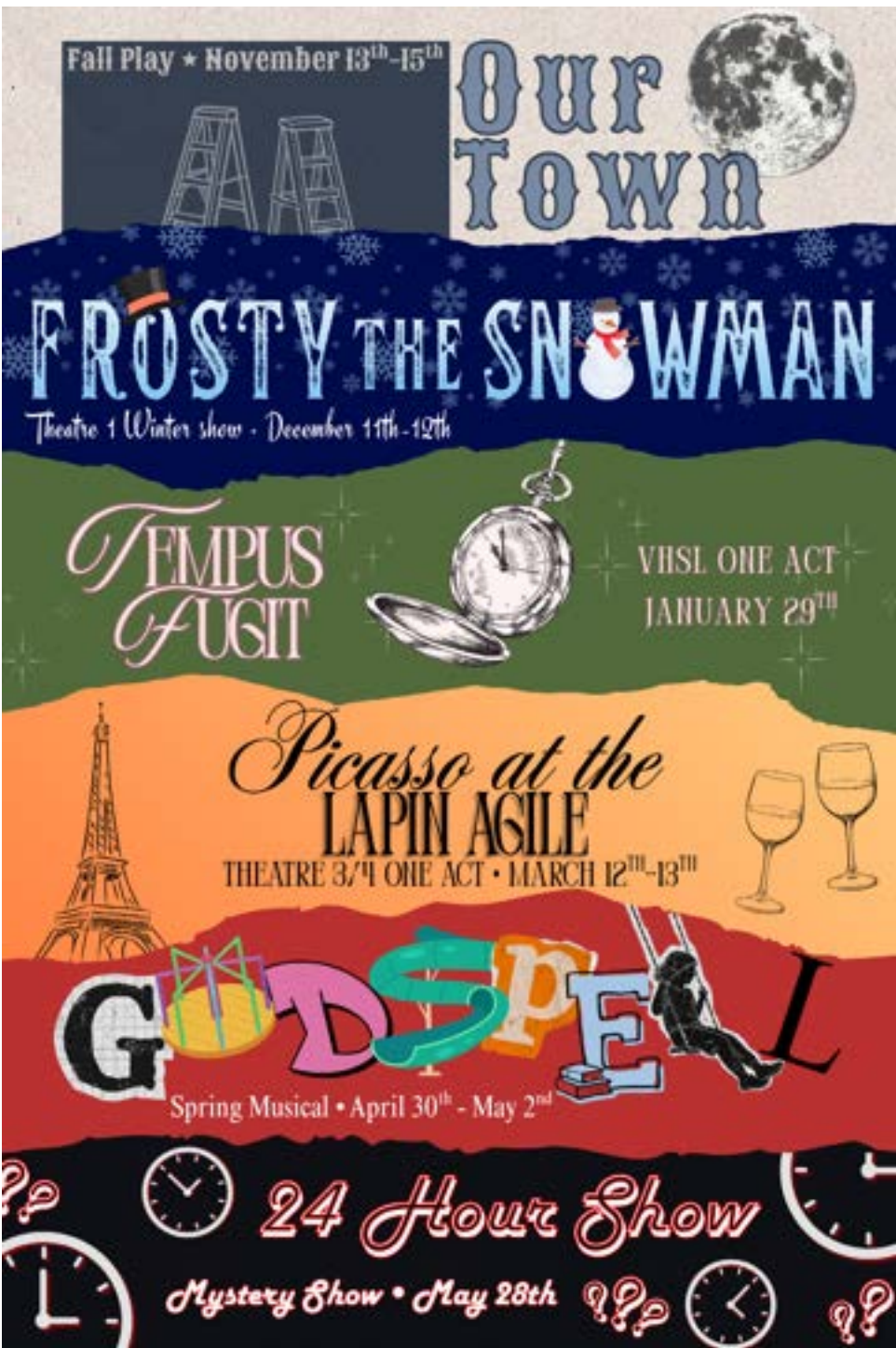
DOWN

1. Acted out, wordlessly
2. Singer with the albums "19," "21," "25," and "30"
3. Sloppy-sounding but smooth as silk soccer great Lionel ____?
4. On a need-to-know ____
5. Until now

South Lakes Theatre lineup 2026-27



Herndon High's Theatre lineup



SPORTS

High school girls golf begins at Herndon High, continues at South Lakes

By Reston Letter staff

This summer Herndon High School added its first girls Virginia High School League (VHSL) golf team. A total of nine girls from freshman to seniors represent the Hornets. Some have competitive golf backgrounds, while others had never played the sport. Reid Kiser, golfer and father of HHS junior Addison Kiser, led the effort to establish the girls team and create more opportunities within an already strong coed golf program.

VHSL does not have boys-only golf teams; teams are coed. The VHSL coed teams are 90% boys and there can be a perceived and true barrier for girls trying out for the golf team. “I had a fire lit

when I was told this had been tried before but they couldn’t get the numbers,” Kiser said. “I was hoping to have four girls and we ended up with nine.” The team plays at Herndon Centennial and Hidden Creek Country Club.

