

THE RESTON LETTER

Reston celebrates 250 years of the USA



Spectators watch fireworks from VIDA's rooftop pool, and a crowd dances to Bruce in the USA at Reston Station on July 2. Reston residents and guests celebrated Independence Day in several spectacular ways. For more, see article on page 4. Photos by Isadora Guerreiro

Officials step up focus on e-bike, mini-bike safety

By Gene Powell, staff writer

The growing use of e-bikes, e-dirt bikes and mini-bikes on area roads and trails has prompted local education and enforcement efforts, as well as a state review of laws governing the vehicles.

Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn raised the issue during the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting June 23, citing concerns about younger riders operating e-bikes, e-dirt bikes and mini-bikes on public roads, shared-use paths and privately owned trails. Alcorn pointed to a recent incident on Wiehle Avenue in Reston

in which a young rider struck a median, fell into a traffic lane and was injured.

"I fear it's a matter of time before we have a serious injury or worse," Alcorn said.

State lawmakers also are examining the issue. A working group created this year under House Bill 1120, introduced by Delegate JJ Singh, is studying possible safety legislation involving electric power-assisted bicycles, commonly known as e-bikes, along with e-dirt bikes, motorized skateboards, scooters and similar devices.

Fairfax County police, the Town of Vienna and the Loudoun County Sheriff's

Office have expanded education and enforcement efforts, including instructional traffic stops, safety advisories and online videos promoting safe and legal operation.

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office has created an online traffic complaint form for residents to report unsafe riding. When a complaint identifies a juvenile or home address, deputies will attempt to contact a parent or guardian to discuss Virginia law, the agency said in a June 15 social media post.

Several Fairfax County supervisors noted that legal e-bikes can provide transportation for young people who

may not have reliable ways to get to school, jobs, sports practices and other activities.

Fairfax County police have published guidance explaining the difference between legal e-bikes and illegal e-dirt bikes under Virginia law. Legal e-bikes have operable pedals and motors rated at 750 watts or less and do not require registration, licensing or insurance. E-dirt bikes lack pedals, can exceed 35 mph and are classified as motor vehicles, requiring registration, licensing and insurance. Riders may face violations, including reckless driving

Continued on page 2

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bulletin



Official opening of mural at Jimmy's Old Town Tavern in Herndon, upcoming art show at RCC, Reston's movement on development plans, America 250 celebrations

kids



Mystery of an accused cat, how to make a cake look like a dog, peculiar pets, puzzle, jokes, pet-drawing

lifestyle

Phantom Foodie reviews Founding Farmers, our property rights as Americans, public art scavenger hunt, pool schedule, Inside Art

opinions

Dr. Sherwood on how having pets strengthens mental health

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THE BULLETIN

Mission Statement:

The Reston Letter seeks to inform the Reston community of local events, highlight local group and individual accomplishments, and, secondarily, to provide a platform for residents to weigh in on local topics relevant to the majority of readers.

Herndon mural transforms tavern wall into tribute to service

By Ellyn Wexler, staff writer

A once-plain wall behind Jimmy's Old Town Tavern has become a colorful landmark honoring those who respond to emergencies, protect their communities and serve the nation.

The 35-foot-long, nearly 12-foot-tall “Memory Lane” mural transforms the tavern’s outdoor gathering space into a public artwork inspired by the First Responder Flag. Bold bands of blue, red, green, gold, white and gray represent law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, dispatchers, correctional officers, members of the military and veterans. The project also serves as a fundraiser for Making Everything Good (MEG), a Northern Virginia nonprofit supporting those communities, along with military families and survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

The mural overlooks a brick-lined memorial walkway honoring loved ones who have died, many of whom served their communities or country, creating a place for

both gathering and remembrance.

For Jimmy and Maureen Cirrito, owners of the tavern, the project extends a long tradition of recognizing those who serve. The Cirritos signed the original lease on Veterans Day in 1996 and opened the restaurant on Memorial Day in 1997, later securing the neighboring space on Flag Day in 2012 before completing an expansion in 2018. “Both dates were random,” Jimmy said.

The expansion added engraved hundreds of commemorative bricks that line the outdoor beer garden. One section was set aside as “Philip James Curtis Memory Lane,” named for Navy veteran Philip James Curtis, one of the tavern’s landlords, who played a key role in the project before his death during construction. “It is a beautiful tribute,” Jimmy said. “Majestic.”

The Cirritos said the space reflects both gratitude and remembrance. “Memory Lane reminds us how lucky we are to be able to walk into an American tavern on Main Street USA to enjoy ourselves, feed our bellies and tip a pint with friends new and old,” they said. “Our military and first



"Memory Lane" mural had its official ribbon-cutting with the Herndon mayor, owners, artist, and MEG founders on-hand. Photo by Isadora Guerreiro

responders sacrifice every day for us to have this comfort.”

Over the years, the tavern has become a gathering place for military members, veterans and public safety professionals, making the mural a natural extension of that connection.

Unlike many public murals, this one includes contributions from those it represents. During painting sessions, police officers, firefighters, emergency dispatchers, military members, retirees, family members and children of first responders painted sections of the colored stripes.

"That made the mural even more meaningful," said Meg Hawkins, president and co-founder of Making Everything Good (MEG) and a retired Northern Virginia police officer. "They all expressed such gratitude for being able to be part of it."

Created by Herndon muralist Meghan Bogue of Wholehearted Murals, the design centers on the First Responder Flag. Shooting stars symbolize hope, remembrance and the legacy of service.

Visitors will also find details including the MEG logo, service dogs Tybee and Denny, the tavern's goose mascot dressed as a firefighter and tributes to the Herndon Police Department and Herndon Volunteer Fire Department.

For Bogue, the project shows how public art can deepen community connection. “Murals are an incredible way to bring people together, tell others’ stories and connect the community through

art," she said.

The idea began more than a year ago when Bogue met Hawkins at a networking event. The mural was completed in four days using exterior latex paint.

"It was so uplifting to hear so many positive and grateful comments from the people passing by," Bogue said.

Local contractor Chuck Brown and CB's Services donated more than 200 hours constructing the supporting wall, working with the Town of Herndon to ensure durability and code compliance. "CB's is proud to be part of the strong building foundation that helps America and its first responders stand strong," Brown said.

The collaboration also reflects MEG's mission. Founded in 2018 by Hawkins and her husband, Eric Provow, the all-volunteer nonprofit supports those communities through crisis transportation to mental health treatment, peer support, victim assistance and service dog-related support for individuals and families in need.

“This mural represents more than artwork,” Hawkins said. “It reflects community, healing, remembrance and unwavering support for those who dedicate their lives to serving others.”

Community members can continue supporting the project by sponsoring mural sections, with proceeds benefiting MEG programs.

Together with the engraved bricks below, the mural creates a lasting place of remembrance, gratitude and community in downtown Herndon.

Sponsorship information is available at <https://bit.ly/jottmural>.

Safety, cont'd from page 1

charges. Mini-bikes also are classified as motor vehicles under state law.

Virginia law requires riders and passengers younger than 15 to wear helmets on all classes of e-bikes. Riders of e-bikes capable of traveling faster than 20 mph, sometimes called e-motos, must be at least 14 years old.

In his June Hunter Mill District newsletter, Alcorn noted that slower-speed e-bikes generally are permitted wherever

traditional bicycles are allowed. Faster e-bikes, however, are prohibited on sidewalks and on some parks, trails and shared-use paths, including the Washington & Old Dominion Trail and Reston Association's privately owned trails.

The Vienna Police Department launched an E-Bike Safety Awareness Campaign in May after receiving increasing complaints about excessive speeds, traffic violations and unsafe riding near

parks, neighborhoods, schools and trails. The department said it will continue targeted patrols in areas where concerns have been reported and encourages residents to report dangerous riding.

NOVA Parks officials said they are partnering with law enforcement agencies in Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun counties to educate users of the Washington & Old Dominion Trail about which powered vehicles are allowed.



FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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CLASS 1, 2, OR 3



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- Bicycle under VA law

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- No pedals
- 35+ MPH speed
- License & insurance required
- Treated as motor vehicle

POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS

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- Registration Violations (§ 46.2-633)
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HELMET REQUIRED

- Class 3 E-Bikes: All Riders
- 15 & Under: Any E-Bike
- E-Dirt Bikes: DOT Approved

FOR PARENTS

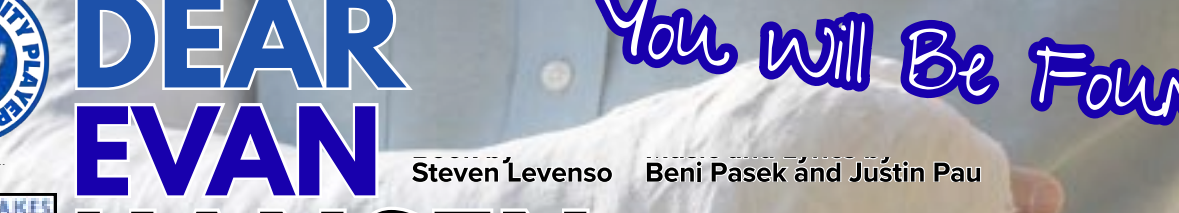
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Community Calendar

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upcoming events**

To enter your own event on the calendar
(free of charge) visit our Events page
on a computer and follow prompts.

A square QR code with a central logo. The logo features a large, stylized letter 'R' in a gold color, positioned above a horizontal rainbow-colored bar. The QR code is black and white, with three large black squares in the corners for alignment.

THE BULLETIN

Reston artist Andrew Black embraces 'The Art of Play'

By Ellyn Wexler,
staff writer

When Andrew Black heads into his studio, he rarely knows exactly where a piece will end up. A patch of color may spark a new idea. A mark made on impulse may change the direction of a painting. For the long-time Reston artist, that uncertainty is part of the fun.

It is also the inspiration behind “The Art of Play,” his solo exhibition featuring more than 50 abstract paintings and drawings on display at Reston Community Center Lake Anne from July 20 to Aug. 4 with a reception on Sunday, July 26, 2 to 4 p.m.

For Black, creativity is less about producing a finished work than enjoying the journey. “Play is an act of doing something simply for the recreation or enjoyment of it,” he said. “I think that is the perfect definition of my creative process. The creating, rather than the creation, is what truly fulfills me.”

