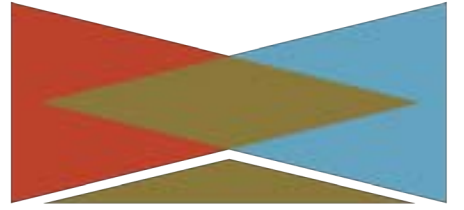


# THE RESTON LETTER



## Hundreds compete in Reston Sprint Triathlon's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary race to fund charitable projects



The Reston Sprint Triathlon featured a 400-meter swim in the Lake Newport pool, a 12-mile bike ride on Reston roads, and a 5K run along scenic local pathways. Nearly 850 athletes, 13 and up, including 16-year-old Fynn Wottawah (left), a swim coach for Lake Anne Stingrays, competed on June 7. Sponsored by CORE Foundation, the race's proceeds go to support charitable projects that address societal needs, build community, and enable positive change. Photos by Isadora Guerreiro

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### education



Making an Impact column, America 250 play at Armstrong, special dedications to our graduates, high school seniors visit their elementary schools

### sports



Reston Masters swim team finishes 2nd in Regional meet, Hornets baseball wins Liberty District title, SLHS boys soccer takes Concorde District title, South Lakes tracks and field finishes high at States

### lifestyle



Phantom Foodie suggests a World Cup eating experience in Reston, Seniors Prom, Reston Community Players to collaborate with South Lakes High, Art column, how to submit your pet's picture for July!

## Ribbon-cutting marks official reopening of Reston North Park



Officials cut the ribbon on June 3, and kids celebrated the new playground at the Reston North Park. Photo by Katy Keffer, staff writer

By Katy Keffer, staff writer

Under a clear blue spring sky, the Fairfax County Park Authority celebrated the official reopening of Reston North Park, affectionately known by local parents as the "Home Depot Playground," on June 3 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a hands-on Wonder Wagon nature center, brief dedication speeches and a relaxed late-afternoon crowd that quickly filled the space.

Park Authority Executive Director Jai Cole opened the ceremony by emphasizing her commitment to playgrounds, noting that they encourage physical activity for children while creating opportunities for adults to connect. The redesigned facility now offers a 180-degree

sightline, allowing caregivers to see nearly the entire area from most locations.

The renovation project began in fall 2025 with the goal of creating a safe and accessible space for "kids to grow, explore and make memories," said Park Authority Board Vice Chair Bill Bouie. The \$1.8 million project was funded through Fairfax County park bonds approved in 2016 and 2020, which Bouie said would not have been possible without residents' support.

Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn, a Reston resident, said the park continues to reflect the community values on which Reston was founded while providing families with a welcom-

Continued on page 3



## LAKE ANNE CARDBOARD BOAT REGATTA

Saturday August, 8<sup>th</sup> 2026 1:00-3:00pm

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

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SCAN TO LEARN MORE



### kids

Underpass artwork, Find the Differences, Reston shapes, Sage Greene's mystery, making cookie dough bark, funnies

### opinions

A reminder to dads this Father's Day, legal advice to recent grads

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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.

## A sweet mission: 9-year-old raises money for local animal shelter

By Megan Schmid, staff writer

Third-grader Thia Pyle of Fox Mill Elementary School is already making a difference for animals in need.

With the help of friends Clover and Lila, the young entrepreneur has spent the past few months baking cookies and making bracelets to raise money for the Fairfax County Animal Shelter. So far, she has raised nearly \$500 to help the shelter care for animals. "I'm just really glad that I am able to help them," she said.

When she is not at school or on the soccer field, Thia enjoys horseback riding and spending time with her dogs. Her family rescued a 3-year-old Labradoodle, Nola, and is currently fostering a blind puppy named Charlie. She also runs a small pet-sitting business, Caring Paws Pet Sitting, offering dog walking and in-home pet visits in Reston.

Her passion for helping animals

began when she started visiting the animal shelter at age 5. "There was a dog that had been there for two years," she recalled. "He was really old with medical issues, and I felt really bad for him." The experience stayed with her and inspired her fundraising efforts. She believes shelter animals are often misunderstood. "Everyone should take a chance on a shelter animal," she said. "They are often the sweetest you can get."

The fundraiser combines two things she loves: baking and crafting with friends. One of her favorite treats to make is oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. "My mom bakes all the time," she said. "I have learned a lot from her, but I read the recipes and do most of it by myself."

She sells her homemade cookies and bracelets door to door in neighborhoods around Reston and hopes to expand to more communities. Although she enjoys meeting people, knocking on doors can

be challenging. "It's hard to speak to adults sometimes," she admitted. "And sometimes people say no."

Still, the encouragement she receives keeps her going. One neighbor especially stood out. "She kept calling me her hero," Thia said. "She was really thankful that I was doing it and told us we were doing the right thing."

Thia says helping animals makes every cookie baked and every door knocked on worthwhile. "Even though we are just kids, we can make a huge difference," she said. "We should all just do what we can."

When she grows up, she hopes to become a veterinarian and continue horseback riding. For now, she is focused on helping as many animals as she can, one batch of cookies at a time.

To request a neighborhood visit or book pet-sitting services, contact Katie Brown at [kathryneganbrown@gmail.com](mailto:kathryneganbrown@gmail.com).



Thia Pyle has a big heart for animals and has used baking and crafts to make a difference for many pets in need. Photo contributed by Thia Pyle

## Star-spangled blowout: Reston Station to celebrate America's 250<sup>th</sup> on July 2

By Patricia Kovacs, staff writer

Reston Station will host a star-spangled community celebration recognizing America's upcoming semiquincentennial on Thursday, July 2. The free pre-Independence Day event, organized by developer Comstock, will transform the plaza into a patriotic gathering place for all ages as the nation prepares to mark its 250th anniversary in 2026.

Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. with lawn games, face painting, photo opportunities, inflatables and other family-friendly activities. Food and beverages will be available from Reston Station retailers and the JW Marriott. At 7:20 p.m., a live performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" will kick off an evening of entertainment featuring Bruce in the USA, a Bruce Springsteen tribute band. A fireworks display is scheduled for 9:15 p.m.

"We want to create a memorable experience that brings people together through entertainment, civic pride and shared celebration," event organizers said. "The vision is to establish Reston Station as a premier gathering place for the community while honoring America's 250th anniversary in an inclusive and engaging way."

The event comes as Reston Station continues to expand as a mixed-use destination with hospitality, residential, dining, office and entertainment offerings. Located along Metro's Silver Line, the district has become a regional hub for residents, workers and visitors. Organizers view the celebration as an opportunity to bring the broader community together around a significant national milestone.

When asked whether the event could become an annual tradition, organizers were optimistic.

"We certainly hope this becomes a signature tradition for the community," they said. "The enthusiasm and collaboration surrounding the event have been incredibly encouraging."

Guests are encouraged to bring blankets and lawn chairs. Parking will be available in Reston Station garages, and the Wiehle-Reston East Metro station provides direct access to the plaza. Early arrival is recommended, as a large crowd is expected.

## Local artists showcase people and places in gallery event

By Katy Keffer, staff writer

Accomplished artists and Restonites Margarita Reyes and Albert Halac hosted an opening reception at the Reston Community Center Hunters Woods on May 31 for "Places I Have Seen and Peoples I Have Met," their latest gallery event. This inviting and moving collection of oil paintings is a probing study of life and identity—across cultures, landscapes, and people.