Across town, South Lakes has had a dedicated girls golf team for at least 10 years. Olivia Dunheimer coached the for many of those years, with assistance from Kevin Anderson, who coached the coed team. Today, Anderson coaches both teams. He provided structure and additional training for the girls team and he brings decades of experience as a PGA member since 1982. This year, there are six girls on the South Lakes team. The South Lakes team plays at



Juniors Addison Kiser and Fiona Gallardo are part of the inaugural girls golf team at Herndon High. Photo by Reid Kiser

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HOMES

Reston National Golf Club in the heart of Reston.

Because of the small number of girls who play the game, there is no NVHS girls golf district, and coaches often set up the matches informally. The main goal for the female athletes is to improve their game, try to make regionals, and move on to states. Now that Herndon has a girls golf team, the athletes and coaches are looking forward to coordinating a little friendly competition.

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SPORTS

Hop, skip, jog, or walk at 9th annual 'Do It Your Way 0.5K'

By Roberta Gosling and Abbe Pascal, SLHS PTSA Food Pantry

The South Lakes High School PTSA Food Pantry is inviting Restonians to its 9th Annual FUNdraiser, the “Do It Your Way 0.5K” on Sept. 27 from 2-4 pm at Lake Anne Plaza. Whether you're a serious walker, runner, jogger, skipper or just in it for the treats, this tongue-in-cheek event has something for everyone.

Participants can look forward to a lively kickoff with warm-ups led by Citizen of the Year Kurt Rose, who will lead us in a little "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" and bring up our elected representatives to wiggle those hips as they knock out dance moves to tunes by DJ Randy Platts.

The event will include several heats kicked off by celebrity starters including SLHS’s own Seymour Seahawk. Seymour will be joined by celebrity humans including SLHS Principal Seward, FCPS Superintendent Reid and other South Lakes Pyramid leaders as they show their support for the Pantry. The celebrities will award heat prizes for best costume and most spirited, so come ready to flaunt your style.

At mid-walk (325 steps) participants will have the opportunity to refuel at the Treat and Tea station with free tea from Elden Street Tea and treats from the South Lakes Culinary program to put some extra pep in your step.

But it’s not just about fun and treats. One hundred percent of proceeds from the “Do It Your Way 0.5K” go directly toward supporting more than 500 students and families in the South Lakes Pyramid each week with food, toiletries and other essentials. With community support, the SLHS PTSA Food Pantry has provided more than 3.3 million pounds of food and toiletries since 2017.

Register online now or sign up at the event. Special pricing is available for students and families, and a limited number of VIP tickets are available for front-row seats and a few extra goodies. Every participant will receive a race bib and a choice of swag. Don’t miss out on the live raffle featuring an exclusive, custom-made piece of jewelry donated by Aspen Jewelry Designs, along with gift baskets and other items. It’s a chance to win big while giving back.

So, lace up those sneakers (or flip-flops—we won’t judge), grab friends, and get ready to walk, run, or just enjoy the day your way.

The Food Pantry is grateful for all the volunteers and community partners who have helped make a difference in the lives of families.



South Lakes athletes compete in the Ultimate Frisbee youth championship in Colorado



Seven South Lakes Seahucks and their coach participated in the 2026 Ultimate Youth Club Championships in early August. Photo left to right: Coach Eric Miner, Zane Mott, Roman Moreno-Hines, Matthew Hazlin, Jackson Snell, Colin Willer, Thomas Murphy, Stephen Reider, Coach Chris King. Photo by Matt Reider

By Matt Reider, staff writer

Since 2005, Ultimate Frisbee teams from around the country have traveled to compete in the Youth Club Championships (YCC). The championship emphasizes fun, athleticism and the “spirit of the game,” which places responsibility for fair play solely on the athletes rather than officials.

This year, Virginia fielded two teams: the U20 Mixed Division Virginia Vanguard and the U20 Boys Division Virginia Vortex. The Mixed Division included 13 teams, while 16 teams competed in the Division II Boys competition.

The journey began in March, with tryouts held at RAC Field in Fairfax from March 13 through May 1. Players from across the state competed together as coaches evaluated them and selected the final rosters. Practices began three times a week toward the end of the school year at Oakton High School or Lake Fairfax Park.

Earlier in the summer, the teams competed in other tournaments. The Vortex played together in Durham, North Carolina, at July’s Southeast Showdown and later competed in the Battle for the Beltway at Lake Fairfax Park on July 18 and 19.

Although players were selected from throughout Virginia, the Reston-South Lakes “Seahucks” team was well represented. The Vanguard roster included Zane Mott, No. 5, and Matt Hazlin, No. 17. South Lakes coach Eric Minor also served on the Vanguard coaching staff.