That outlook fits naturally in the community he credits with shaping both his life and artistic perspective. “Reston is a very diverse and nurturing community,” he said. “Reston’s philosophy of embracing nature and being a responsible steward for our planet has long resonated with me.”

He also credits Reston’s programs and facilities with exposing him to new art forms and providing access to equipment he might not otherwise have used.

Black graduated from James Madison University in 1980 with a bachelor’s degree in fine arts. The university’s art program encouraged students to work across multiple media and instilled a willingness to experiment that still guides his work today. “Not to be afraid to try something different, and not to be afraid of failure,” he said. “Failure is not a weakness; it is part of the process that allows me to grow as an artist.”

More than 35 years as a federal graphic designer sharpened his eye for balance, composition and craftsmanship. The experience also taught him not to settle for work

that fell short of his expectations.

Retirement in 2017 gave him something he had long lacked: time. “Being able to devote hours to my work and sustain that over several days was a gift,” he said.

Freed from the demands of client projects, Black could focus entirely on his own artistic vision. “Now, I get to make what I want to make, not what someone else wants.”

Much of the work in the exhibition was created during the past five years. The collection includes colorful abstract paintings layered with circles, dashes, scratched lines and other recurring marks, as well as intricate pen-and-ink drawings filled with patterns and textures.

Black often jokes with his wife that he is going to “play around for a while” when he heads to the studio. In reality, that is his shorthand for making art.

His process is intentionally open-ended. A piece may begin with a few areas of color or a handful of quickly sketched shapes before evolving through layers of marks, patterns and textures. Rather than working toward a predetermined image, he responds to what unfolds on the canvas or paper.

Visitors may notice recurring circles, textures and color relationships throughout the exhibition. Together, they form a visual vocabulary that connects the pieces while allowing each work to develop its own personality.

The exhibition also reflects how his artistic voice has evolved. Earlier works often incorporated dimensional constructions made from wood and found objects. Over time, he shifted toward the more spontaneous abstract paintings and drawings that now dominate his work.

Although Black admires artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, Martin Puryear, Edward Hopper and Sally Mann, he resists pointing to any single influence. Instead, he continues to follow the lesson that has guided him since college: keep exploring.

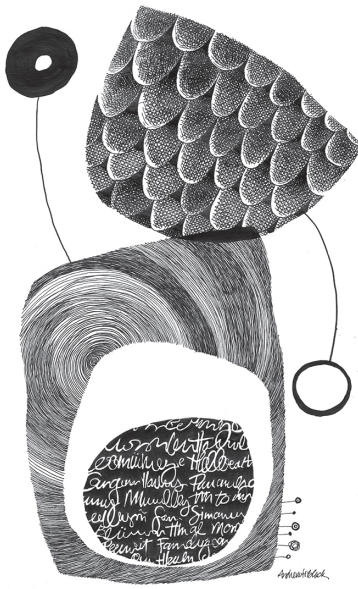


Andrew Black’s “The Art of Play” will feature more than 50 of his paintings and drawings at Reston Community Center at Lake Anne from July 20 to Aug. 4. His artist’s reception will be July 26 from 2-4 p.m. Photo contributed by Andrew Black

As for what he hopes visitors take away from “The Art of Play,” his answer comes back to the joy that fuels his work. “A work of art is not fully complete until it is experienced by others,” he said. “I hope they leave with the same sense of joy that I received while making it.”

At an age when many retirees are slowing down, Black is still looking for new creative challenges. In August, he plans to take a class in pine-needle basket making.

The medium may change, but the approach remains the same: keep experimenting, keep learning and keep playing.



Backpack drive, shredding event to benefit Cornerstones

Contributed by Century 21

Reston Realtor® Micki Moravitz will host her sixth annual Backpack Drive and Shredding Event from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, July 25, on Charterhouse Circle, off Glade Drive.

The event benefits Cornerstones by collecting new backpacks and school supplies for local students as they prepare for the new school year. Moravitz hopes to collect at least 125

backpacks.

Residents can also bring sensitive documents for free, secure on-site shredding.

Moravitz launched the annual event as a way to celebrate her summer birthday by giving back to the community.

Kaye’s Mini Doughnuts will provide doughnuts and lemonade for participants. Additional information is available through the event’s QR code.



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Sat, July 25
10am–12pm
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4437 Brookfield Corporate Dr. Suite 110 Chantilly, VA 20151



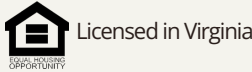
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THE RESTON LETTER

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THE BULLETIN

Reston celebrates 250 years of the USA!

From page 1

By Dawn Crosson, owner

Reston bustled with America 250 celebrations this June and July as thousands gathered to celebrate 250 years of our own United States of America.

On June 26, Lake Fairfax put on Fairfax County's first-ever drone light show, mesmerizing hundreds with the accuracy and clarity of their images in the clear night sky. The drone show is a cleaner alternative to traditional fireworks, and made many pet owners happy. Food trucks, live music, family-friendly fun abounded all day before the evening light show.

Reston Station held a multi-day America 250 celebration that kicked off with a young girl singing the National Anthem on Thursday, July 2. The event included Clydesdale horses, cotton candy

making, founding father impersonators, The Sandlot on the big screen, fireworks, a splash pad, a Bruce Springsteen tribute band, and loads of family fun. Though the hot weather (102 degrees was the official high) may have turned some away, there was standing and pre-positioned lawnchair room only by the time the fireworks lit up the sky on July 2, reflected in all the shining buildings surrounding the plaza.

The celebration was part of Reston Station's Summerbration series, a lineup of free community concerts and events.

Though Reston Town Center's Stars and Stripes Family Night was canceled due to the heat, many local establishments had festive specials and everyone had decorations, as the town joined together to celebrate our shared freedoms in the United States of America.



Top: Bruce Springsteen tribute band rocks out at Reston Station. Below, left to right: George Washington and Benjamin Franklin pose with the Declaration of Independence, a scene from Lake Fairfax's drone light show, Love sign at Reston Station. Photos by Isadora Guerreiro and Benjamin Burgess

Presented by

RESTON MUSEUM

A photograph showing a large group of people, mostly children and young adults, standing on a wooden platform or dock. They are wearing life jackets and some are holding paddles, suggesting they are participating in a water activity or regatta.

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A circular logo for the Reston Museum, featuring a stylized building and the text "RESTON MUSEUM" around the perimeter.

Hosted by Lake Anne of Reston, A Condominium Unit Owners Association and Reston Community Center.

In Loving Memory of Dr. Thomas F. Koerner

A Life of Learning, Leadership, and Family

It is with profound sadness and deep gratitude for a life well lived that we announce the passing of our beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Dr. Thomas (Tom) Koerner. Surrounded by the love of his family, Tom departed this world on Dec. 2, 2025, leaving behind a legacy of devotion, achievement and warmth.

Born in Chicago, he was the son of Celestine and Lois Koerner and the younger brother of Elayne.

For 68 years, he was the cherished husband of Josephine, his devoted partner and the love of his life. Together, they built a wonderful family, raising five sons: Thomas F. Koerner Jr. (Carolyn) of Fairfax, Virginia; Timothy John Koerner of Lakewood Ranch, Florida; Terrence Michael Koerner (Tamara) of Leesburg, Virginia; Todd Alan Koerner of Hermosa Beach, California; and Troy Raymond Koerner (Kimberly) of Brambleton, Virginia. He was a proud grandfather of 11 grandchildren: Theresa, Ty, Trent, Thomas, Kathryn, Tess, Max, Tristin, Michael, Troy and Raymond, as well as one great-grandchild, Lucy, each of whom he adored and inspired.

A man of intellect and dedication, Tom earned a bachelor's degree from Iona, a master's degree from St. John's, and a Ph.D. in journalism from North-

western University, setting the stage for a remarkable career. He began with United Press, where, as a young reporter, he interviewed Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable, Joan Crawford and Louis Armstrong, among many others. After working in high school administration, he was one of the editors of the "Walker Report" on the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention. These credentials led to his involvement with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), where he served with distinction before retiring as executive director. His work inspired the lives of countless educators and students nationwide.

Retirement did not mark the end of Tom's professional journey. Instead, he embarked on a fulfilling second career in publishing with Rowman & Littlefield, where he continued to share his knowledge and passion for education and leadership through the written word. He continued to work until he was 90 years old.

Tom will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to his family, his integrity and his generosity of spirit. His influence extended beyond his professional achievements. He was a mentor, role model and friend to many. His legacy lives on in the lessons he taught, the lives he touched and the

A portrait photograph of Dr. Thomas F. Koerner. He is an older man with short, light-colored hair, wearing glasses, a dark suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is smiling slightly at the camera.

family he cherished above all else.

The family is deeply grateful for the outpouring of love and support. They kindly request that donations be made to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in remembrance of a remarkable man who dedicated his life to serving others.

He will be dearly missed, lovingly remembered and forever in our hearts.

THE BULLETIN

Government reviews Reston land development

By Gene Powell, staff writer

Several major proposed Reston-residential and commercial developments moved forward in June through government reviews.

Reston National Golf Course
Developers are proceeding to seek county approval to develop a 14-plus acre portion of the 166-acre course, to build 308 townhouses along the property's northwest and west sides. The owners also propose renovating existing facilities and adding features such as a multi-story lighted driving range facility and a second restaurant on the remaining 152 acres of the 56-year-old course. The next step in review of the proposal is a Sept. 23 hearing by the county planning commission.

The course owners maintain the small tract is already zoned for such residential housing, having been left outside 1971 rezoning that covers the remaining course. County officials have expressed skepticism about the claim. Officials last year rejected a proposal involving the entire course, in which as many as 800 residences would have been built on part of the land, and the remaining acreage would be a "linear" public park space donated to either Fairfax County or Reston Association (RA).

The association's board solicited comments in June from residents on RA's next steps and voted at a June meeting to continue its opposition to development of the course. At an April RA board meeting, Michele Hudnall, president of the Whitney Park East Homeowners Association and a Realtor, said she had conducted a study that shows \$47 million in combined property equity would be immediately lost by 441 adjacent homeowners if the course is developed.