Reyes, born in Uruguay and the granddaughter of famous Uruguayan painter Pedro Figari, exudes graciousness, kindness, and a contagious energy for her art and the people around her. Halac grew up in Argentina and is a delightful storyteller, charming, and unpretentious. Together, this artistic duo's magnetism mirrors the allure of their paintings.

The oil paintings fit in with the multicultural, international, and natural space that is Reston. With Reyes's images of nature, flowers, and trees, she captures the soft mood of place. Fall into the quiet and open

air of countryside in "Scene of Virginia" or the pleasure of a pause at a riverside Parisian café in another titled "Eiffel Tower," which rises high in the background.

Halac's paintings are commanding for their penetrating depictions across cultures and customs. Here, what stands out most are the eyes, hands, and precise poses of a people. His work represents the faces of daily living alongside messages of hope and prosperity, as seen in "Romanian Widow," whose blue eyes pierce from the canvas. It's also in the seated posture of a market seller whose gaze looks for customers in "Moroccan Chicken Peddler" where vivid orange, brown, and red of roosters and chickens pop off the canvas.

Reyes shared they had traveled much of the world—Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas—though one continent remained absent from their paintings. "We haven't yet been to Australia," she noted. Still, both artists continue to find daily pleasure in painting, affected deeply by current events and stories being revealed all



Reyes and Halac in front of Reyes' work at the display's opening reception. Photo by Katy Keffer

around the world.

Notably, one of Halac's major works he hoped to feature, "After Guernica, Gaza,"—a raw and vulnerable study of the war in Gaza—did not meet the Reston Community Center's exhibit guidelines and was removed. To fill its void mere days before the exhibit opened, Halac painted a still-unnamed work to convey the "wholeness and spirit of the exhibition," Halac shared. With striking

shades of blue showing a night sky in peacetime and at war, hope persists despite heartache. He is inviting the public to visit the gallery, rest with the painting, and help title the piece.

The exhibit is free and open to the public with an opportunity to purchase any of the artwork on display. Visit Reston Community Center Hunters Woods at 2310 Colts Neck Road now through July 6.

# THE BULLETIN

## Fairfax County homeownership, rental costs increasingly out of reach, new study reports

By Gene Powell, staff writer

Homeownership and rental costs in Fairfax County are increasingly out of reach for many residents, according to a new report presented by the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development.

The study, "Assessing Housing Needs in Fairfax County," released April 30, found that housing costs have outpaced income growth for more than a decade, creating challenges for workers, families and the county's long-term economic competitiveness.

"Real renter incomes have grown only 2%, while rents grew 5% over the same period," the report stated. A household now needs an annual income of about \$100,000 to afford a typical rental unit in Fairfax County, well above the earnings of many teachers, first responders and other essential workers.

Lower-income households face the greatest burden. According to the study, about 87% of renters earning less than \$75,000 spend more than 30% of their income on housing, the federal threshold for affordability. Single parents and seniors experience the greatest strain.

The report also found that annual rent increases accelerated after the COVID-19 pandemic, rising from roughly 2% annually before 2020 to about 5% each year since then. Average market-rate rent in Fairfax County is now about \$2,500 per month.

For many renters, buying a home has become increasingly unrealistic. The study said the county's median home value reached \$770,000 in 2025, while the median renter could afford a home priced around \$386,000.

The affordability gap between typical home prices and what renters could afford widened dramatically over the past decade, growing from \$75,700 in 2010 to \$321,900 by 2023. Rising mortgage interest rates have made homeownership even more difficult to attain.

The report noted that nearly half of homebuyers made down payments of 20% or more, typically exceeding \$100,000. Separate county housing reports found that every newly built single-family detached home sold in Fairfax County in 2025 cost more than \$1.1 million.

Affordable rental housing also remains in short supply. The study estimated Fairfax County lacks approximately 13,800 rental units affordable to households earning at or below 60% of area median income, defined as \$78,700 annually for a two-person household and \$98,350 for a family of four.

Meanwhile, housing construction has not kept pace with demand. The report found rental supply grew just 5% between 2013 and 2023, roughly half the regional growth rate.

With Fairfax County's population expected to increase by as many as 184,000 residents by 2035, the study concluded the county will need to roughly double its pace of housing production compared with the previous decade.

A separate county report released in March estimated Fairfax County will need between 41,000 and 95,000 new homes by 2035 to meet projected demand.

## Midnighttreats debuts at Reston Town Center

By Kaydence Smith, staff writer

Northern Virginia-based dessert company Midnighttreats has relocated from Plaza America to Reston Town Center, bringing its plant-based cookies and late-night dessert menu to a more prominent location in the heart of Reston.

The company opened its first storefront in Reston in 2022 after starting as a home bakery in 2017. Before opening a brick-and-mortar location, the business also operated from a ghost kitchen in Chantilly.

According to co-owner Jemal Mahdi, visibility and foot traffic were major factors behind the move. "Our previous location was tucked away in the back of an office building that had once housed a Subway restaurant," Mahdi said. The new location's proximity to hotels, restaurants and community events made it an attractive fit for the growing business.

Midnighttreats specializes in plant-based cookies made from scratch using original recipes. The bakery is best known for its signature "monster cookies," one-third-pound treats that are crispy on the outside and soft on the inside.

The menu features four year-round monster cookie flavors: chocolate chip, birthday bash, cinnamon-roll and brownie. Three seasonal flavors rotate every two weeks. In addition to cookies, customers can



Midnighttreats is located at Reston Town Center. Photo by Isadora Guerreiro

choose from milk teas, dirty sodas, cookie pies and cookie nachos served with dipping sauces.

Although the bakery markets itself as plant-based, Mahdi said most customers are not vegan. "People come because they love cookies," he said.

Midnighttreats has also become a popular option for customers with food allergies. The bakery operates a nut-free kitchen, with the exception of coconut, and all of its cookies are vegan.

Another defining feature is its late-night hours. Midnighttreats remains open until midnight every day, offering a dessert option long after many businesses have closed. "We're glad to provide a late-night dessert option for people, especial-

ly being so close to hotels," Mahdi said.

Looking ahead, Midnighttreats plans to continue expanding throughout the region, with locations in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. currently in the planning stages.

Midnighttreats' new location is located at 1826 Discovery St, Reston.



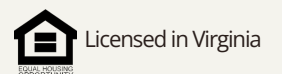
## How's the market?

This is by far the question I am asked the most. If you would like to chat about the market, feel free to reach out and let's talk about what is going on in the Reston area.

I am always happy to do a **free evaluation** of your home.



**Holly Weatherwax**  
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holly@hollyweatherwax.com



Families test out the brand new playground. Photo by Katy Keffer

### Playground, cont'd from page 1

ing place where children can play freely.

The upgrades are significant, as many local parents can attest. The playground's new poured-in-place rubber safety surface provides a cushioned, slightly springy feel while ensuring stability and inclusive use. Aging wooden retaining walls have been replaced with durable concrete structures that also serve as seating areas for visitors. New benches are located throughout the park, while two large blue umbrellas provide shade for

parents and caregivers. Accessible pathways connect the playground and ballfield. New trees have also been planted throughout the area, reinforcing Reston's longstanding commitment to preserving open, healthy and natural spaces.