The Vortex included South Lakes players Colin Willer, No. 12; Roman Moreno-Hines, No. 16; Thomas Murphey, No. 23; Jackson Snell, No. 22; and Stephen Reider, No. 52.

Pool play began Aug. 1, at Aurora Sports Park in Aurora, Colorado. The second-seeded Vanguard went 1-1 in Pool B, defeating LA Sky 13-2 in its opening game before falling to KOI of Lexington, Kentucky, 13-10.

The 12th-seeded Vortex won one of its three pool-play games.

It opened with a 13-6 loss to Illinois Illusion, followed by a 13-7 loss to COS-mic Colorado. The team finished the day with a 13-4 victory over Connecticut Harpoon.

The Vortex struggled in crossover play, losing to Charlotte Flight before falling 11-10 to Colorado Cutthroat in its first bracket game. The teams traded points after the Vortex took an early 1-0 lead, eventually reaching a 10-10 tie before Colorado scored the winning point and sent Vortex to the 13th-place game.

Vortex responded with a 13-4 victory over Connecticut, matching its earlier pool-play score against Harpoon. Jackson Snell led the team with nine points, followed by Levi Morrow with seven and James Smialowicz with six. Gavin Smith recorded 24 assists over the team’s seven

games.

The Vanguard had a stronger tournament, defeating Equinox of Montpelier, Vt., 12-10 in the play-in game to advance to the quarterfinals. Vanguard then defeated MN Superior 13-9.

In the semifinals, Vanguard faced KOI, which jumped to a 4-0 lead before Vanguard answered with a point. Trailing 7-3 later in the game, Vanguard rallied to close the gap to 7-6, but KOI scored the next few points to win 10-7.

Vanguard then fell to the Madison Mufabots of Madison, Wis., 14-10, in the third-place game.

Carter Anderson led Vanguard with nine goals, while Ellie Cymrot and Abigail Glassman each had eight and Gretchen Schmitt had seven. Hazlin recorded 20 assists for Vanguard.



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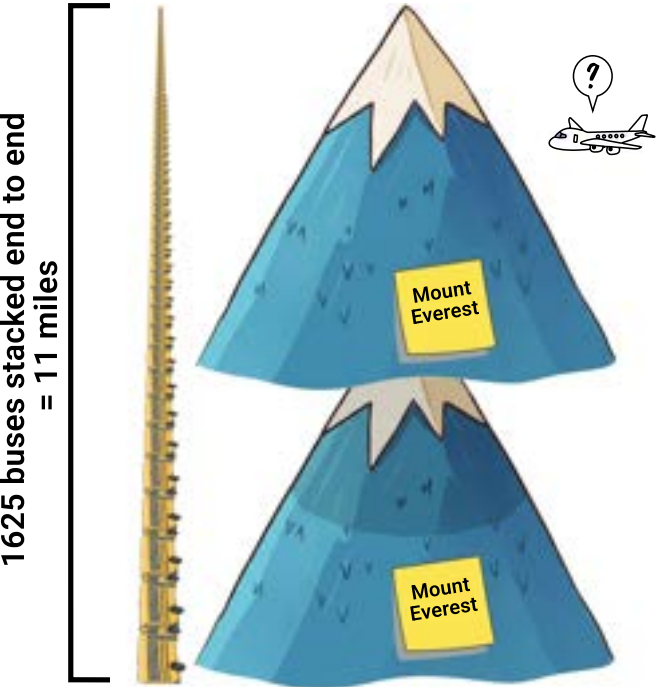
KIDS

Fairfax County Public School Buses are Cool Buses

By Bob Welland, Kids Section editor

Now that you’re back to school, how do you go to school and back? For 131,000 students in Fairfax County, they ride on FCPS school buses. That’s a lot of students so the county has the 4th largest fleet of school buses in the USA.

FCPS owns 1,625 buses. If you stacked them up end to end, they would make a



tower 11 miles high. That’s the height of two Mount Everests! Be sure to put the buses back when you’re done.

To keep students safe, school buses have stop sign arms. These mechanical arms swing out to warn drivers that children are boarding or exiting the bus and may be crossing the street. It is against the law for a car to pass the bus when the sign is out. Some buses have cameras by the stop arm to record any car breaking the law, so the driver will be sent a \$250 ticket.

What’s the future of school buses? FCPS has 48 new electric school buses and plans to get more. These electric buses are more expensive to buy than diesel buses but the electricity charging costs are half the cost of fuel. Even better, they don’t spew out stinky exhaust and their engines are much quieter. So watch what you say on an electric bus because the driver will actually be able to hear you.



Present Day: Diesel Buses

Near Future: Electric Buses

Far Future: One-Wheel Buses

Find 8 Differences: Totally Trucks at Reston Association's Central Services



It's Under Your Nose!

These clues are **hiding the answer!** The first part gives you a real hint. The rest is meaningless but contains the letters of the answer. The first one is done for you.