Lofts II at Reston Station
A planned June 23 public hearing by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors was deferred to a later date on a plan by Pulte Group for a second phase to the existing Lofts residential development. The project, east of Wiehle Blvd. and south of Sunrise Valley Drive, would replace three existing low-rise office buildings with about 160 homes—condominiums and stacked townhouses and some underground parking.

On June 10, the Fairfax County Planning Commission recommended approval of a rezoning application for the project, but the advisory Reston Planning and Zoning Committee on June 15 voted not to recommend the plan. Residents in the existing Lofts development continue to raise questions about parking, traffic, promised retail development and development of a new north-south street along the west edge of the proposed development.

Reston Town Center North
County officials on June 16 held the latest public hearings on the 47-acre proposed development bounded by Baron Cameron Drive, Town Center Parkway, Fountain Drive and New Dominion Parkway. The next step for the project is a July 22 review by the county planning commission, and a Sept. 15 public hearing by the board of supervisors.

In what is expected to be a decade-or-more series of projects, the area is projected to contain a new Fairfax County elementary school, a county recreation center, and athletic field. Relocation of both the existing Reston Regional Library and the Embry Rucker Shelter are included – and funded - in the tentative outline for the overall project, along with a central 3.6-



The American Dream Way project shortly after groundbreaking in 2024. The upscale housing project was set to be completed the end of 2026. Land development is a hot topic in Reston, with major projects underway and proposals for more on the rise. Photo by Benjamin Burgess

acre green space and public performance area.

Citizens attending the hearing inquired about parking, pedestrian safety and the potential for a new school on the site. A representative of Inova said there are no plans to relocate its long-standing health care facility at the northeast corner of the project's acreage but also said there is no commitment for permanent presence.

Isaac Newton Square
The county planning commission advanced a plan for 143 new townhouses in the northern portion of the square, a second step in changing the existing 36-acre office park into a total of 2,100 residences. The entire project gained general approval in 2019. The next step for the proposal is an Aug. 25

review by the county Board of Supervisors.

The full project envisions several types of townhomes and a seven-story, 345-unit multi-family building, according to planning commissions records.

Lake Anne Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Crescent development

Fairfax County Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn hosted a town hall meeting June 25 on updating the Lake Anne Comprehensive Plan to allow the option to include the Reston Community Center in the redevelopment of the Crescent Apartments.

The complex was purchased by the county several years ago. If approved as part of redevelopment to add additional affordable housing, the commu-

nity center would be relocated from its current location at Lake Anne's Washington Plaza. The new complex will contain as many as 750 multi-family residences.

At the meeting, Alcorn noted a major consideration is that the current community center is in a long-term lease through 2039 on private property, while relocating to the Crescent site would place it on publicly owned land. Attendees at the program asked about the future of existing art and other programs at the existing center, expansion of current and new programs, and the time it would take to build a new center. Alcorn said it's likely a new center will not be built for at least 5-6 years, at the earliest, if approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Local groups help feed 400 families in fifth annual food rally

Contributed by StarKist, Feed the Children

About 400 Northern Virginia families received food and household supplies during the Fifth Annual Summer Food & Resource Rally held at Floris United Methodist Church in Herndon. The event was organized by StarKist, Feed the Children, Cornerstones and Floris United Methodist Church to help families experiencing food insecurity.

Volunteers distributed 400 family kits containing StarKist products, 25-pound boxes of shelf-stable food, 15-pound boxes of house-

hold and personal care items, Avon products and information about community resources. Organizers said each kit was designed to support a family of four, providing the equivalent of more than 8,300 meals. More than 50 volunteers, including StarKist employees, community advocates, business leaders and elected officials, participated in the event. The rally is part of an ongoing partnership among the organizations to address food insecurity and connect families with essential resources.

"For families facing hunger and hardship, every moment matters — and every meal matters," said Emily Callahan, president and CEO of Feed the Children. "Together with StarKist and community partners like Cornerstones, we can put food and essential resources directly into the hands of the families who need them most." Cornerstones, a nonprofit serving Northern Virginia since 1970, provides housing, food assistance and other support services to individuals and families experiencing hardship.



StarKist employees were among the 50 volunteers who helped deliver food and supplies to families. Photo contributed by StarKist

SPECIAL EDITION: PETS

We asked and you delivered! Meet some of The Reston Letter readers' pets!



Bama & Ivy love the World Cup! #USA



Zoe & Reese enjoy burgers at Big Buns & concerts at Reston Station.



Sandy enjoys paddleboarding on the lake.



Rocky loves quality time with his family.



Bailey enjoys runs at Baron Cameron Park.



Dylan loves laying in the sun.



Vinnie and Violet are best friends who enjoy lounging in the sun on their porch.



Tilly Anne's idea of bliss is a nap in the tall grass.



Lennon enjoys mimicking other dogs & relaxing at Town Center.



Damien is too busy being a "scary" guard cat, fending off deliveries and neighbors.



Stella loves exploring new trails.

Bogey's Mix offers healthy food for your furry, four-legged friends

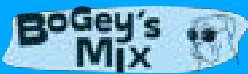
By Ava-Grace Satterfield, staff writer

When Leesburg business owners Caroline and Zachary Feldman brought home their boxer, Bogey, they wanted to feed him the healthiest diet possible.

After struggling with traditional kibble and subscription dog food services, they teamed up with friend Adam Totter to launch Bogey's Mix, a fresh dog food company that prepares affordable meals made with locally sourced ingredients.

The difference was almost immediate. "We saw him vertically leap in the air when we first fed him fresh food," Caroline Feldman said. "Bogey is the whole reason behind Bogey's Mix, and he's just thriving."

The company operates from a commercial kitchen in Leesburg, where head chef Judson Smith prepares two recipes, Turkey Feast and Beef Bonanza.



FRESH, LOCAL DOG FOOD.

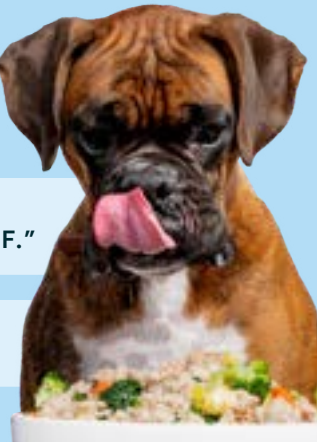
Real dog food, made fresh, right here in Leesburg, VA.

bogeysmix.com



"HI, I'M BOGEY! BOXER-IN-CHIEF."

"USE CODE: LOCAL50"



Both are made with whole ingredients, contain no preservatives and feature meat sourced from suppliers around the Washington region.

Transparency is central to the business. "As a pet owner, I'm reading labels constantly," Feldman said. "I always want to know what's in his food."

The company lists every ingredient and explains its purpose on both its website and product packaging.

Before starting Bogey's Mix in 2024, the Feldmans found that meal plans from several subscription services didn't provide enough food for Bogey. Today, the company works with pet nutritionists to develop recipes that meet dogs' nutritional needs. Its website calculates customized meal plans based on a dog's age, weight, activity level and other factors, tailoring portions within about 50 calories of each pet's daily requirements.



The three co-founders of Bogey's Mix, Zachary Feldman (front), Adam Totter (second) and Judson Smith (last) work alongside two other members from the kitchen staff.

Photo contributed by Bogey's Mix

Bogey's Mix hand-delivers meals each week to customers from Reston to Fredericksburg and also sells its products at markets and community events throughout Northern Virginia.

The enthusiastic response from dogs and their owners keeps the team motivated. "Some dogs will jump up on the table and house the bowl, while some try to eat another dog's meal," Feldman said. "It's cool to see the excitement from the dogs and that we're creating a product people believe in."

The company continues to refine its recipes and cooking methods while keeping its mission in focus. "We're always refining our recipes and enhancing ingredients," Feldman said. "We want to keep evolving."

For the Feldmans, the business is personal. "Bogey is my bestie, and he's a family member through and through," Feldman said. "We hope he lives a really long life."

SPECIAL EDITION: PETS



Davos is known for his bandanas and frequenting the South Lakes Shopping Center.



An avid twirler, Molly enjoys the pet-friendly patios in RTC.



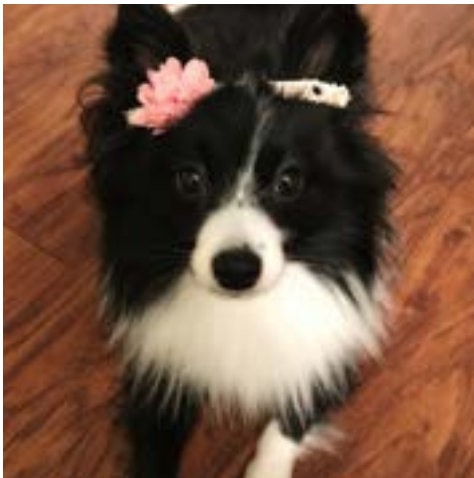
A great exposure therapy dog known for his manners, Pojo enjoys jumping to catch banana slices.



Bob enjoys walks around Lakes Thoreau & Audubon.



Mocha loves exploring all the trails Reston has to offer.



Harley Quinn enjoys scenic trails and staying fit with puppy yoga.



A retired TSA dog, Bruno loves to swim at Reston pools.



Willow is an indoor cat who loves to lounge around.



A model for several pet food safety ads, Dakota likes to hang at sixty vines & explore trails.



Mochi and Richard Biscuits are 9-month-old brother and sister kitties who love to hide in bags and boxes of all sorts.



Sammy enjoys belly rubs and bird watching.



Daisy loves to go to the Pups on the Pavilion at RTC to see her friends and play with the balls!

Woofie's delivers pet care across Reston, Herndon, and beyond

By Kaydence Smith, staff writer

For many pet owners, animals are part of the family, a philosophy that guides the services offered by Woofie's, a pet care company serving Reston and surrounding communities.

Founded in 2019, the company opened its first location in Loudoun County and has since expanded throughout Northern Virginia and other markets. Services include dog walking, pet sitting, mobile

grooming and dog training. Franchise owner Tanya Lee said new dog-walking and pet-sitting clients receive an initial consultation, allowing staff to meet the pet and owner and discuss the animal's needs before services begin. While mobile grooming focuses on dogs and cats, pet-sitting services are available for a variety of small animals. "We love taking care of pets and really care about what we do," Lee said.

Lee said many clients

choose mobile grooming because it eliminates the need to transport pets, making the service especially convenient for older adults and people recovering from injuries.