Unfazed by the celebratory activities around them, many children continued to test the new equipment, spinning, swinging, climbing ropes and racing down slides. For them, the renovated park was already serving its purpose: encouraging activity, exploration and a sense of adventure.

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# THE BULLETIN

## Reston dojo bows out: United States Karate Center closes after 43 years

By Ellyn Wexler, staff writer

A pillar of the Reston martial arts community has stepped off the mat for the final time.

The United States Karate Center, a longtime institution tucked away in Isaac Newton Square that trained thousands of area children and adults since 1983, closed at the end of May after 43 years in business. Mounting financial and scheduling challenges ultimately forced the decision.

Master John K. Thomas, a former U.S. national full-contact champion, founded the dojo. Two years ago, leadership passed to longtime students Sensei Murali Mooliyil and Sensei Nathan Keysor, a retired Fairfax County master police officer who grew up in Reston and attended South Lakes High School.

Keysor first walked into the dojo at age 13 in 1987, an experience that shaped the course of his life. “Master John K. Thomas’s teaching style immediately resonated with me, and martial arts became a central part of my life from that moment on,” he recalled.

After earning his black belt in 1994, Keysor began teaching, motivated by the lessons martial arts had given him. “I was inspired by the profound impact martial arts had on my own life, giving me discipline, confidence and a sense of purpose,” he said. “I wanted to pass those same benefits on to others, especially children and young adults.”

The closure marks the end of a dojo that emphasized character development over rapid belt advancement. While many martial arts schools operate on a high-turnover “belt factory” model, the center focused on individualized prog-

ress.

That philosophy led local parent Nina Li to enroll her daughter, Katie Tung, in the program 18 months ago. “When we were looking at martial arts programs, one thing I wanted to avoid was places that focus purely on advancing through belts as quickly as possible,” Li said. “The United States Karate Center was completely personalized. My daughter competed with herself, not against other kids. The senseis never rushed anyone through.”

Li described the atmosphere as relaxed and welcoming. “The senseis chatted with the kids and the parents about their lives,” she said. “There was a board on the wall celebrating monthly birthdays. It was a small thing, but it showed they valued the kids as individuals.”

The school also emphasized realistic self-defense training, introducing sparring early to help students build confidence. “She became much more confident,” Li noted of her daughter. “The senseis wanted kids to become comfortable with someone directly in front of them. That’s a much more realistic self-defense scenario.”

Parent Alvaro Soto Jr., whose daughter Mya trained at the dojo for more than two years, said the school became a second home for many families. Beyond martial arts instruction, he watched his daughter develop confidence, resilience and self-discipline that carried into other areas of her life. Like many families, Soto believes Reston is losing more than a martial arts school. He sees the closure as the loss of a community where children formed friendships, learned leadership skills and grew into more confident versions of themselves.



Master John K. Thomas, Sensei Murali Mooliyil and Sensei Nathan Keysor.  
Photo contributed by Kathryn Keysor

Keysor said his 20 years in law enforcement heavily influenced his teaching philosophy. “My background reinforced the importance of real-world self-defense, situational awareness and mental toughness,” he explained. “Martial arts is not just physical. It’s about developing character, integrity and the ability to protect oneself and others.”

For Keysor, the most important lessons were not physical. “Control, honor and discipline,” he reflected. “True martial arts training should make someone a better person, not just a better fighter.”

Taking over the dojo two years ago was both “humbling and challenging” for Keysor. “I never expected to step into Master Thomas’s shoes, but I felt a strong responsibility to preserve the school’s legacy while adapting to new realities,” he said.

Keysor was recently named a 2026 inductee into the Cleveland Martial Arts Hall of Fame and recognized as a Level 7 Instructor by the Police Tactics Instructors of America.

Ultimately, rising operational costs in Northern Virginia and Keysor’s reloca-

tion to West Virginia made it impossible to continue. “It was a tough but necessary decision,” he acknowledged.

For Keysor, the most meaningful part of the school’s legacy was watching students grow over the decades.

“There are so many memories: watching shy children become confident leaders, seeing students overcome physical challenges and celebrating black belt achievements,” he said. “Many former students still reach out years later to tell me how USKC positively shaped their lives.”

Despite the closure, Keysor hopes the school will be remembered for more than martial arts instruction alone. “I would like the school to be remembered as a place where students learned not just techniques, but values, respect, discipline and personal growth under the guidance of Master Thomas’s authentic teachings,” he said.

Families and alumni wishing to share memories or stay connected with former dojo members can still reach the organization through its longtime email address at [uskc.online@gmail.com](mailto:uskc.online@gmail.com).

## Reston Community Center recognized for water safety leadership

Contributed by Reston Community Center

Reston Community Center and the Fairfax County Park Authority were recognized by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in May. The proclamation highlighted RCC’s leadership in helping residents of all ages build confidence, prevent accidents and stay safe in and around the water.

“Water safety is not a seasonal effort,” RCC Aquatics Director McCall told the Board. “RCC, along with the Park Authority, strengthens water safety across the county – from well-managed facilities to shared standards of excellence in aquatics programming and public education. Together, we are building a safer, more prepared community.”

RCC’s Terry L. Smith Aquatics Center, located at RCC Hunters Woods, offers programs that help children, teens, adults and older adults gain skills that support safety, wellness and confidence in the water. From beginner swim instruction to advanced lifeguard certification, RCC provides residents with opportunities to learn techniques that prevent emergencies and save lives.

### RCC’s Aquatics Department has a broad community impact:

- RCC offers approximately 80 weekly group learn-to-swim classes and more than 2,000 private lessons annually, to help children, teens and adults become safer, more confident swimmers.
- Each summer, RCC provides free beginner swimming lessons for children, expanding access to life-

saving skills.

- Adapted aquatics offers year-round, individualized instruction for children and adults with physical or learning disabilities, providing accessible water safety education and specialized support.
- RCC’s aqua aerobics program offers 26 classes each week, helping adults and older adults build strength, balance, cardiovascular health and social connection.
- RCC is one of the largest public American Red Cross training providers in the region. More than 300 lifeguards have been trained in the past four months and RCC plans to increase lifeguard training capacity by 75% next year.

McCall also recognized the RCC staff members whose work brings these programs to life every day, including Alfred Toussaint, Dory Traynham and Sophie Kartchner, who were present for the proclamation. Toussaint teaches children and adults to swim and stay safe in the water. Traynham helps adults maintain strength, mobility and confidence through aqua aerobics while building community beyond the pool. Kartchner trains lifeguards who protect community pools, helping many first-time job seekers become skilled, responsible safety professionals.

Through RCC Aquatics, children learn lifesaving water safety practices, adults build strength and connection and lifeguards are prepared to act when it matters most. With every class and every swimmer, RCC is strengthening a culture of water safety throughout the community.