Across

1. Bad doctor hides in avocado omelette

4. Give a lesson in tea chugging

7. Apple in tulip honey

8. Our foe is in the scene, my gosh!

Down

2. Motor board made from two new heelys

3. Homer shouts in tornado hurricane

5. Junk food found in American dynamite

6. Alarm inside cars I rented

1	D	O	O	M		3
		4			5	
6						
7						
8						

KIDS

Reston's Fuzziest Superhero

FAIR-FOX

in "THE WILD GOOSE CASE"

DEEP BELOW LAKE ANNE PLAZA...

IS THE SECRET DEN OF FAIR-FOX

HE MONITORS RESTON FOR ANY TROUBLE.

HONK! HONK!

SUDDENLY AN ALARM...

OH NO! A GIANT GOOSE IS ATTACKING RESTON!

FAIR-FOX QUICKLY CONSTRUCTS A GIANT ROBOT SUIT FROM NEARBY PARTS.

A/C

NOW WHERE'S THAT GOOSE?

OH! THE GOOSE WAS JUST REALLY CLOSE TO THE CAMERA.

HISS!

HEY MISTER! CAN YOU GET MY BALLOON OUT OF THAT TREE?

ANOTHER DAY SAVED BY FAIR-FOX!



Acorn Art Magic

(what could you make from acorns?)

what do you see?

Argh! Autocorrect

My school supply list had typos and I brought a bunch of crazy stuff to school. Can you figure out the right supplies?



M F K M



C N L E



E C S T



C D Y G



G B S T B R



P L T N T S

Little Hands, Big Cinnamon Bites

By Alexis Estep, mom, chef, Restonian

School is back in session and routines are back in full swing! Were you able to go to bed early and wake up on time, or was it a bit more difficult? In our house, it was a bit of a struggle! Some of my kids did well; others needed more guidance. The one thing that they all needed to survive was comfort. For them, comfort comes in the form of food, usually something baked, sweet or savory, but fresh from the oven. This week it was cinnamon cake bread. We hope you try this recipe and bring a little comfort to your week!

Cinnamon Cake Bread

Ingredients:

- 4½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups buttermilk
- ½ cup sunflower or vegetable oil

The Sweet Topping:

- ¾ cup sugar
- 1½ tablespoons ground cinnamon

Instructions:

- Start by preheating your oven to 350°F and lining a 13 x 9 in. baking pan with parchment.
- In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt until well combined.
- Using a separate medium bowl, beat the



Leif enjoying some cake bread while decompressing after school with a game.

- eggs together with the buttermilk and oil. Gently stir this wet mixture into your dry ingredients, blending until the batter is smooth.
- In a small dish, mix the topping sugar and cinnamon.
 - Pour half of your batter in the pan and then generously sprinkle about half of the cinnamon-sugar. Layer the rest of the batter on top and finish with the remaining spice mixture.
 - Bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. If needed, bake another 5 minutes.
 - Allow the cake bread to rest in the pan for about 10 minutes, then slice and serve warm.

Solutions

Find 8 Differences: Left to Right: 1) Loader tracks instead of wheels, 2) Sign says Dump Truck, 3) Missing orange cone, 4) Child has no hard hat, 5) Building vent missing, 6) Extra yellow cone, 7) Boy's shirt is blue instead of green, 8) Dinosaur in trees

It's Under Your Nose: ACROSS: 1) Doom, 4) Teach, 7) iPhone, 8) Enemy, DOWN: 2) Onewheel, 3) Doh, 5) Candy, 6) Siren

Argh Autocorrect: Marker, Pencils, Eraser, Crayon, Glue Stick, Post It Note

OPINIONS

If you don't come home tonight, who raises your kids?

By Sean Joyner, estate planning attorney

Every parent has had the thought, usually somewhere between merging onto the highway and glancing at a text from the babysitter: What happens to my kids if we don't make it home tonight?

Most parents think they've addressed it. They recall a brief conversation years ago: "If anything happened to us, you'd take the kids, right?" The chosen guardian agrees, and everyone believes the issue is resolved. But that casual conversation carries no legal authority. Without properly executed documents, no one—not your closest friend, your brother or even your own mother—has an automatic legal right to take custody of your children in an emergency.

A complete guardianship plan has two critical parts:

1. The emergency (short-term) guardian

This is someone who lives 20 to 30 minutes away, such as a local friend or neighbor. In an accident or other emergency, responders cannot simply hand your children over to an adult who has not been designated. If your chosen guardian lives out of state or isn't immediately available, your children could spend traumatic hours or days in temporary state custody while arrangements are made.

A short-term guardian can step in immediately to care for your children until long-term arrangements are made.

2. The permanent (long-term) guardian

These are the people who will raise your children to adulthood. Beyond shared values, consider continuity. Moving out of state can mean taking your children away from their school, friends and community roots—the sources of stability they may need most during an already traumatic time.