The company recently opened a grooming school at its Ashburn location to help address the shortage of trained pet groomers. "We're helping young people get a profession," Lee said.

Additional information is available at www.woofies.com



Tanya Lee founded Woofie's in 2019. Photo contributed by Woofie's



Mango likes to hike & will bow if you offer him a treat.



Tater Tot & Bean enjoy relaxing on the deck and bird watching.



Mobile Grooming | Dog Walking | Pet Sitting | Dog Training

woofie's

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SPECIAL EDITION: PETS

A love letter to every pet owner

By Tanya Lee, Owner of Woofie's Reston-Herndon

Dear Pet Owner,

We see your love for your pets every day.

We see it in the handwritten notes you leave for your pet sitter. We see it in the way you apologize because your dog hasn't been brushed as much as you hoped. We see it in the treats tucked into your dog's bag "just in case." We see it when you ask us to call if your senior dog seems tired or remind us that your puppy is still learning to trust the world, and we see the excitement when you pick them up after their appointment.

Every one of those moments reminds us of something simple: we all love our pets, and we all want to give them the happiest, healthiest and most comfortable lives possible. After years of working alongside professional groomers and caring for thousands of wonderful dogs, I'd love to share a few things we've learned that truly make a difference.

One of the most important is understanding matting. Many people think mats are simply tangles in the fur. In reality, the worst matting usually forms next to the skin, where you can't easily see it. Those tight mats pull on the skin every time your dog walks, sits or lies down. They trap moisture, reduce airflow, and can lead to painful hot spots, skin infections, hematomas, and even hide parasites or injuries.

Fortunately, checking for matting at home is simple. Part the hair and make sure you can actually see the skin. Then take a wide-tooth metal comb and gently run it through the coat.

If the comb catches, there's still matting hiding beneath the surface. Brushing the top layer may make the coat look beautiful, but your dog feels what's hap-

pening underneath.

There's also a bit of irony when it comes to curly-coated breeds like Doodles, Poodles, and Bichons. It sounds counter-intuitive but the longer you want their beautiful fluffy coat to be, the more frequently they need to be groomed. It's about keeping the skin and coat healthy and maintained and avoiding a shave-down, so every appointment doesn't have to be a haircut, it can be a bath in between haircuts to maintain their health and comfort. Most should be professionally groomed every four to six weeks, with baths or maintenance appointments in between if you're keeping the coat long. A little preventative care is always kinder—and far more comfortable—than having to remove painful mats later.

Looking after their comfort doesn't stop with their coat. Their teeth deserve the same attention ours do. Brushing with pet-safe toothpaste and regular veterinary dental care can prevent painful dental disease and help keep them healthier throughout their lives.

Every stage of a dog's life deserves something different. Puppies need practice. They aren't born knowing how to stand on a grooming table or trust a blow dryer. Gentle, positive grooming experiences teach them confidence that lasts a lifetime and makes grooming appointments less stressful, and even fun. Many of our furry clients get excited to see the grooming van pull up!

Senior dogs need patience which is why appointments can sometimes take longer. Some can no longer stand comfortably for an entire appointment because of arthritis or weakness. I've seen our groomers spend much of a groom gently supporting an 80-pound dog with one arm while grooming with the other. It's physically demanding and emotionally exhausting, but



they do it because every senior dog deserves to feel clean, comfortable and dignified in their golden years.

So, this is a love letter about the incredible bond between people and their pets.

Check their coat and skin. Start grooming while they're young. Brush their teeth. Be patient as they grow old. Treasure every muddy paw print, every gray whisker and every joyful tail wag. We never get enough time with the ones we love.

Thank you for loving them the way you do. Thank you for trusting us to care for them alongside you. It is one of the greatest privileges of our profession, and a responsibility we never take for granted.

EDUCATION

Herndon studio seeks children for 'Simply Me' art show

Contributed by Joy Granados, photographer

Capture Joy Photography is inviting families to apply for "Simply Me," a black-and-white portrait project that will culminate in an art show benefiting the Catholic Charities Pregnancy and Adoption Program.

Ten children will be selected. Portrait sessions are scheduled for August at the Herndon studio and will focus on natural expressions and personality, from laughter and playful faces to quiet, thoughtful moments, without props or colorful backdrops.

"What if your child's bold, quirky, joyful personality could be celebrated in a local art show?" said owner Joy Granados. "The 'Simply Me' project is designed to

be simple, timeless and deeply expressive, capturing the little expressions parents never want to forget while supporting an incredible local cause."

Children of all ages may apply. Select-

ed portraits will be featured in the Simply Me Art Show Nov. 2 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Pinot's Palette in Herndon. The event coincides with National Adoption Awareness Month.

Scan the QR code for more

Application details are also available by contacting Capture Joy Photography at joy@capturejoyphotography.com or 571-512-0162.



Apply now to have an August photo session for Nov. 2 art show. Photos by Joy Granados, Capture Joy Photography

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EDUCATION

Making an Impact

Beth Greenberg Cotell and Pam Ahart-Steward

By Chuck Cascio, author and former South Lakes teacher

Of the many ways Reston has been described by people who were raised in the community, perhaps the most unique comes from Beth Greenberg Cotell and Pam Ahart-Steward: "Growing up in Reston was like living in a warm hug!" That environment led to a childhood in which the two 1988 South Lakes High School graduates spent hours exploring nature.

"We would go for nature hikes in the woods and look for signs of tadpoles, squirrels or baby rabbits," Beth said. "We thrived in nature, and there was so much around us."

Their affection for Reston's natural settings led them to spend countless hours exploring. "When we met in January 1973, we were instant friends," Beth

said. "We always loved animals and spent endless hours researching careers involving them."

It would be logical to assume that the two pursued careers in biology, science or veterinary medicine. "We considered becoming vets, of course—but there was too much blood to deal with—and then looked at being naturalists or marine biologists," Beth said.

Instead, Pam graduated from St. Paul's College in Virginia with a degree in sociology and a minor in business, while Beth left the University of Delaware after one semester and returned to Reston.

Even while working full time at the Washington Speakers Bureau in Alexandria, they continued pursuing their interest in animals and nature. Then, in April 1998, Pam told Beth, "I had a dream about pet sitting." After researching the idea, she suggested it could become a part-time business.

Later that month, while keeping their full-time jobs, they launched what was then called Best Friends Pet Care, now known as All Friends Pet Care.

The business grew quickly. By Jan. 1, 1999, pet care had become their full-time occupation. Today, All Friends offers services including mid-day dog walks, vacation visits, overnight stays and more. "We

have never looked back," Pam said.

For Beth and Pam, the rewards extend beyond building a successful business. The two continue to work as both owners and operators. "Clients can reach out and speak to either of us with any questions, concerns or booking requests," Beth said. "I often say, 'It is tough to stay in a bad mood in this job,' because as soon as you walk in the door, you become the center of a pet's world."

In 2020, the pandemic slowed business and led to a reduction in some services. "We got by on Small Business Administration loans and a lot of prayers," Pam said. "We also offered future-use gift cards for clients to purchase. It gave us a little cushion in our bank account, and clients could use the credit when they were ready to travel again."

She added that several regular dog-walking clients continued paying their biweekly rates to help support the business and its pet sitters. "We wouldn't have made it without them," she said.

After more than 25 years in business, All Friends continues to evolve. Beth said the company is testing a new service called "Hangout Buddy," which provides extended daytime pet care of three hours or longer. The company is also considering expanding ser-



Beth Greenberg Cotell and Pam Ahart-Steward

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 36th crossword puzzle creation, made specifically for The Reston Letter readers!

What The Answers Do

ACROSS

- 1. With 14-Across, what every answer does w/another
- 6. "Heartbreak ____" (on "lonely street," per Presley)
- 7. Type of content that is high in rich desserts
- 9. Tennessee athlete, or TV button (abbr.)
- 10. Dental org., or computing pioneer Lovelace
- 11. Went upstairs, or danced
- 13. Lay-about, or dawdler
- 14. With 1-Across, what every answer does w/another

DOWN

- 1. Topsy-turvy
- 2. Non-Spanish speaker's tongue-twister in "churros"
- 3. Spanish diminutive suffix, or skater Midori
- 4. Colorful Mexican shawls
- 5. Home stealers, or what pitchers often throw
- 7. Walgreens rival
- 8. Scoundrel, or sleazeball
- 12. Grp. once led by Arafat



NWFCU Foundation's Aspire Higher Scholarship Program celebrates local students

Contributed by NWFCU Foundation

The Northwest Federal Credit Union Foundation has named three students from Reston and Herndon to its Aspire Higher Class of 2026, awarding scholarships that recognize academic achievement, leadership and community service.

This year, the foundation awarded \$170,000 in scholarships to 32 students across the region. Since 2005, it has awarded more than \$2.6 million to 500 students. Recipients were honored June 18 at the annual Aspire Higher Scholarship Breakfast.

Herndon High School seniors Selah Haywood-Philbert and Jamison Daly were among the scholarship recipients. Haywood-Philbert, an AP and honors student and captain of the Herndon Step Team, plans to study neuroscience at the University of Toronto before pursuing a career as a physician. Daly, a varsity athlete and member



(Left to right) Jamison Daly, Ethan Ham, and Selah Haywood-Philbert received Aspire High Scholarships this year. James Butlin (far right) a former scholarship recipient, spoke at the scholarship breakfast. Photo contributed by NWFCU Foundation

of several honor societies, will attend the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets to study biological sciences and plans to become an Army Medical Corps physician.

South Lakes High School's Ethan Ham also received a scholarship. The National Honor Society member and artist plans to study fine arts

with a concentration in animation.

Also recognized was 2025 scholarship recipient James Butlin of South Lakes, who returned to this year's breakfast as a guest speaker, sharing his experiences in leadership, service and advocacy with the new recipients.

"The Aspire Higher Schol-

arship is about more than financial support," said Taralyn Tharp Kohler, foundation director. "It is about recognizing students who lead with purpose, give back to their communities and are committed to building a better future."

Applications for the 2027 Aspire Higher Scholarship Program open Oct. 15.