RCC Aquatics instructors, from left: Alfred Toussaint, Sophie Kartchner and Dory Traynham Photo contributed by RCC

Registration is now open for RCC’s summer aquatics sessions. Details available here – <https://rebrand.ly/chqtf4>

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Submit your event at [therestonletter.com/events](http://therestonletter.com/events)

<p><b>13</b> JUNE</p> <p>Reston Farmers Market</p> <p>Saturdays all summer Saturdays 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Lake Anne Plaza</p>	<p><b>14</b> JUNE</p> <p>EatLoco Farmers Market</p> <p>Sundays all summer Weekly outdoor market Sundays 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Parking lot of Halley Rise</p>	<p><b>19</b> JUNE</p> <p>Aquapoolooza <i>Reston Association's pool party</i></p> <p>3-6 p.m. at Lake Newport Pool Free/RA Members &amp; RecPass holders \$25/Non RecPass holders (free for kids under 3) All are asked to pre-register as space is limited. <a href="http://reston.org">reston.org</a></p>	<p><b>21</b> JUNE</p> <p>Play All Day</p> <p>Celebrate the longest day of the year with various free activities around Reston <a href="http://reston.org">reston.org</a></p>
<p><b>24</b> JUNE</p> <p>Senior Movie Day</p> <p>Now You See Me, Now You Don't Doors open at 9 a.m., movie at 10 a.m. Parking validated in blue or green garages Free to 55+</p>	<p><b>24</b> JUNE</p> <p><i>First concert in</i> Sunset Concert Series</p> <p>Wednesdays, June 24-August 26 Lake Anne Plaza 7:30-9 p.m.</p>	<p><b>25</b> JUNE</p> <p><i>First concert in</i> Take a Break Concert Series</p> <p>Halley Rise (2025 Fulton Place) 7:30-9 p.m. Free</p>	<p><b>27</b> JUNE</p> <p>RDGLDGRN performance</p> <p>Nationally recognized band from Reston plays in Concert on the Town series 7:30-9:30 p.m. Reston Town Center Pavilion</p>
<p><b>27</b> JUNE</p> <p>Lake Fairfax 250<sup>th</sup> Independence Day Celebration</p> <p>Live music, food trucks, drinks Water park opens at 10 a.m. events all day Colorful drone light show, arrive by 8 p.m. \$20/car, free to pedestrians/bikers *rain date June 28 <a href="http://fairfaxcountyparks.gov/parks">fairfaxcountyparks.gov/parks</a></p>	<p><b>2</b> JULY</p> <p>Celebrate America 250</p> <p>Event Kickoff: 5:30 p.m. Star Spangled Banner: 7:20 p.m. Showtime: 7:30 p.m. Bruce In The USA tribute band Fireworks: 9:15 p.m. Reston Station *more info see page 2</p>	<p><b>3</b> JULY</p> <p>Stars, Stripes, Splashes Pool party</p> <p>1-4 p.m. at Hunters Woods Pool Free/RA Members &amp; RecPass holders \$20/Non RecPass holders (free for kids under 3) <a href="http://reston.org">reston.org</a></p>	<p><b>4</b> JULY</p> <p>Firecracker 5K for the Troops</p> <p>8-10 a.m. High-energy run that honors our service members Reston Town Center \$35/kids \$45/adults Register via Potomac River Run and Walk</p>
<p><b>4</b> JULY</p> <p>America's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration <i>by Town of Herndon</i></p> <p>6:30 p.m. start, fireworks at 9:30 p.m. Family-friendly activities, food trucks, live music Brady Park (814 Ferndale Ave. Herndon) Free</p>	<p><b>18</b> JULY</p> <p>Fairy Festival</p> <p>10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Walk through a woodland full of fairy houses, create a fairy home, have tea and storytime with the Fairy Queen. Wear a fairy costume! Walker Nature Center Register: \$10/RA members, \$15/non-members</p>	<p><b>26</b> JULY</p> <p>"The Art of Play"</p> <p>2-4 p.m. Exhibit reception and opening: mixed media abstracts by Andrew Black Reston Community Center Lake Anne</p>	 <p>For more events or to add your own, go to <a href="http://therestonletter.com/events">therestonletter.com/events</a></p>

## LIFETIME

### I'd like to drive that red Mustang

By Scott Parkin, staff writer

Two years ago, I had to leave our car at the dealer for major work. The dealer gave me a brand-new loaner. On my way back to Reston, I stopped at the intersection of Spring Street and Herndon Parkway, and the engine immediately shut off.

While angry drivers behind me leaned on their horns, I frantically called the dealer's service representative and was told, "Just press the accelerator."

Call me a Luddite, but my car shutting off without my doing it is not something I look for or want. It is definitely not a feature I would seek out in a new vehicle. Still, many of the safety features common in newer cars are intriguing, though not enough to replace our paid-off small SUV.

A 1971 movie called *Traffic*, directed by Jacques Tati, is one of my favorites. In this classic comedy, Monsieur Hulot, played by Tati, drives a Citroën "camper car" to an auto show. As its designer, he is hilariously confused by the vehicle's many gadgets. Even the windshield wipers do not work as expected.

I often feel like Hulot, whose films "Traffic" and "Playtime" explored his inability to adjust to a changing, modernizing world.

Frankly, I think there is a disconnect between those who de-

sign improvements to cars, computer technology and household appliances and end users like aging baby boomers. If Tati were alive today and made a movie about driving a new Lexus SUV, I would be first in line to see it. Between the alarms warning that a car is approaching on your right, a pedestrian is in front of you or you have drifted across a lane divider, Hulot would likely do all the wrong things in response. Just as I might.

Still, I am not a complete Luddite. After a few fainting spells and a fall several years ago, my daughter urged me to buy a watch that would notify someone or contact emergency services if I fell. Both my wife and I now wear one.

Inside the garage of our apartment building sits a red 1965 Ford Mustang. I imagine it has seat belts, a hydraulic, not electronic, emergency brake and an AM radio, and I am certain its engine does not automatically shut off at an intersection.

I'd like to drive 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.*

### Summer activity can reveal underlying mobility problems

By Taruna Rijhwani, Health Watchers PT

Each summer, many people become more active and begin noticing aches and stiffness that were easy to ignore during colder months.

It often starts with mild back tightness, knee pain or soreness after a long walk. But as activity increases through travel, golf, tennis, hiking or other outdoor recreation, those small discomforts can become more noticeable.

According to mobility and rehabilitation specialists, the activity itself is not always the cause of the problem. More often, increased movement exposes underlying issues that may have developed gradually over time.

Long flights, road trips, sightseeing and extended time on your feet can place added stress on the body, especially for adults who have spent much of the year in less active routines. Common complaints include lower back pain after travel, sciatica symptoms and knee discomfort during exercise or walking.

Many people respond by reducing activity altogether. While temporary rest may ease symptoms, experts say avoiding movement for long periods can contribute to increased stiffness, weakness and reduced mobility.

Instead, specialists recommend addressing the underlying causes of pain early before they begin limiting daily activities.

For active adults, particularly those older than 40, treatment often focuses on identifying mobility restrictions, correcting strength imbalances and improving movement patterns. In some cases, modifying activities temporarily can help reduce strain while maintaining overall fitness.

Health professionals say mobility plays a critical role in maintaining independence and quality of life. As pain or stiffness worsens, people often begin limiting activities gradually, avoiding longer walks, travel or recreational sports.

Experts encourage people experiencing persistent discomfort to seek evaluation before symptoms interfere with summer plans and everyday movement.

Many clinics offer introductory consultations or mobility assessments designed to identify potential problem areas and recommend treatment or exercise strategies.

The goal, specialists say, is not simply pain reduction but helping people stay active, travel comfortably and continue participating in the activities they enjoy.

Health Watchers Physical Therapy & Wellness offers a complimentary Discovery Visit to help identify the root cause of aches or stiffness and give you a clear plan to stay active and pain-free this summer. Call or text 571-308-8252 to schedule.