You have the authority to select the adults best suited to maintain that continuity and honor your parenting style, whether that means a relative or a close family friend.

Confidential exclusions

Sometimes protecting your children is less about whom you choose and more about whom you want to exclude. If there is a specific relative who should never raise your children because of past conflicts, differing values or lifestyle concerns, you may be able to execute a confidential exclusion document.

This private legal document can tell the court whom you do not want appointed as guardian and why. It can help ensure that your wishes are considered if a family member seeks custody.

The court gap

Without a signed nomination, the decision falls to a judge at the Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court. The court will consider factors such as the children's best interests, the circumstances of the proposed guardians and the availability of suitable caregivers.

Your unwritten wishes, however, may never reach the courtroom. For example, you may prefer an out-of-state

sister and her partner, while another local relative whom you would not choose seeks custody. Without proper documentation, the court may not know your preferences.

Part of a broader plan

Guardianship is just one piece of a comprehensive estate plan. While it addresses who will care for your children, a complete plan also protects their financial future. Establishing a trust can provide guardians with access to resources for your children while helping avoid unnecessary court involvement.

Creating a guardianship plan can take one afternoon. It can help protect your children in an emergency and ensure they are raised by the people you choose.

Disclaimer: The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Reading this article does not create an attorney-client relationship. Laws vary by state, and readers should consult a qualified estate planning attorney regarding their specific legal needs.

Sean Joyner is an estate planning attorney at Joyner Trust Law (joynertrustlaw.com, 703-485-8995), helping Northern Virginia families protect what matters most.



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A brother's crash, a warning about e-bike safety

By Casey Menish, Reston neighbor

A few weeks ago, I was walking my dog on the path between South Lakes Drive and Lake Thoreau when two kids rushed past me on an e-motorbike. The driver at least had his helmet on, but the kid on the back was wearing sandals. Although the passenger had a helmet on his head, it wasn't clipped, so it would do him no good in a crash.

Then, just minutes later, another kid passed us without a helmet and wearing Crocs as he sped by on his similar electric vehicle on the path. I have been horrified to see how many teens and children are recklessly zipping around Reston on e-motorbikes this summer.

I have good reason to be horrified. Nineteen years ago, in 2007, my brother Brian nearly lost his life when he crashed his moped. The memories of my brother's traumatic brain injury come back to me all the time. For a while, it seemed like the popularity of mopeds went away, but the recent trend of e-motorbikes proves that history doesn't always repeat itself, but it rhymes.

July 7, 2007. I was 16 years old, and my dad knocked on my bedroom door early that Saturday morning to tell me my brother had crashed his moped and was in the hospital. Assuming that Brian had just broken his arm, I groaned, "Ugh, do I have to go?" My dad insisted we had to go immediately, so I rolled out of bed and walked down to the car, fully expecting my brother would have some bruises and scratches. But as soon as I opened the door to the garage, I saw it: Brian's pristine white helmet. My heart sank as I realized that if Brian's helmet was in the garage, we were headed for a much more dire situation at the hospital.

The summer of 2007 was supposed to be all fun for the seniors from Herndon High School as they enjoyed their last summer together before heading off to college. Brian went to a party at a friend's house on July 6, and he made two critical mistakes that would alter the course of his life forever. He chose to ride his moped while intoxicated, and he chose not to wear a helmet.

In the early morning hours of July 7, Brian drove his moped around the winding bends of Shaker Woods Road. He crashed into the guardrail, was thrown off the

bike 25 feet into a ravine and fractured his skull. Brian remembers trying to yell for help, but no screams came. He also remembers trying to claw his way out of the ravine but being able to use only his left hand. His left-side brain injury left him there for hours, unable to yell or use the right side of his body, hopeless and alone.

By some miracle, a neighbor couldn't sleep that night. He was on the road to a 24-hour grocery store around 3 a.m. when he saw Brian's moped crashed on its side, with the headlights shining into the dark woods. The man heard someone mumbling, trying to yell. He didn't have a cellphone, so he couldn't call for help. He didn't want to leave Brian, but he didn't want to stay and risk Brian not getting help. A few minutes into his panic, a car full of young men pulled up, called 911 and one of the boys went down the ravine to make sure Brian was not alone. We still don't know who that was. The crash was so close to our home that my dad remembers hearing the helicopter that rushed Brian to the ICU at Fairfax Hospital.

I remember the doctor telling us very bluntly that Brian had slim chances. My dad tried to clarify: "Slim chances to walk again? Talk again?" And the doctor replied, "Slim chances of living." After his initial emergency brain surgery, we sat with Brian for hours. He was hooked up to dozens of monitors and lifesaving devices. When my dad stepped away for a moment, the nurse told me it was a good time to tell my brother goodbye while I had a few minutes alone with him.