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SEPTEMBER 4
Bruce In The USA
A Tribute To Bruce Springsteen
7:30pm - 9:00pm

Relive the Glory Days with sip-and-stroll drinks, a pop-up bar, photo booth fun, and family-friendly festivities all while the world’s #1 Bruce Springsteen tribute band brings The Boss’s greatest hits to life.

SEPTEMBER 11
Silent Dance Party
7:00pm - 8:30pm

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.

SEPTEMBER 18
Night of Nicks
Stevie Nicks, Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band
7:30pm - 9:00pm

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.

SEPTEMBER 25
Karen As Dolly
A Tribute To Dolly Parton
7:30pm - 9:00pm

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.

FAB FRIDAYS LIVE MUSIC

Fridays • 7:30pm - 9:00pm • 1900 Reston Metro Plaza

JULY 10
Beatlemania
Beatles Tribute Band

JULY 17
J Tucker & The Krewe
Funk, Soul

JULY 24
Josh Christina and The Revival
Piano Rock Legends

JULY 31
Mother’s Little Helpers
Rolling Stones Tribute Band

AUGUST 7
The Tribe
R&B

AUGUST 14
Hourglass
James Taylor Tribute Band

AUGUST 21
The Reflex
80s Tribute Band

AUGUST 28
Don’t Back Down
Tom Petty Tribute Band

SEPTEMBER 4
Bruce In The USA
A Tribute To Bruce Springsteen

SEPTEMBER 11
Silent Dance Party

SEPTEMBER 18
Night of Nicks
Stevie Nicks, Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band

SEPTEMBER 25
Karen As Dolly
A Tribute to Dolly Parton

COMPLIMENTARY FITNESS CLASSES

BELOVED YOGA
Mondays & Wednesdays
6:00pm - 7:00pm
1900 Reston Metro Plaza
May 27 - September 2
Hosted By Beloved Yoga
Remember your mat and water.

TRAMPOLINE FITNESS
HOSTED BY VIDA FITNESS
Tuesdays
6:00pm - 7:00pm
1800 Reston Row Plaza
June 2 - September 1
A low-impact exercise on mini trampolines.

POP UP ZUMBA
WITH ROCHI B FITNESS
11:00am - 12:00pm
1900 Reston Metro Plaza
Sunday, May 31 & Saturday, August 15
A full body, cardio fitness, dance class for all levels.

ALL-AMERICAN MOVIE MAGIC & MORE

Saturdays • 6:30pm - 9:00pm • 1800 Reston Row Plaza

JULY 11
Movie: Cars

JULY 18
Movie: The Bad Guys

JULY 25 MOVIE + EVENT
Movie: The Parent Trap
Spin into summer-camp vibes with hula hoop fun!

AUG 1 - MOVIE + EVENT
Movie: Minions
Bello! Maximum mischief by meeting some real Minions before the movie.

AUG 8 - MOVIE + EVENT
Movie: Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory
Unwrap a chocolate bar for a chance to discover the Golden Ticket and win a sweet prize!

AUG 15 - MOVIE + EVENT
Movie: The Secret Life of Pets
Meet some sweet animals looking for their fur-ever home.

AUG 22 - MOVIE + EVENT
Movie: School of Rock
Get a blow-up instrument and get ready to rock because every legend starts with a little air-jam.

AUG 29 - MOVIE + EVENT
Movie: Pitch Perfect
Warm up those vocal cords and hit the high notes with pre-show karaoke.



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SPORTS

South Lakes trailblazer heads to Hollins for flag football

By Matt Reider, staff writer

Lila Jaster, a Reston resident, multisport athlete and recent South Lakes High School graduate, is preparing for her next chapter as a scholar-athlete in the NCAA Emerging Sport of Women's Flag Football. She has accepted a full scholarship to Hollins University in Roanoke and is expected to compete for a spot at middle linebacker.

Jaster is perhaps best known as the first female player to score in a South Lakes varsity football game when she converted a point-after attempt on Sept. 13, 2024.

Her athletic journey began long before that historic moment. A pattern emerged throughout high school: whenever a new opportunity presented itself, Jaster was willing to step outside her comfort zone and give it a try. "I was looking for a new challenge," she said. "My older brother loved football but didn't play, so I thought it could be something that brought us together."

Her first soccer coach, Todd Shea, encouraged her throughout her athletic career, while

support from coaches and fellow female player Emily Brown helped her feel welcome on the football team despite some social anxiety. Joining the team opened additional opportunities, including an invitation to play basketball. Despite limited experience in the sport, she joined the freshman team and earned a spot on the junior varsity squad the following year.

The next year, Jaster added another sport to her schedule by joining the girls wrestling team. Wrestling quickly became her favorite sport, and she qualified for the Virginia High School League girls state tournament last year.

Girls flag football arrived in Fairfax County in 2025. Even before the inaugural season began, Jaster's enthusiasm for the sport grew. At a Washington Commanders event recognizing teams from Northern Virginia and Maryland, promotional materials described the athletes as "trailblazers." By joining South Lakes' inaugural team, Jaster continued her own tradition of breaking new ground for female athletes.

Being a multisport athlete

required a significant commitment. Jaster battled injuries, illness and a kidney issue while balancing a demanding athletic schedule. She eventually scaled back her participation in soccer to focus on her varsity sports at South Lakes. Along the way, she learned new skills, adapted to new teammates and coaches, and developed resilience.

Through those experiences, she gained a deeper appreciation for hard work, preparation, coaching and teamwork.

That memorable point-after kick remains her favorite athletic moment. "I remember my brother had this solo part in the band that night, and he forgot to play because he was so pumped up about my point," she said. "That night, I really felt like my team was supporting me."

As a senior, she also enjoyed serving as a leader and mentor to younger teammates on the wrestling and flag football teams.

College coaches took notice of Jaster's unique combination of leadership and athletic ability. She drew interest from Radford University, George Mason University and other schools



South Lakes' Lila Jaster is a leader and multi-sport athlete who will continue her athletic pursuits on Hollins University's women's flag football team. Photo contributed by Lila Jaster

building flag football programs. She ultimately chose Hollins because it offers a Division III varsity program, while many larger schools currently compete only at the club level.

Jaster hopes to return to South Lakes and support the Seahawks' flag football program as it grows, even as she begins her

college career at Hollins. In May, women's flag football received a formal recommendation to become an NCAA championship sport, with the first national championship expected to be awarded in spring 2028—a sign of how quickly the sport she helped pioneer at South Lakes is gaining momentum.

Herndon-South Lakes rallies past O'Connell for spring hockey title

By Matt Reider, staff writer

High school hockey in Northern Virginia runs year-round. While teams compete in the Northern Virginia Scholastic Hockey League from September through early March, the shorter spring season features more local competition.

The Herndon-South Lakes varsity team (HSL) competes in the 11-team RRHS Spring High School League, sponsored by the Reston Raiders Hockey Club and hosted at SkateQuest in Reston.

The spring season concluded June 10 when Herndon-South Lakes faced O'Connell in the 2026 championship game. HSL earned home-ice advantage by defeating Oakton in the semifinals, while O'Connell advanced with a win over Yorktown.

HSL entered the title game with a 10-1 record. O'Connell brought an 8-1-2 mark, with its only loss coming earlier in the season against HSL.

Junior Noah White led HSL with 25 points in 12 games. Campbell Wilkins topped the team with 13 goals. O'Connell's leading scorer, Dylan Whiteman, entered the game with 17 points, including 10 goals, tied with teammate Lukas Malagrin for the team lead.

Fans welcomed both teams with drums and cowbells as players took the ice.

O'Connell seized control early and built a 2-0 lead in the first period. Defenseman Ray Baumann opened the scoring at the 11:23 mark when he fired a shot from just inside the blue line through traffic and into the top corner of the net. About five minutes later, Samuel Crean sent Whiteman behind the defense with a precise pass, and Whiteman finished the breakaway to double the lead.

HSL answered in the second period. After officials assessed Edward Cope a

roughing penalty midway through the period, HSL generated offense while short-handed. Defenseman Stephen Reider collected the puck and fired a long pass to Johnny Petzold at center ice. Petzold carried the puck into the offensive zone before finding Wilkins streaking into the slot. Wilkins buried the pass behind O'Connell goaltender Akshay Vani to cut the deficit to 2-1.

About 90 seconds later, Wilkins struck again. Cal Crosson threaded a pass behind the O'Connell defense, and Wilkins converted the breakaway opportunity to tie the game 2-2 heading into the second intermission.

Both teams traded chances early in the third period as the physical play intensified.

With less than six minutes remaining, Petzold gave HSL its first lead of the night. Using traffic in front of the net as a screen, he stepped into the slot and snapped a shot past Vani. Wilkins collected the assist on the eventual game-winning goal.

O'Connell coach Jim Wisniewski called a timeout with 1:41 remaining and pulled his goaltender for an extra attacker. HSL repeatedly won faceoffs and cleared



Rising seniors on the Herndon-South Lakes hockey team pose after the team won their second spring championship. For Herndon juniors Calvin and Clark Crosson, and South Lakes sophomore Leandra Barger, their HSL years are over as they move out of state to play AAA hockey next year. Photo by Chuck Wilkins

the puck before Clark Crosson finally found the empty net from just inside center ice with one minute remaining, extending the lead to 4-2.

O'Connell continued to press with six skaters and narrowed the gap when Baumann scored his second goal of the game with five seconds left. The late goal cut the deficit to 4-3, but the visitors ran out of time.

When the final horn sounded, HSL secured the RRHS spring championship

with a 4-3 victory.

Players celebrated with family and friends before both teams gathered at center ice for the traditional postgame handshake line. The championship carried added significance for several upperclassmen who will head to different schools this fall. After winning two spring championships and enduring several playoff disappointments over the past few years, they finished their Herndon-South Lakes careers with another title.



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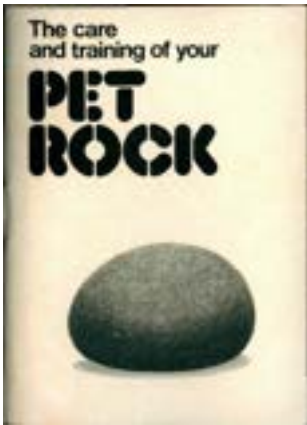


KIDS

Peculiar pets from the past: Pet Rocks, Chia Pets and Tamagotchis

By Bob Welland, Kids Section editor

Pets come with responsibilities like feeding, grooming, training and cleaning up you-know-what. In 1975, this gave Gary Dahl the idea to make the ultimate low-maintenance companion, the Pet Rock. He sold smooth beach rocks in cardboard boxes (with air holes.) It included a 33-page humorous book with care and training instructions. The book explained how easy it was to train the pet rock to obey commands like “sit” and “stay”. Surprisingly, it taught more complex tricks, such as “roll over,” which was best done “on the side of a hill.” Pet Rocks were a short-lived fad, selling 1.5 million in the first year.