**"I thought my back pain was part of getting older...But I was wrong."**  
Struggling with back pain?  
This could be your **first step** toward **real relief**.

At Health Watchers PT in Reston, we uncover the root cause of pain and help you move forward — without pills or surgery.

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# EDUCATION

## Let's 'Bee' excited about summer reading: An interview with the Reston Regional Library mascots

By the Friends of the Reston Regional Library

Staff at Reston Regional Library are all abuzz preparing for this year's Summer Reading Adventure. We caught up with the library's mascots, Beatrix and Bobbee, to learn more about the program and what's happening at the library this summer.

**FRRL:** Thanks for taking the time to talk with us today. Can you tell our readers a little about yourselves?

**Beatrix:** I'm Beatrix, named after children's author Beatrix Potter.

**Bobbee:** And I'm Bobbee, named after Reston founder Bob E. Simon.

**FRRL:** For readers who can't see you right now, you're both bees.

**Beatrix:** We are. We've been the official mascots of Reston Regional Library for a couple of years. We think we were chosen because we love books almost as much as we love flowers. The staff has decorated the library with flowers, so it feels like home. We love seeing people check out books, attend programs, use the 3D printer and preserve family memories at the Memory Depot. There's always something happening here.

**FRRL:** Tell us about the Summer Reading Adventure. We hear it has a paleontology and archaeology theme.

**Beatrix:** That's right. This year's theme is Unearth a Story™. Reading lets you dig into new ideas, places and people. You never know what you'll discover.

er.

**FRRL:** How does it work?

**Bobbee:** Readers sign up, work toward reading goals and earn prizes. Local businesses have donated prize coupons, and participants can enter drawings for gift cards to Scrawl Books.

**FRRL:** Can adults participate?

**Bobbee:** Absolutely. Adults enjoy books, too, and they can earn prizes. The library is for everyone.

**FRRL:** Are there special programs tied to the theme?

**Bobbee:** Tons. There's the Subterranean Scavenger Hunt, Sew Your Own Dinosaur, Didgeridoo Down Under, the Really Big Dinosaur Puppet Show, Uno, Dos, Trés Andrés!, Ship Science and a Chinese dance performance. There's

something for every age and interest.

From Aug. 20-23, the Friends of the Library will host its Back-to-School Book Sale for children, teens and teachers. Summer readers can redeem coupons for free books during the sale.

Then on Aug. 22, the library will celebrate with its End of Summer Reading and Back-to-School Bash, featuring crafts, music and family activities.

**Beatrix:** This year also marks the 250th anniversary of the United States, and the library is celebrating all summer long. June's theme is Voices of Pride and Progress, July's is Celebrate Independence, and August's is Youth and Education in America.

There's also a separate America 250 reading challenge. Participants can complete an America 250 Bingo board by reading, listening to books and taking part in activities. Those who fill an entire card will be entered into prize drawings, including a Kindle and LEGO sets.

**FRRL:** It sounds like there's something for everyone this summer. Any final thoughts?

**Bobbee:** We hope people get excited about reading and all the discoveries waiting for them. Every book has something new to reveal, just like every person has a story to tell.

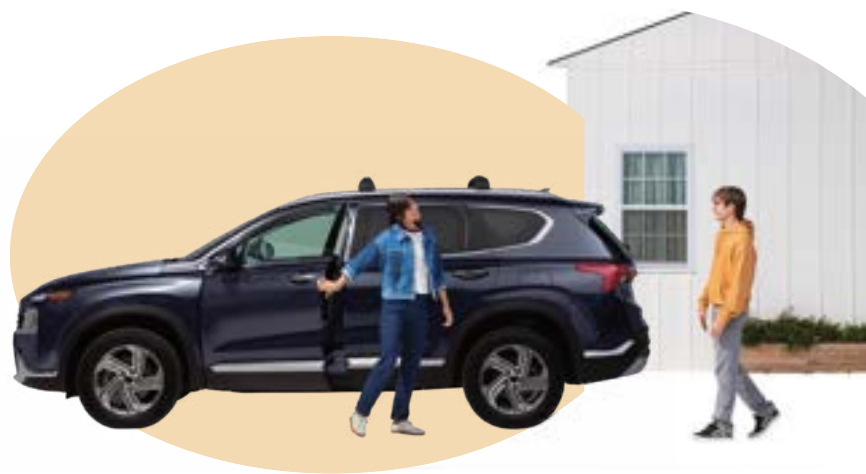
**Beatrix:** People and bees.

**Dig into Summer Reading!**  
**June 17 to August 19**  
**Complete challenges, win prizes!**

Starting June 10th you can register at [fairfaxcounty.beanstack.org](http://fairfaxcounty.beanstack.org)

Or ask at the Information Desk at Reston Library!

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# CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**CONGRATULATIONS TO MATT MCDONALD ON YOUR MASTER DEGREE. YOU'VE WORKED SO HARD AND WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU!**  
-LOVE, JORDAN, JOCELYN AND THE PUPS <3

AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**EMDAD SWAPAN HAS GRADUATED FROM VCU! CONGRATULATIONS, EMDAD! WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU AND YOUR HARD WORK!!**

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY  
CLASS OF 2026


**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**RESTON NATIVE IRELAND DIBACCO GRADUATED SUMMA CUM LAUDE FROM CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY, WITH A BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE, MAJORING IN MUSICAL THEATRE! CONGRATULATIONS!!**

CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**ALAN GARTEN - WE'RE SO PROUD OF YOU AND CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR YOU AT WVU!**

HERNDON HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**BENNETT, WE ARE PROUD BEYOND WORDS! WISHING YOU MUCH SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS AS YOU START YOUR NEW ACADEMIC CHAPTER AT JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY!**  
-LOVE ALWAYS, MOM AND DAD

HERNDON HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**VICTORIA MAYFIELD-BROWN- OUR NATURAL "LEADER OF THE PACK," IS GRADUATING! YOUR WISDOM, PASSION AND UNWAVERING FOCUS WILL SURELY PROPEL YOU AS YOU PURSUE PROFESSIONAL ACTING AND LAUNCH YOUR OWN INNOVATIVE FUTURE BUSINESS VENTURES!**

HOMESCHOOLED  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**BEYOND PROUD OF KAILYN KOHLER FOR GRADUATING FROM JMU WITH A BFA IN GRAPHIC DESIGN! THE CREATIVE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER!**  
-MUCH LOVE, MOM, CHRIS, AND QUIN

JMU  
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**DOUBLE CELEBRATION FOR LUKE — TURNING 18 AND GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL! WE COULDN'T BE PROUDER AND CAN'T WAIT TO WATCH HIS CLEMSON ADVENTURE BEGIN. WE LOVE YOU ENDLESSLY. GO TIGERS!**

SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2026! GRACE, WE'RE SO PROUD OF YOU AND EXCITED TO SEE WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU AT THE UNIV OF ILLINOIS-URBANA-CHAMPAIGN! GO ILLINI!**

SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**CAROLINE, WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU FOR ALL YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED ACADEMICALLY AND ATHLETICALLY, BUT IT'S YOUR KINDNESS AND INTEGRITY THAT REALLY DEFINES WHO YOU ARE. TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!**

SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**CONGRATULATIONS JAMIE! WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU AND EXCITED FOR YOUR NEXT CHAPTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA! WE LOVE YOU!**  
-MOM, DAD & VIRGINIA

SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2026

**SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATE!**



**ZACHARY WIEMER IS GRADUATING WITH THE SLHS CLASS OF 2026! WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU! THE NEXT ADVENTURE BEGINS IN CHAMPAIGN...I-L-L-I-N-!!**  
-LOVE, MOM, GARY, SHAWN, JOCELYN, AND CLARK

SOUTH LAKES HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2026

## High school seniors visit their former elementary schools



In traditional Legacy Walks, South Lakes and Herndon graduates tour their elementary schools, greeting students and former teachers prior to their commencement ceremonies. Schools pictured are Lake Anne and Armstrong elementaries. Photos by Isadora Guerreiro



On June 6, the Armstrong Elementary first graders performed "This is America: A Celebration of Our Country." The students sang "This is America", "Grand Old Flag" and "Mighty United." Students spoke about the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the history behind our national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner," and important symbols of our country. Photo by Laura Geiken

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# RESTON STATION'S SUMMERBRATION

## MORE MUSIC. MORE MAGIC. MORE SUMMER.

### CELEBRATE AMERICA 250

Red, White, & Boom! Reston Station is throwing a star-spangled celebration for America's 250th! Join us for family-friendly fun, a live DJ, a splash pad, games, sip-n-stroll, food, live music, fireworks, photo booth, ice cream, and more!

**1800 RESTON ROW PLAZA**

**JULY 2**  
**Event Kickoff: 5:30pm**  
**Star Spangled Banner Live: 7:20pm**  
**Showtime: 7:30pm**  
**Bruce In The USA**  
**A Tribute to Bruce Springsteen**  
**Fireworks: 9:15pm**

**JULY 3**  
**The Prince Project**  
**7:30pm - 9:00pm**  
 Prince Tribute Band  
**1900 RESTON METRO PLAZA**

**JULY 4**  
**The Darby Brothers**  
**5:30pm - 7:00pm**  
 70s & 80s  
**1800 RESTON ROW PLAZA**

**JULY 4 - MOVIE + EVENT**  
**Movie: *The Sandlot***  
 Grab your crew, hit the inflatable baseball square, and practice your swing. You're killin' me, Smalls!  
**START TIME: 7:30PM**  
**FOLLOWING CONCERT**

### ANNOUNCING THE SIGNATURE EVENTS OF 2026! • 1900 Reston Metro Plaza

**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**  
**Rikki 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

**MAY 29**  
**All Fired Up**  
 Pat Benatar Tribute Band

**JUNE 19**  
**Still Surfin'**  
 Beach Boys Tribute Band

**JULY 10**  
**Beatlemania**  
 Beatles Tribute Band

**JULY 31**  
**Mother's Little Helpers**  
 Rolling Stones Tribute Band

**AUGUST 21**  
**The Reflex**  
 80s Tribute Band

**SEPTEMBER 11**  
**Silent Dance Party**

**JUNE 5**  
**The Side Men**  
 70s Yacht Rock

**JUNE 26**  
**Mamma Mania!**  
 Abba Tribute Band

**JULY 17**  
**J Tucker & The Krewe**  
 Funk, Soul

**AUGUST 7**  
**The Tribe**  
 R&B

**AUGUST 28**  
**Don't Back Down**  
 Tom Petty Tribute Band

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

**JUNE 12**  
**Collective**  
 Top 40, 90s, 2000s

**JULY 3**  
**The Prince Project**  
 Prince Tribute Band

**JULY 24**  
**Josh Christina and The Revival**  
 Piano Rock Legends

**AUGUST 14**  
**Hourglass**  
 James Taylor Tribute Band

**SEPTEMBER 4**  
**Bruce In The USA**  
 A Tribute To Bruce Springsteen

**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 and 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

**JUNE 6 - MOVIE + GIVEAWAY**  
**Movie: *Rudy***  
 Cheer on Rudy and take home a mini football as we celebrate big dreams, underdog spirit, and a little game-day fun.

**JUNE 27 - MOVIE + EVENT**  
**Movie: *BIG***  
 Step into the playful spirit of Big with hopscotch and jump ropes —because growing up is optional, but having fun is mandatory.

**JULY 18**  
**Movie: *The Bad Guys***

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

**JUNE 13 - MOVIE + GIVEAWAY**  
**Movie: *Back To The Future***  
 Light up the night with free glow sticks so you can add a little neon flair to your time-travel adventure!

**JULY 4 - MOVIE + EVENT**  
**Movie: *The Sandlot***  
 Grab your crew, hit the inflatable baseball square, and practice your swing. You're killin' me, Smalls!

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

**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.

**JUNE 20 - MOVIE + EVENT**  
**Movie: *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids***  
 Come play giant Jenga and dodge floating bubbles to bring the larger-than-life backyard adventure to reality.

**START TIME: 7:30PM**  
**FOLLOWING CONCERT**  
**JULY 11**  
**Movie: *Cars***

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

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

**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!

# EDUCATION

Making an Impact

## Erika Reinfeld

By Chuck Cascio,  
author and former South Lakes teacher

The following information about Erika Reinfeld, a member of the South Lakes High School Class of 1997, is not AI-generated, though it may seem too good to be true.

Erika is the public engagement officer for the MIT Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research. Prior to that, she was a lecturer and Communication Lab manager for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Department of Nuclear Science and Engineering. Before that, she spent 10 years managing outreach programs at MIT Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research and three years as education coordinator at the MIT Museum. Her first job after college was as an education specialist for the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

She is also an elected school committee member for Medford Public Schools in Massachusetts, and she and her wife have two children.

With that background, it is not surprising that Erika says, "My big thing is interdisciplinary education, trying to make connections between different ways of thinking, which the world desperately needs right now. It's where we make the most progress as a society."

Erika regularly promotes interdisciplinary thought and activity. At MIT, she is devoted to expanding connections among science, education and public discourse.

"They all tend to get siloed, but astrophysics is an exciting field that combines physics, chemistry, math and computing, and there's also room for art, culture and humanities," she said. "I am inspired by how enthusiastic the astronomers I work with are about finding interesting ways to share what they love with the public."

Erika said the Reston community's "live, work, play" motto "was well embedded in my 18 years growing up there."

At South Lakes, major influences on her thinking were class projects and enrichment activities she described as "extended learning opportunities that let us explore things beyond state standards and formal curricula. I really appreciate the ownership those experiences gave us. They helped me feel more confident, in direct contrast to how socially insecure I was."

Her appreciation of diverse areas of knowledge was fueled by many influences, but one she recalls fondly from South Lakes was when physics teacher Dr. Faruk

El-Yussef "told me with absolute confidence that I would become 'Dr. Erika' and 'take the physics world by storm someday.'"

"I might not have become 'Dr. Erika,' but I did find my way back to physics. Astronomy, after all, is just physics in 'de skies,'" she said with a chuckle.

Erika's wide-ranging background helped her realize that "I was never going to be happy just doing astrophysics. I need to engage other parts of my brain too. Living in Reston allowed me to explore multiple fields broadly and deeply, and what I want in my career and in life is to maintain that balance and to give other people, kids especially, those opportunities."