My mom was traveling in New Mexico at the time, and she dropped everything to fly home. When she arrived just a few hours later, the waiting room at the hospital was full of dozens of seniors from the HHS class of 2007. In small groups, Brian's friends were allowed to go into the ICU to see him. When his best friend came in, we could see Brian trying to push himself up. The nurse told us not to get our hopes up, that it was likely just the anesthesia wearing off. But I knew at that moment that my stubborn big brother would make it.

Fast-forward to 2026, and my brother Brian is still partially disabled from his traumatic brain injury. He never regained the use of his right arm, he walks with a limp and sometimes his speech is still a little slow. But



Nineteen years after Brian Menish nearly lost his life in a moped wreck in Reston, and despite years of therapy, he is still partially disabled on his right side and has a speech impairment. His sister hopes his story serves as a reminder to the many kids on e-motorcycles today. Photo contributed by Casey Menish

he taught himself to walk again, how to talk again and, despite his physical disabilities, he has even completed triathlons and taught himself how to paint with his left hand. He earned a college degree, established a successful portfolio of investment properties in California, and he has sole custody of his 6-year-old son, whom he is literally and figuratively raising single-handedly.

July 7, 2007 was the worst day of my family's life, but I also count it as the luckiest day because Brian survived his moped accident. Not all children or their families are as lucky.

I was happy to see The Reston Letter publish an article about e-bike safety on the front page of the July 2026 issue. Coming from a woman whose family was devastated by a moped crash and who still struggles with the aftermath nearly 20 years later, I have to implore you: If you're considering getting an e-motorbike for your kid, please think twice. And if your child already has one, please make sure they understand that properly wearing a helmet and appropriate footwear is not negotiable. Legally in many cases accidents are the parents' fault. They need to ride safely and understand the laws and rules of the road, or they could get themselves or someone else killed.

LIFESTYLE

Inside Art

By Louise Seirmarco-Yale, Reston Artist



Every season brings a new look to our environment. Some of it we like, and some we like less. Art can help us enjoy every moment, event and season. We can use art as therapy.

Consider the worried child who has apprehensions about school and never shares those feelings. Many adults remember bad school memories. The remedy is reassurance. Art is reassuring to children and to the child that remains in us even now as adults. How?

Art has the ability to take us to a place where we feel secure. Like all art, reassurance is unique and different for each of us.

For some of us, reassurance is touching a precious bracelet left to us by someone special. Is it the jewelry? Or is it the remembrance of what touching that piece of jewelry evokes? Seeing that bit of art takes us to a special psychological place, where we are happy, safe and reassured about the goodness in life and our place in it. That's what art can do!

Carrying or keeping a small physical object for reassurance is an ancient idea. Smooth stones with a natural or carved depression, rubbed with the thumb and known as "worry stones," appeared across many cultures. The repetitive rubbing itself can be calming, much like modern fidget objects.

Amulets were associated with luck, courage, health or protection. An example is the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, who wore or carried small objects, such as Egyptian scarabs, which symbolized protection, renewal and life. A charm might be a coin, tiny figure, piece of jewelry, animal form or object associated with someone important. Art that reassures us always speaks to us, and has for centuries.

Beads handled during prayer and contemplation were used in numerous religious traditions, such as rosaries in Christianity, mala beads in Hinduism and Buddhism, and misbaha or tasbeih in Islam. The physical act of moving from bead to bead provides rhythm, touch and focus, much like performance art.

Coins, medals, religious medallions, military tokens and keepsakes have often been carried in pockets and touched in moments of uncertainty. Their power does not come from magic, but from association. "This belonged to my mother," or "Someone gave this to me," or "This reminds me who I am." It is just comforting.

Association becomes the magic in life, as in art. Art is the physical form of reassurance when we cannot actually be there ourselves. A parent putting a tiny stone in a lunchbox and saying, "If you miss me, hold this for a minute," is participating in a human practice that is thousands of years old.

Consider giving a power object today to someone who needs reassurance. An object that, at first glance, is not called art, but actually is.

Louise Seirmarco-Yale is a Reston artist, speaker, teacher and author of "Art.

You Be The Judge. Reawaken Your Instincts and Enjoy Art On Your Own Terms," free download at www.peopleneedart.com or on Amazon, Facebook and Instagram at @louise_seirmarco_art.

Hail to the chef

By Phantom Foodie

It's football season. It's also seasoning season. The Commanders are back, and so am I. This is the second installment of my game-by-game pairing of the Commanders schedule with some of my favorite gameday bites around town. This fall, we're taking that approach again, matching the food to the opponent, the city and the moment. Four games. Four cities. Four menus. Let's eat.

Week 1: Philadelphia Eagles—Sept. 13, 4:25 p.m. ET

We open on the road in the City of Brotherly Love, which means one thing on the menu: the Philly cheesesteak. Thinly sliced ribeye, sautéed onions and a soft, toasted Amoroso hoagie roll.