Pet Rock Book, credit Rock Bottom Productions

Another peculiar pet from the past was the Chia Pet. You bought a terracotta (baked clay) figure in the shape of a ram, puppy or other animal with grooves on the back. You would soak chia seeds in water until they became a sticky paste that you spread in the grooves. By keeping the hollow animal figure full of water for two weeks, the chia would sprout and grow into green “fur.” They were popular in the 1980s, thanks to a catchy TV advertising jingle of “Ch-ch-ch-chia!” But nowadays, chia seeds are used more for adding fiber and protein



Hedgehog Chia Pet, credit Chia Pet

to puddings and smoothies.

Chia Pets were more work for their owners than Pet Rocks, because the chia plants were actually alive. Then in the 1990s, the first digital pets came from Japan that simulated the care and feeding chores of a living pet.



First Tamagotchis from 1996, credit Tamagotchi

They were called Tamagotchi (meaning egg-shaped watch in Japanese). When you activated the toy, the screen showed a little alien creature hatching from an egg. You pressed buttons to feed, clean and play with the virtual creature and over days, it would grow from baby to teenager to adult. But if you didn’t attend to it, it would grow sick and possibly die. Kids would bring them everywhere, even school which caused distractions and angry teachers.

Hmm, that sounds familiar. Maybe our smartphones are today’s peculiar pets.

Little Hands, Big Bites

By Alexis Estep, mom, chef, Restonian

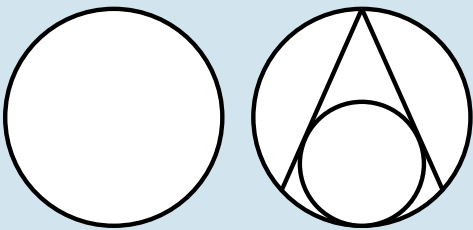


Mailin hanging out with Magnus, and Lars reading to his dog, Argos

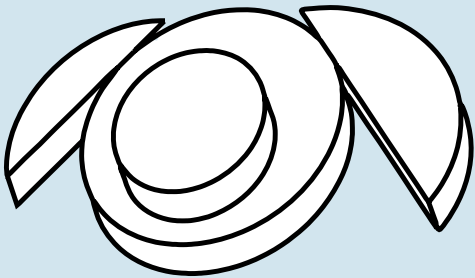
We thought it was the perfect time to introduce you all to our pets! We have two big dogs, Magnus and Argos. Magnus is a pyredoodle (standard poodle and Great Pyrenees mix), and Argos is a black Labrador Retriever. Our kids love to give them lots of pets and cuddles, help with walks, and take turns feeding them. Our daughter refers to them as her two additional brothers.

To celebrate our canine friends, here are steps to make a cake that looks like a doggy!

Step 1: Bake two round cakes



Step 2: Cut out two ears and a snout



Step 3: Decorate with frosting



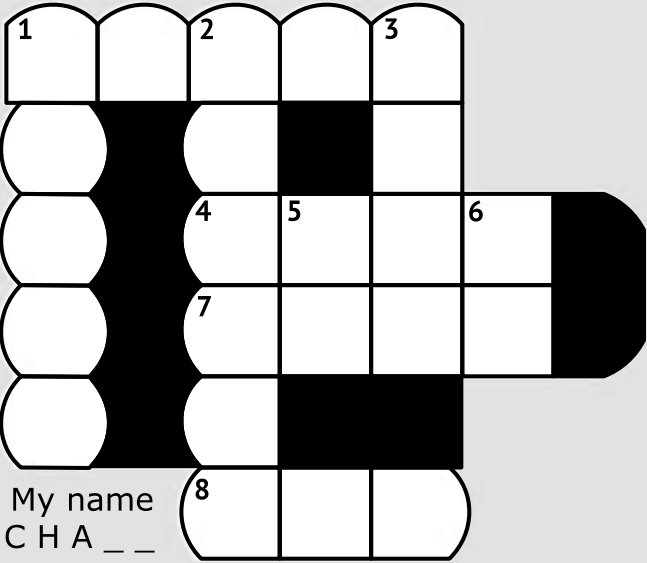
Crossword Poodle

Across

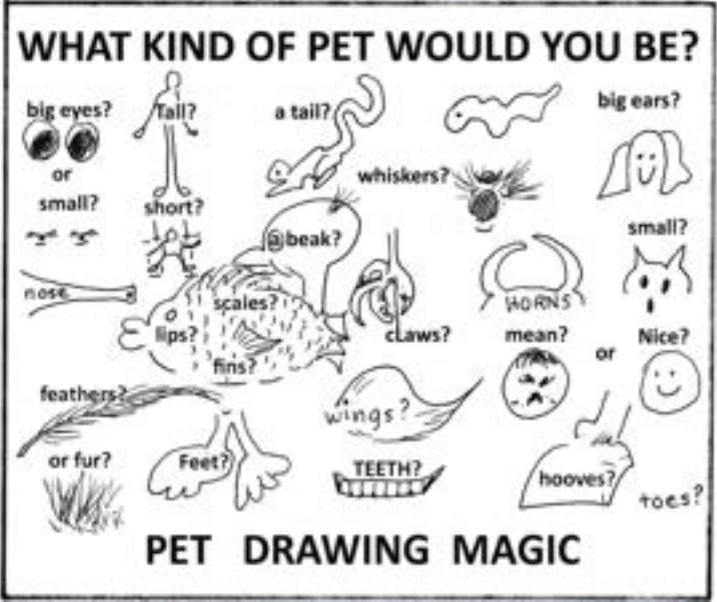
- 1. Shaggy, like eyebrows
- 4. Quaker _____
- 8. Short bark

Down

- 1. [Cartoon dog head]
- 2. [Snoopy dog head]
- 3. Snowman or cooler
- 5. Skip it on YouTube



6. My name is C H A _ _



KIDS

Sage Greene and the Mystery of the Accused Cat

Mystery Fiction by
Arthur Semicolon Doyle

Middle-school sleuth, Sage Greene, walks to the house of her elderly neighbor, Mrs. Gray. It's a hot and humid summer day in Reston so Sage appreciates the cool air conditioning inside. She is greeted in the foyer by Kimble, an orange cat. As Sage removes her shoes, Kimble plays with the shoelaces.

"Shoo, Kimble!" Mrs. Gray says. "He's a year old but still as rambunctious as a kitten!"

In the kitchen, Mrs. Gray offers Sage an iced tea, but her cupboard is empty. Her dishwasher has just finished so she opens it up for a glass. A big cloud of steam rises out and fogs up her eyeglasses. "Not again!" she laughs. "My glasses fog up all the time in the humid weather."

After pouring Sage a glass of iced tea at the table, they hear loud thumps from the living room. Curious, Sage and Mrs. Gray investigate. When they enter the room, Kimble jumps from the top of the coffee table and runs past them into the kitchen. Several magazines are on the floor. "Ooh, that cat is always knocking things over!"

Sage helps Mrs. Gray pick up the

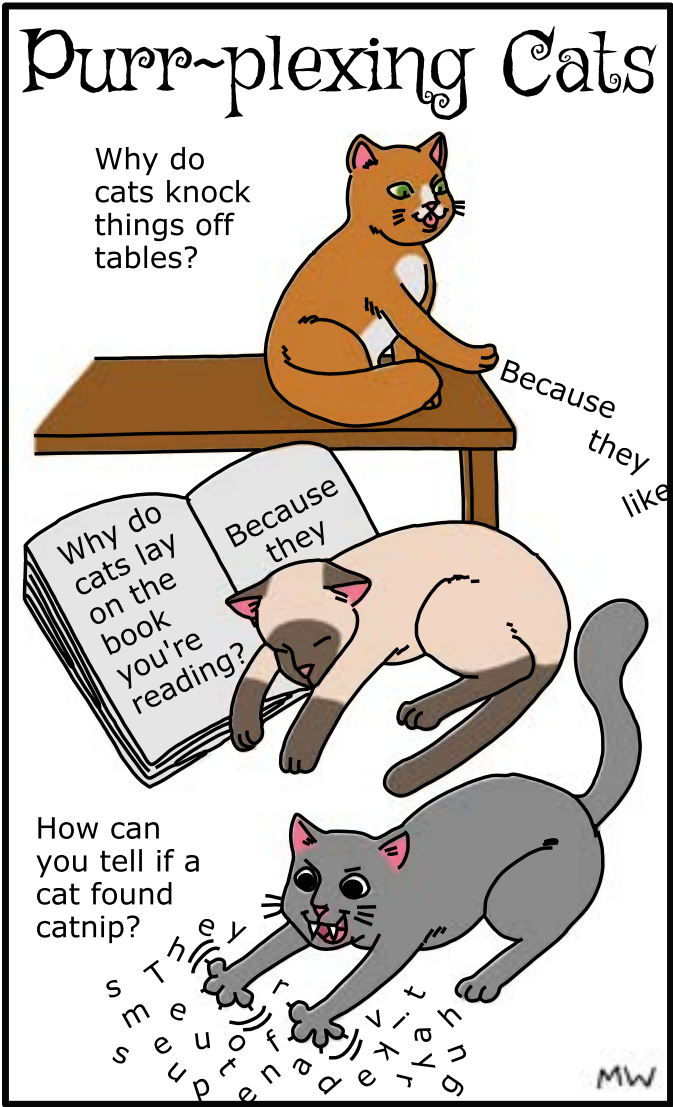


magazines. Suddenly a loud shattering and splash sound comes from the kitchen. Then a terrified Kimble darts out of the kitchen, through the living room, and disappears around a corner.