At MIT, Erika promotes exploration and learning in fields that may not immediately seem related. She and the astronomers she works with call astronomy a "gateway science" because, she said, "It is often people's first entry point to STEM learning. Astrophysics is not an applied science that is necessarily going to impact people's daily lives, but it offers inspiration and opportunities for critical thinking, which are both essential to positive engagement with the world."

Another major influence on Erika's interest in connecting seemingly different aspects of life was the Reston Community Center Young Actors Theatre. "Being on stage, learning how to communicate in different ways, surrounding myself with creative people and seeing how teams work together to bring a project to life were skills that allowed me to build my career and my personal support network," she said. "Being a camp counselor with Reston Association also helped me become a better leader and program developer more attuned to the wide range of students' needs."

The importance of Erika's work is evident as liberal arts increasingly become separated from the growing emphasis on technology and science. Erika is dedicated to demonstrating the importance of tying these seemingly different fields together.

"I want to be a connector, bringing people and ideas together in ways that empower them," she said. "I help my astronomers share their research with new audiences through things like planetarium shows and community events. As an elected official, I listen to what people in different parts of the school system are telling me about their experience and try to find common ground for improvements to policies



Erika Reinfeld

and practices, structures that will allow us to customize learning experiences for every student."

Not surprisingly, Erika has even more plans. For the past year, she has been working to start the Medford School Arts Alliance, a nonprofit "friends" organization that supports visual and performing arts in and beyond the classroom.

"Our driving goal is to give students positive experiences they might not otherwise have," she said. "To me, the most rewarding moments are when someone tries something new and discovers something about themselves or the world that they maybe didn't expect."

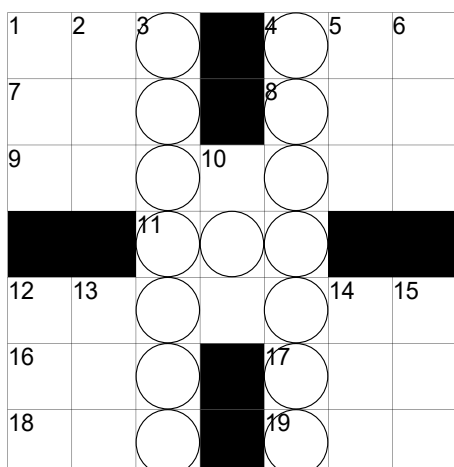
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### Crossword Corner

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 35<sup>th</sup> crossword puzzle creation, made specifically for The Reston Letter readers!



### What June is Doing

#### ACROSS

1. Supportive garment
4. \_\_\_ wow (half a woof)
7. ISP bought by Verizon
8. Prefix w/ form or verse
9. Grasps firmly
11. Openly gay &--w/other circled words--what June's doing in the musical "Carousel"
12. Reveals (to the public)
16. Singer Carly \_\_\_ Jensen
17. Keanu's role in 3 virtual reality films
18. "All Things Considered" public network
19. Zeus, e.g.

#### DOWN

1. "\_\_\_! Humbug!"
2. Leaping Australian marsupial (abbr.)
3. "\_\_\_ the place" (i.e., everywhere)
4. "\_\_\_ one's butt" (i.e., trying hard)
5. Lennon's loved one
6. Victory
10. Outstanding or owed
12. What some ashes go into
13. Snooze or siesta
14. Pope who's a Chicago White Sox fan
15. It patches holes in a lawn

**Skate Into Summer at SkateQuest!**  
Camps for beginners, figure skaters, and hockey players starting at age 4½.

SKATEQUEST

# SPORTS

## Reston Masters Swim Team places second out of 60 at regionals

By Matt Reider, staff writer

The Reston Masters Swim Team brings together about 120 adult swimmers of all ages and abilities for four weekly practices focused on fitness, endurance and technique. Members train year-round at the Reston Community Center and in Reston outdoor pools during the summer.

Founded in the mid-1970s, RMST operates under United States Masters Swimming and competes in local, regional, national and international meets. RMST has a strong record of success and sent 29 swimmers to the regional competition at George Mason University during the weekend of April 10. The team placed second among nearly 60 teams in the Colonies Zone, which stretches from Virginia to upstate New York and Maine. Nationals were held April 30 through May 3 in North Carolina, where the team finished 11th out of more than 250 teams from across the country.

Like many adult sports organizations, RMST relies on experienced leadership. Coach Frank Koval has led the program for more than 25 years and has coached both youth and adult swim programs. Kim Brightwell, a longtime RMST swimmer, has known him for much of that time, dating back to their days swimming on early Reston teams. Brightwell specializes in the backstroke and has earned All-American honors in the 50-

and 100-meter events.

Brightwell praised Koval's ability to unite swimmers of varying backgrounds and abilities. Participants range from triathletes to beginners and span ages 18 to 95. "The coach does a great job creating a team environment from a diverse group," she said. "Masters swimming is a great place to interact with people across age groups."

She described meets as reunions where swimmers reconnect with long-time friends.

Rob Stites, a seven-year member, competes on a successful relay team and continues working to improve his butterfly technique. After retiring a few years ago, he said swimming has helped him maintain his health.

Tony Wynes has been with the club for 12 years and jokes that he "isn't fast," so he enters multiple events at meets to maximize points. Larry Paulson, a long-distance butterfly specialist, joined the team more than 20 years ago, while Margaret Shapiro competed professionally in triathlons before joining RMST.

In addition to practices and meets, RMST organizes the Jim McDonnell Lake Swim, featuring 1- and 2-mile open-water races held each Memorial Day weekend. Lynn Hazelwood helped organize the first event in 1988 and remains involved today. "It was right around the time when triathlons were becoming popular, and we wanted to do an open-water swim," she said.



Reston Master Swim Team has thrived for 25 years under the leadership of Coach Frank Koval. Photo contributed by Reston Masters Swim Team

Hazelwood worked with the Reston Association to secure access to Lake Audubon and coordinate the race.

With as many as 300 swimmers participating, safety remains a priority. Nearly 20 lifeguards and what Hazelwood described as "a small armada" of watercraft monitor the course, with assistance from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

The event is divided into categories based on swimsuit type, with Category I requiring specific swimwear and Category II being less restrictive.

This year's event took place May 24, and drew more than 100 swimmers in the Category II 1-mile race and nearly 100 more in the 2-mile event. Elizabeth

Wood of Herndon won the Category I 1-mile race with a chip time of 23:32.2, while Bryan Rivera of Maryland won the Category II 1-mile race in 22:26.2. In the 2-mile races, Thomas Dion of Virginia led the Category I field with a chip time of 44:41.3, and Kempsey Clark of Maryland won the Category II race in 48:07.7.

Although many participants came from Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C., the event also attracted swimmers from Colorado, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

The program welcomes new members, and interested adults may try two free practices before joining. More information is available through the Reston Masters Swim Team.

### A HUGE HORNET THANKS FOR A BUZZ-WORTHY YEAR!

From the Herndon Sports Boosters Board

Because of our generous donors, members, and volunteers, the Herndon High sports programs continue to provide student athletes with the resources\* they need.

\*Fairfax County only pays for coaches, transportation, and officials.

Visit our site for ideas about how to best support our Herndon athletes and teams for the 2026-2027 school year!