For a local option, Santini's New York Style Deli turns out a cheesesteak worth making the trip for. For an upscale alternative, Jackson's Mighty Fine Food in Reston Town Center does a slow-roasted French dip that more than holds its own. Also be on the lookout for cheesesteak egg rolls, popular around town.

Round out the spread with a Nordic Knot soft pretzel and a growler from Lake Anne Brew House.

Week 2: Dallas Cowboys—Sept. 20, 4:25 p.m. ET

Everything is bigger in Texas, and your spread should be, too. This is a brisket game. For the ambitious, fire up the smoker and go low and slow with a dry rub of salt, pepper, garlic and smoked paprika.

For those who'd rather leave it to the pros, order a whole brisket from Salt Lick BBQ in Austin, legendary Texas Hill Country 'cue shipped straight to your door via Goldbelly. Plan ahead for shipping time.

For a simpler Sunday spread, pick up Wegmans pulled pork and load it onto a salted baked potato with coleslaw, cheddar and a drizzle of barbecue sauce. Texas would approve.

Week 3: Seattle Seahawks (Home Opener)—Sept. 27, 1 p.m.

The defending Super Bowl champions are coming to Northwest Stadium, and the home opener deserves a spread worthy of the moment.

Start with a smoked salmon dip, cream cheese, capers, red onion and fresh dill, served with bagel chips or cucumber rounds. Simple, impressive and ready before kickoff.

For the main event, bring Seattle's Pike Place Market soul to your table with clam chowder served in a sourdough bread bowl. Wegmans or Whole Foods will sort you out on both counts.

Crack open an Elysian Space Dust IPA, Seattle's own and available at Total Wine & More or Wegmans. Then make your way to Ted's Bulletin in Reston Town Center for its homemade toaster pastries. The perfect way to spike the football on a home opener win.

Week 4: Indianapolis Colts (London)—Oct. 4, 9:30 a.m. ET

A 9:30 a.m. kickoff is not a hardship; it's a breakfast opportunity. Set your alarm, fire up the skillet and go full English: eggs, bangers, baked beans, grilled tomato and toast.

A word on bangers: the name dates to wartime food shortages, when sausages were packed with so much water they would literally explode in the pan. Handle with care.

For the drink, skip the mimosa and try a breakfast tea cocktail. Steep a strong English breakfast tea, add bourbon, a



Santini's in Reston is a solid option for a New York cheesesteak. Photo by Phantom Foodie

drizzle of honey and a squeeze of lemon, and serve it warm. Sophisticated, seasonal and appropriate for a 9:30 a.m. kickoff.

At halftime, pivot to Indianapolis with a breaded pork tenderloin sandwich, Indiana's unofficial state sandwich. Pound a pork loin thin, bread it, fry it golden and serve it on a bun with mustard and pickles. Fair warning: The pork cutlet will dwarf the bun. It's Indiana's evolved version of the wiener schnitzel.

For those who'd rather leave the kitchen altogether, Ms. Foodie and I are big fans of Makers Union in Reston Town Center, part of the Thompson Restaurants family and a perfect spot for an early Sunday spread. Double-check their opening time. Cheers, mate.

The schedule is set. The seasoning is ready. Four games, four cities, four menus and Commanders fans hungry for a big season.

Hail to the Chef.

Disclaimer: The Reston Letter and its staff do not receive solicitation, compensation, or special endorsement from any restaurant or culinary establishment. Our reviewer dines unannounced to make the experience genuine. Our mission is to provide our readers with an accurate representation of our reviewer's experience so they may make their own informed decisions. Taste, service, and culinary preferences vary.

Forsythe's 'Natural Wonder' exhibit on view at Reston Art Gallery

Contributed by Reston Art Gallery

"Natural Wonders," a solo exhibition of Rosemarie Forsythe's paintings inspired by the natural world, is on view through Sept. 27 at Reston Art Gallery & Studios at Lake Anne Plaza. The gallery will host a reception with the artist from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13.

Scenes from Forsythe's Virginia backyard and places she encountered while living and working around the world inspire the paintings in the show. Horses, parrots, leopards, an alligator, fish and birds appear alongside forests, flowers, palm trees and other landscapes. The paintings range from Southern sand dunes to northern winter settings with birch trees, while others depict fish swimming through deep blue water and animals among lilies, ferns and wildflowers.

The artist works primarily in

acrylic, adding 23-karat gold leaf and gold rivets to create texture. Inspired in part by 15th-century illuminated manuscripts, her work incorporates mathematical and physics equations related to her subjects, including the mechanics of a horse's movement and the speed of a leopard.

A former U.S. diplomat, policymaker and international business executive, Forsythe lived in seven countries and visited more than 60. Self-taught as an artist, she draws on her professional experiences and interests in science, mathematics and different cultures in her work.

"Natural Wonders" is open Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. at 11400 Washington Plaza West in Reston. Appointments are available by emailing art@restonartgallery.com.

More information about Forsythe and her work is available at rosemarieforsythe.com and restonartgallery.com.