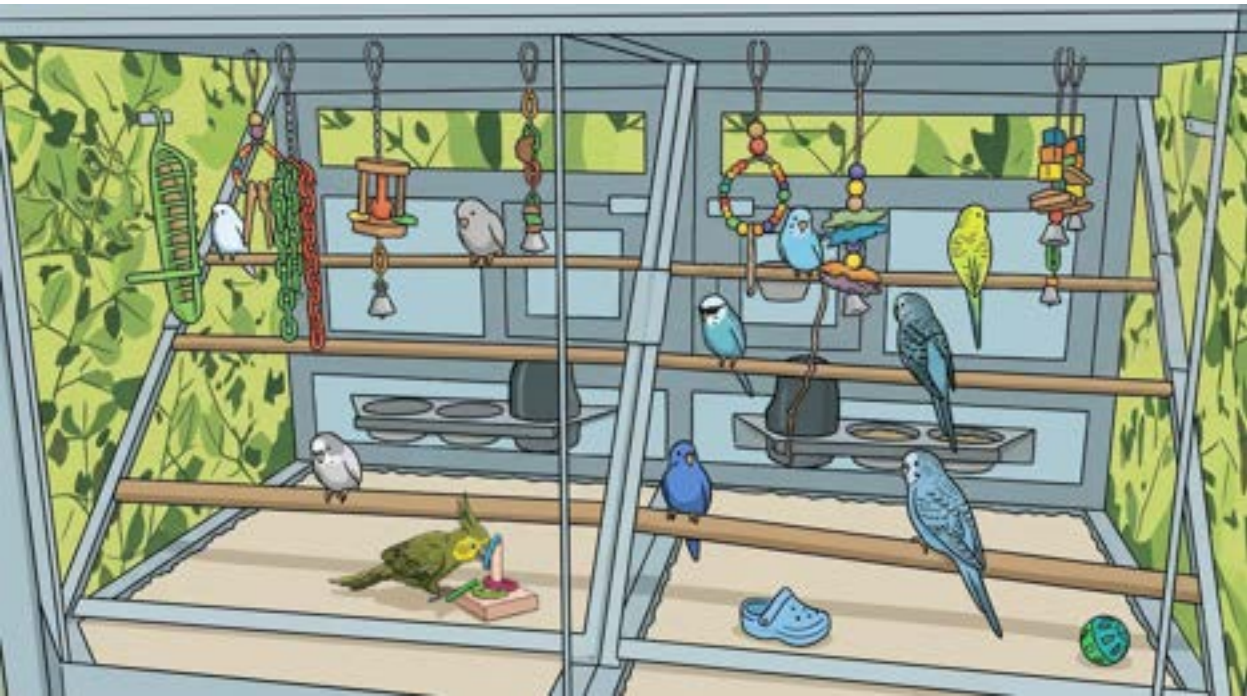
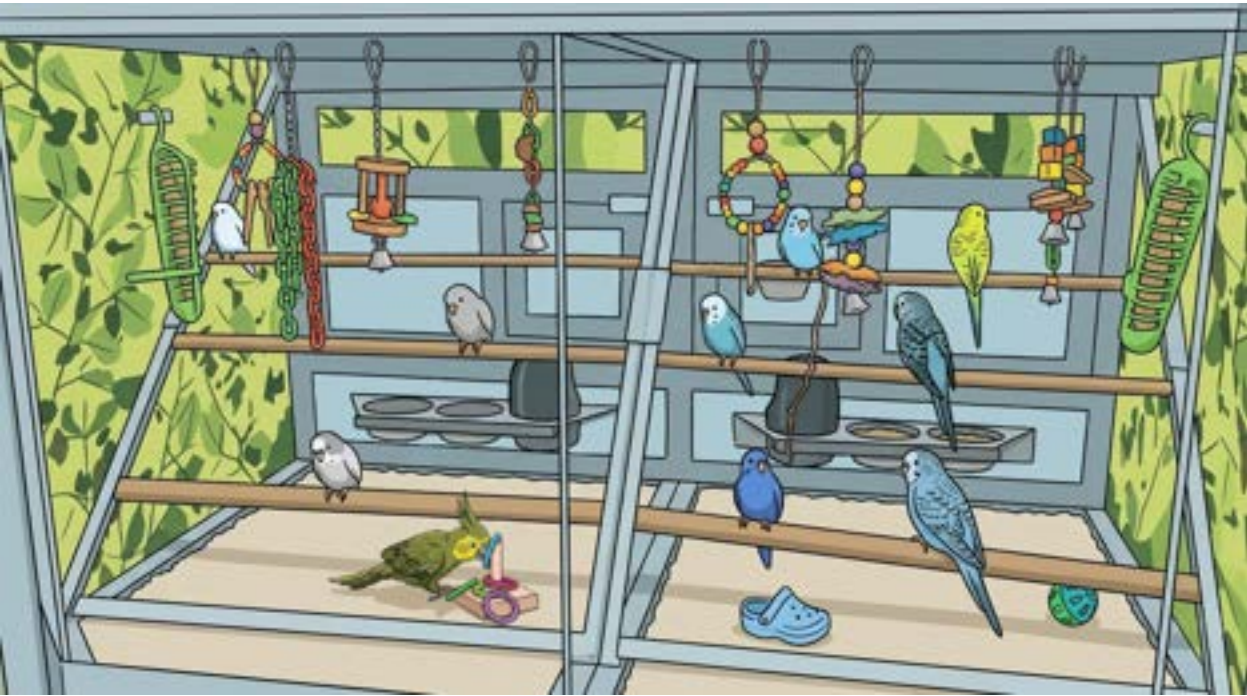
They look in the kitchen to see the floor is covered with iced tea and broken glass. Mrs. Gray gasps. Sage leans in the doorway and sees the table top also has iced tea and glass pieces on it. "Stay out of there, Sage," says Mrs. Gray. "You don't have shoes on."

Mrs. Gray shakes her fist in the air. "Kimble, you naughty kitty!" she shouts. "Knocking a glass off a table is going too far!" Sage interrupts, "Wait a minute. Kimble didn't do it."

How does Sage know Kimble is innocent?



Find 8 Differences: Pet Shop Birds



Solutions

Sage Greene Mystery:

Mrs. Gray is confused. Sage says, "I know Kimble likes to knock things off tables, but if he pushed the glass off the table, it would have smashed when it hit the floor. Look at the table top. There's broken glass and iced tea there too. The glass must have shattered while it was still on the table and then some pieces and tea fell on the floor."

"But how?" asks Mrs. Gray. Sage replies, "The glass was very hot from the dishwasher and then you poured cold iced tea in it. After a few moments, that temperature change can make a glass shatter on its own."

Sage and Mrs. Gray find the frightened cat hiding in the foyer and they discover his back is wet with tea. "Poor kitty got splashed," says Sage as she dries him with a towel. "You know, Kimble, if you hadn't lured us out of the kitchen that glass might have shattered in my hand. Thank you." Kimble purrs as if to say "You're welcome."

Find 8 Differences: Left to Right: 1) Dinosaur in wallpaper, 2) Bell hangs lower, 3) Gray bird on higher post, 4) Missing purple ring, 5) Bird wears sunglasses, 6) Blue bird more to the right, 7) Missing suet feeder, 8) Ball closer to front

Crossword Poodle: ACROSS: 1) Bushy 4) Oats, 7) Odie, 8) Yap DOWN: 1) Bluey, 2) Snoopy, 3) Yeti, 5) Ad, 6) S E

OPINIONS

Ask Doctor S. One of my favorite coworkers doesn't answer emails (fur real)

I spend my days helping people manage anxiety, depression, grief, stress and many other challenges that come with being human. But I have to admit something: one of my favorite coworkers has four legs, a wagging tail and a fondness for claiming an entire couch as her own.

Her name is Lila. She is my 10-year-old pit bull and the most empathetic pup I have ever met. Lila regularly joins me at the office, and while she does not have a psychology license (I've checked), she has an uncanny ability to know when someone needs a little extra comfort. Clients often smile as soon as they see her. Some pet her while talking through difficult memories. Some laugh when she gives them the side eye or express concern when she appears to be chasing a squirrel in her sleep. Others simply seem to breathe a little easier knowing she is nearby.

Watching these interactions makes me curious. Is this just anecdotal, or does psychological research support what many pet owners already believe? As it turns out, science has quite a bit to say.

The American Psychiatric Association's 2024 Healthy Minds Poll found that 84% of pet owners believe their pets have a positive impact on their mental health. The most common reasons were companionship, unconditional love, a calming presence, reduced stress, increased physical activity and greater social interaction. These findings mirror what many therapists hear every day.

Researchers have also found that spending time with dogs, even for brief periods, can reduce psychological distress. A recent study published in the journal *Emotion* found that spending time with one's own dog was associated with improved emotional well-being, particularly during stressful periods.

So how do pets help us feel better?

One reason is that they excel at something humans sometimes struggle with: being fully present. Dogs are not worried about tomorrow's meeting or replaying an awkward conversation from five years ago. They simply enjoy being with us. Petting or walking a dog naturally encourages mindfulness, the ability to focus on the present moment, a skill therapists often teach to help reduce anxiety.

Pets also provide something psychologists call "unconditional positive regard." They show up whether you've had a bad hair day, forgotten your grocery list or embarrassed yourself in front of your coworkers. They are simply happy to see you. That consistent acceptance can be surprisingly powerful, especially during times of stress or loneliness.

Dogs, in particular, improve our lives in ways we may not even notice. They get us outdoors. They encourage regular routines. They introduce us to neighbors we might not otherwise meet. Those daily walks become small doses of exercise, sunlight and social interaction, all well-established contributors to well-being.



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Pets are wonderful, but they are not magical antidepressants. They require time, money, patience, training and veterinary care. At times, they can create stress as well as relieve it. Research suggests the relationship matters more than simply owning an animal. A loving bond with a pet appears to provide the greatest emotional benefits.

Lila reminds me that comfort does not always come from words. Sometimes it comes from sitting quietly beside someone, offering warmth, acceptance and the occasional request for a belly rub.

That's not a bad lesson for the rest of us, either.

Keep cool and psych'd to see you next month! -Dr. S.

Do you have a question for me? Are there topics you are hoping I will write about? Please submit your suggestions to info@therestonletter.com

Dr. Hayley B. Sherwood is a longtime clinical psychologist in Reston-Herndon. To learn more, visit www.oakhillpsychological.com, or see the About Us section to learn more about the team of therapists.

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LIFESTYLE

E Pluribus Yum

By Phantom Foodie

I recently spent a week on the Eastern Shore, mostly cooking and consuming tide-to-table dishes. As I was driving home through the cornfields of Delmarva, I got to thinking about farm-to-table options here in Reston and the connection to the founding fathers around this milestone holiday. Enter Founding Farmers. I dropped my bags, grabbed Ms. Foodie, and went for the comfort food.

Founding Farmers Reston Station sits conveniently right on the Silver Line plaza at Wiehle-Reston East. The concept is compelling: majority-owned by American family farmers, everything made from scratch, ingredients sourced from producers they know by name. It is a restaurant with a genuine origin story. We just wished the story was woven into our meal.

We were greeted and seated quickly into a large booth in the main dining room. Menus tossed at the end of the table. Did we stumble into a diner? The booth cushions had seen better days but I felt the worn, torn cushions gave it a rustic feel.

We started with the Cinnamon Sugar Bacon Lollis, a signature starter that appears on every must-order list. Tasty? Yes. Worth the hype? You will have to decide for yourself. They arrived warm and sweet but felt more like a novelty than a revelation.

The mains, however, delivered. Ms. Foodie's Shrimp and Grits were fresh, well-seasoned, and satisfying —



Founding Farmers' Southern Fried Chicken & Waffle

the kind of dish that reminds you why Southern comfort food endures. My Fried Chicken and Waffle with mac and cheese and green beans was generous, golden, and undeniably good. The chicken was crispy and juicy, and not at all greasy. I only wish the waffle was a complete waffle versus two quarters. We both devoured the mac and cheese quickly, fending each other off from across the table.

The drink options are extensive and there is something for everyone. For the craft cocktail connoisseurs, definitely try the award-winning Founding Spirits line. While our beverages arrived promptly, we did have to ask for water as the mains arrived.

Service was kind but transactional — orders taken, food delivered, check presented. What was absent was any sense of the restaurant's remarkable story. In a farm-to-table concept built entirely on the identity of farm-



Founding Farmers' Shrimp & Grits

er-owners, that narrative should be part of the meal. A server who could speak to the sourcing, the sustainability mission, the farmers behind the food would elevate the entire experience. Instead, we left full but not particularly moved.

E pluribus yum. Out of many, one delicious meal. Founding Farmers is sow good. The food is fresh, made with care, and hits the comfort notes squarely. But a restaurant with this much story to tell deserves a dining experience that tells it. We'll be back — perhaps for brunch, with a cocktail from the Founding Spirits menu and a desire for a service staff who knows the farm behind the fork.

Founding Farmers Reston Station

1904 Reston Metro Plaza

Happy Hour: M-F, 3:30 - 6:00 PM

Catering, Private Group Dining

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.

FACILITY RENTALS

Having a party or celebration?

Reston Association has a variety of facilities available for rent, from outdoor pavilions with grills to indoor event spaces perfect for showers, corporate gatherings or small weddings. What's more – RA members receive discounted pricing on all rentals! Our staff is eager to help you plan the ideal event in the venue that's perfect for you.



Contact Member Services:
reservations@reston.org or 703-435-6530

Reston Association Pools Schedule

SEASON 3 (June 20 - Aug. 21) includes July 4 holiday	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Autumnwood Pool	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	Fitness 12 - 6 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Dogwood Pool	10 a.m. - 7 p.m.	10 a.m. - 7 p.m.	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.	CLOSED	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.	9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Glade Pool & Spa	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Golf Course Island Pool	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Hunters Woods Pool & Spa	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	CLOSED	12 - 8 p.m.
Lake Audubon Pool	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	CLOSED	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	Fitness 12 - 6 p.m.
Lake Newport Pool	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	CLOSED
Lake Thoreau Pool & Spa	Open 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m.	Open 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.	Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & Fitness 12 - 9 p.m.	Open 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.
Newbridge Pool	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED
North Hills Pool & Spa	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	Fitness 12 - 6 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
North Shore Heated Pool & Spa	Open 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 12 p.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 12 p.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 12 p.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 12 p.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.	Open 12 p.m. - 7 p.m. Fitness 6 - 9 a.m.
Ridge Heights Heated Pool	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Shadowood Heated Pool	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.	Fitness 12 - 6 p.m.	11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Tall Oaks Pool	11 a.m. - 8 p.m.	11 a.m. - 8 p.m.	CLOSED	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.	12 - 8 p.m.
Uplands Pool	9 a.m. - 7 p.m.	9 a.m. - 7 p.m.	9 a.m. - 7 p.m.	CLOSED	9 a.m. - 7 p.m.	9 a.m. - 7 p.m.	9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

LIFESTYLE

Inside Art

By Louise Seirmarco-Yale,
Reston Artist



Can summer projects be art? There seems to be an interesting parallel between summer home projects and art-making. Both begin with seeing potential. Summer seems to awaken a very old human impulse which is to improve the nest.

The practical reasons are obvious with longer days, warmer temperatures, dry weather, and easier outdoor work. There is also a powerful psychological, and even biological component. The same person who ignored a peeling fence in February may suddenly feel compelled to repair it in June. Everything seems more open and apparent. Windows are open, and gardens grow. Neighbors appear and children play outside. The world feels larger and more alive.

Humans are strongly affected by daylight. More light equals more energy. We tend to feel more energetic and optimistic. "Now is the time to get things done" seems to be the inner message.

Improving one's environment is rarely about necessity alone. Summer creates hope. There is optimism and hope in intuitively feeling that 'the future is worth preparing for'. We see perceived opportunity to make life better and to invest in improvements. This urge is close to what motivates artists to create art as well; simply to make life better.

Artists also understand instinctively that order emerging from disorder is pleasurable. A canvas begins as chaos like a cluttered garage begins as chaos. Humans seem wired to enjoy creating meaningful order. It feels good to know that order creates a sense that the world is slightly more harmonious now, because we touched it.

People often say they "can't do art," and overlook the fact that they are already making aesthetic judgments all day long. Choosing where a chair should go or deciding which flowers belong together are artistic acts in miniature.

Artists often speak of a painting "coming together." When scattered marks suddenly become a coherent whole it is magic. Home projects have exactly the same moment. The mulch is spread and the flowers are planted. The porch furniture is arranged and suddenly, "There it is." The vision and the reality align. There is a little burst of pleasure.

The satisfaction is often strongest when the improvement is visible but not dramatic. A painter may move one shape two inches and suddenly the whole painting breathes. A homeowner may only trim a hedge, paint a front door, or place a pot of flowers by the entrance. The change is modest, yet every time they walk by, they receive a small reward. "Yes. That's better" they say to themselves.

Just like the artist, trusting the artist within, the deeper satisfaction is not, "The project is finished." It is, "I knew what would make this better, and I was right." Summer projects can be art.

For a free download of Louise's book, "Art. You Be The Judge. Reawaken Your Instincts and Enjoy Art On Your Own Terms", go to: [@louise_seirmarco_yale](http://www.peopleneed-art.com)

Public Art Reston kicks off communitywide scavenger hunt

Contributed by PAR

Public Art Reston has launched its 2026 Public Art Scavenger Hunt, a free community activity that encourages participants to explore public art installations throughout Reston.

Participants of all ages can pick up a scavenger hunt card at Reston Community Center locations at Hunters Woods and Lake Anne Plaza, the Reston Museum and the Reston Art Gallery, or download one from Public Art Reston's website. The cards include QR codes that provide locations of public artworks across the community.

To participate, individuals must take selfies with the artworks and post them on social media using the hashtag #PublicArtReston. Entry instructions and prize details are available on the scavenger hunt cards and online.

All participants will receive a small prize, and five winners will be selected to receive \$500 gift cards.

The deadline to submit entries is Aug. 23. Winners will be announced Aug. 31.



What the American Revolution means to Reston homeowners

By Roxanne Watts,
Reston real estate agent

In 1776, there was no Reston.

There was, however, a revolution that helped make something many Americans take for granted possible: the ability of ordinary citizens to own land protected by law.

Owning property means more than having a place to live. It means the freedom to build equity, sell when the time is right, pass a home to children or grandchildren, or use it to help finance a business. Those protections have helped generations of Americans build financial security and strengthen the middle class.

Virginia's leaders played an important role in shaping the nation's commitment to private property rights, drawing in part on English legal traditions. That commitment was reinforced in the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1791, which provides that private property cannot be taken for public use without just compensation.

Those principles are reflected every day in Reston.

Imagine buying a home today without a title search. You wouldn't know whether the seller actually owned the property, whether liens or other claims existed, or whether a long-lost heir might suddenly appear. Because deeds are recorded in public land records, the chain of ownership can be traced. That transparency is one of the reasons title insurance is possible and buyers can purchase a home with confidence.

Before the American Revolution, much of Virginia's land was distributed through grants from the British Crown, often to

politically connected landowners. Thomas Fairfax controlled a vast portion of Virginia's Northern Neck. Nearly two centuries later, Robert E. Simon purchased about 6,750 acres to create Reston, where generations of families have enjoyed the benefits of secure property ownership.

The first detached homes in Reston, near Fairway Drive and Stirrup Road, sold for about \$35,000 to \$40,000 in the 1960s. Those early buyers could hardly have imagined that many of those homes would one day be worth \$1 million or more. Townhomes in Hickory Cluster, near Lake Anne, Reston's first village center, sold for about \$25,000 in 1966, a significant investment at the time. Today, some of those midcentury modern homes sell for as much as \$750,000.

Every sale has been recorded in the courthouse land records, creating a documented chain of ownership. The buyers have not been kings or aristocrats, but teachers, nurses, first-time homebuyers, entrepreneurs and retirees, ordinary

people building equity, security and a future for their families. Homeownership also encourages investment in neighborhoods, civic involvement and a sense of stewardship. Reston residents have demonstrated that commitment for decades by working to

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What The Answers Do									

preserve the community's character, natural environment and quality of life.

As America celebrates its 250th birthday, we are reminded that one of our greatest freedoms is the opportunity to own a small piece of it. Every time I hand a buyer the keys, I'm reminded that what I'm really delivering is more than a house. It's an opportunity to build a future. As the old saying goes, "Under all is the land." Nearly 250 years after the Revolution, that remains one of America's greatest gifts and, for many, the American Dream.



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