Rosemarie Forsythe's paintings are on display at Reston Art Gallery through Sept. 27 with artist's reception on Sept. 13 from 2-4 p.m. Above: "Winter Stillness"



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LIFESTYLE

TRL Teen Feed

Senior year, senior you

By Meg Marsh, Reston neighbor

Most people can identify the feeling of trying to fit in versus truly belonging. The difference can be felt in friendships, on sports teams, at camp, among neighborhood kids and, eventually, at work. Fitting in requires some effort, paying attention to what everyone else is doing and adjusting accordingly. Belonging feels different. There is an ease to it. For many people, it takes years, sometimes well into adulthood, to recognize the difference.

That makes senior year of high school an interesting moment. At the exact time teenagers are being asked to make decisions about their futures, they are also surrounded by messages about what those futures are supposed to look like.

There is the dream college. The acceptance video. The perfectly decorated dorm room. There is also the quintessential senior year, the football games, Homecoming, prom, lifelong friendships and tearful goodbyes. Some teenagers genuinely want and experience all of those things. Others don't.

This season of future planning of-

fers seniors an opportunity to think honestly about the pursuits that most closely match their interests, abilities, strengths, passions and personalities. It also requires accepting some less romantic realities: grades, test scores, finances and the difference between short-term desires and long-term goals.

Social media can make that difficult. An algorithm isn't designed to show a 17-year-old the enormous range of interesting ways a life might unfold. It learns what captures someone's attention and offers more of the same. A teenager watching a few college decision videos may quickly find a feed filled with picturesque campuses, acceptance celebrations and carefully curated dorm rooms. It can be entertaining. However, it is hardly a blueprint for what is right for an individual person.

Social media can also shape the way adolescence is remembered.

Teenage years have long been romanticized through movies, books, songs and stories. Social media has added emotional montages of childhood photographs, recreated pictures, senior-year "lasts" and reminders that



Photo by Meg Marsh

an era is ending. There is something beautiful about recognizing the passage of time. Nostalgia is evidence that something mattered. But it is also possible to become nostalgic not only for what actually happened, but for what was supposed to happen.

Perhaps people can even miss a version of childhood they didn't quite have. The perfect group of friends. The magical senior year. The sport played forever. The college experience imag-

ined since childhood. There is nothing wrong with feeling sentimental about what is ending. (There is also nothing wrong with being ready for it to end.) As seniors consider what comes next, perhaps the most useful question isn't simply where they can get in or even where they should go. It may be where they can become more fully themselves.

The world is urgently in need of young adults pursuing joyful, congruent and industrious lives.

Reston’s June Schreiner stars in new horror film

By Ellyn Wexler, staff writer

Reston native June Schreiner, profiled in these pages last year for her starring role in “When I’m Ready,” is back on the screen in “Dark Hollow,” a horror movie set in a West Virginia coal-mining community.

Released Sept. 4, “Dark Hollow” stars Schreiner as KC Scarbro, a young mother fiercely devoted to her family, community and the land around her. When a nightmarish creature emerges from a coal mine, KC must confront the threat.

Schreiner got her start in acting with the Reston Community Players at age 10 and went on to perform with Syntetic Theater, Arena Stage and other area theaters before pursuing film and television. She said she was drawn to “Dark Hollow” by writer-director Daniel Beyers’

script and his commitment to bringing humanity to the people and region where he grew up.

“I was so inspired by the conviction of KC and the humanity that Daniel Beyers, our writer/director, wanted to bring to the people and the area he grew up in, West Virginia,” Schreiner said.

Set in the early 2000s, the story explores the environmental and human toll of coal mining in Appalachia. Schreiner said she was particularly interested in a horror story that uses its frightening elements to explore a larger issue.

“I think a horror movie that isn't blood and guts for the sake of blood and guts, but is horrifying to serve the metaphor it is exploring is really exciting,” she said.

Filming took the cast and crew into West Virginia’s mountains and 11 miles into coal mines, with shoots often running from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. Schreiner called it a wild and challenging experience but said it was important to persevere.

The project also carries deep personal significance for Schreiner. Her mother, actress Dana Andersen Schreiner, died in 2023 during production. After filming in West Virginia, June spent a week with her mother in Reston before heading back to New York to resume filming.



Reston actress Julie Schreiner stars in a horror film set in West Virginia that premiered Sept. 4. Images courtesy of Julie Schreiner



Answer Key

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T	S	I	E	D
E	I	S	L	E
Y	S	S	E	M
S	A	E	D	I
A	B	M	A	M

Slippy-Sounding but Silky Smooth

“It is so weird for me to watch the movie and see myself before and after this incredible, life-changing shock,” Schreiner said. “Films are amazing like that—like little time capsules of your life.”

Schreiner attended the Los Angeles premiere Sept. 4 at the Lumiere in Beverly Hills and participated in a post-screening Q&A.

“Dark Hollow” is available on Apple TV and Amazon.

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