[www.HerndonSportsBoosters.org](http://www.HerndonSportsBoosters.org)



South Lakes' boys soccer team won the Concorde District Championship and advanced into round two of regionals. Photo by Isadora Guerreiro

## Herndon-Reston Youth Lacrosse 14U team wins championship over Great Falls



The 14U Herndon Reston Youth Lacrosse (HYRLAX) team captured the championship title this season with a victory over Great Falls Lacrosse in the final game. Made up of seventh- and eighth-grade boys, the team showed tremendous growth and determination throughout the season, earning praise from coaches for their hard work and improvement. HYRLAX is a community-based program serving youth in the Reston and Herndon areas. Photo by Patricia Pearl Greenberg

# SPORTS

## United Soccer League provides local potential pathway to college or professional play with new women's team

By McAllister Pearce-Biney, student writer

Northern Virginia is quickly emerging as a hotspot for women's soccer, and the Virginia Development Academy's USL W team is helping fuel that growth.

The Virginia Development Academy's USL W team competes in the highly competitive USL W League, providing elite female players with an opportunity to train and compete at a high level during the summer while pursuing collegiate and professional careers.

The team represents the highest level of VDA's player pathway, connecting every stage of development from the futures program to the pre-professional ranks. According to Bobby Puppione, VDA's girls director, the program focuses on elite training, high-level competition and long-term player development under an experienced coaching staff.

This season's roster features standout collegiate athletes and several players who have earned call-ups to the U.S. Women's Youth National Team system. The team made an impressive statement in its home opener on May 15, defeating Richmond 5-1 before a crowd of more than 1,000 fans.

Jolie Jenkins described her time with the team as "a great experience," citing the competitive environment and coaching staff as key factors in her continued growth as both a player and teammate.

VDA's commitment to developing top-level talent was further highlighted in January when youth player Audrey McKeen of Fairfax County signed a three-year professional contract with NWSL club Racing Louisville.

The program's reach extends throughout the region, including players from the Herndon and Reston communities. As more local athletes advance to collegiate, national team and professional opportunities, VDA continues to strengthen Northern Virginia's reputation as a rising force in women's soccer.

People interested in the team can learn more through club events, ID sessions, social media, and VDA website [vdasoccer.org](http://vdasoccer.org).

## Seahawks track and field seniors graduate and race to States

By Shanen Elliott, guest writer

The South Lakes Seahawks track and field team capped another successful Virginia season by sweeping Regionals (5th straight girls title/2nd straight boys), then adding to it with 3rd (45 points) and 5th place (37 points) finishes respectively at VHSL States. Seniors Aya Ryan and Caroline Elliott anchored the girls as the dynamic duo paired with Quinn Jackson and Sarah Ghantiwala to finish second in the 4x800m (USA 11th best time of 8:56.03). They added 2nd place finishes in the 1600m (Elliott) and 800m (Ryan, Elliott 5th), before Ryan closed her career with an outstanding 4x400m final leg (Anya Catto, Olivia Friends, Karletta Webb, Ryan, 4th). Additional girls scoring came from Catto (300m Hurdles, 5th), Tia Tuffour (100m Hurdles, 7th), Collins Han (100m, 4th), and the 4x100m relay team (Melanie Velasco, Friends, Suriah Fornah, Han). Meanwhile, the boys' squad was highlighted by a couple of

school-record-breaking performances from seniors. Blake Jackson established the new school benchmark in the triple jump (2nd place), before finishing 2nd in the long jump, while Milo Wilkins put himself atop the SLHS record board in the shot put (6th). Alex Guthrie continued his hot streak with 2nd and 3rd place finishes in the 200m and 100m, then joined Jackson to anchor the 4x100m alongside Joshua Dagne and Brooks Ross (5th).

This wrapped up an action-packed week at South Lakes that saw multiple track & field seniors walk first at their Friday graduation, before boarding buses to compete that same day at States. The team was also strongly represented at the annual "The Lakes Show Awards Ceremony!" Award winners included: Elliott & Guthrie (Female & Male Athletes of the year), Ryan & Wilkins (Tri-Sport Athletes), Q.Jackson (Top Rookie), Guthrie (Top Record Breaker), Scott Raczko (Coach of the Year), and South Lakes Track & Field (Team of the Year).



31 track and field South Lakes athletes competed at the state tournament. Photo by Shanen Elliott

## Herndon Hornets Baseball wins Liberty District title



HHS Baseball won their first Liberty District Championship since joining the district in 2018 by defeating McLean 2-1 on June 25 and first district title since winning the Concorde in 2002. Three days later, the Hornets defeated Yorktown to qualify for States. Photo contributed by HHS Sports Boosters

## Herndon High's sports summer camps return

By McAllister Pearce-Biney, student writer

### Baseball

Since 2021, the Herndon Baseball summer camp has helped young athletes develop their skills and enjoy the game of baseball. HHS Baseball's head coach, Coach Frank, and ballplayers from the Hornets baseball team guide young players ages 6-14 (Rising 1st-9th graders) through a fun few days of baseball.

Camp will be held during two sessions: July 6-9 and July 13-16. The first session is currently full and has a waitlist. Camp runs from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day at the baseball field at Herndon High School. Each camper will receive a camp

T-shirt and have the opportunity to earn camper awards at the end of the week. Camp cost is \$250.

### Basketball

Herndon basketball is offering a camp designed to develop the next generation of players. Herndon's Coach Hamilton, his coaching team, and student athletes from the program invite 1st- 3rd boys and girls and rising 4th through 9th grade boys of all abilities to join a camp on July 20th- 24th filled with friendly competition and high-energy learning. Camp goes from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Camp cost is \$225.

### Elite Basketball

Another camp option is Coach Hamilton's Elite Camp. This session is for ris-

ing 6th-9th grade boys, offering an opportunity to train like high school varsity athletes, simulating the intensity, structure, and expectations of a varsity-level practice. The focus is on advanced skill development and game IQ. Participants will be challenged both physically and mentally, preparing them for the next level of their basketball journey. Dates are July 6th-8th (Mon-Wed) 6 p.m.- 8:30 p.m. Elite camp is \$200.

Other summer sports camps offered at Herndon High are: **Girls Volleyball, Girls Basketball, Running, Cheer, and new this year is Football.** For more information and to register go to: [herndonhs.jumbula.com](http://herndonhs.jumbula.com).

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HOMES

# KIDS

## Underpass appreciation: There's art under there

By Bob Welland,  
Kids Section Editor

Reston has more than 20 underpasses that allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross under busy roads without worrying about traffic or waiting for lights. They connect our trails and footpaths so we can walk around our community safely and conveniently.

Plus there's art under there. Under where? I just made you say "underwear." These tunnels don't have to be dim and drab. Five underpasses in Reston are sites of beautiful public art. Three are located in northern

Reston along North Shore Drive near Lake Anne. Two others are near Hunters Woods Village Center in south Reston. Use the maps to plan a visit with your family!

The first art site was installed in 1965 by Gonzalo Fonseca at the North Shore Drive Underpass. It's a set of concrete geometric shapes dispersed around the area. This creative work has the less creative name, "The Underpass." Then in 1967, Baltimore-based potter, Olin Russum, made a textured ceramic mosaic on the walls of the Moorings Drive Underpass. Its bumpy chunks look like rocks, roots and branches.

Much more recently in 2010, Valerie Theberge decorated the Glade Drive Underpass with "Emerge," a vast collection of colorful glass tile mosaics. Many are circles with tiles radiating out from the center, called mandelas. Other shapes are squished and stretched like amoebae. In 2018, Lake Anne Elementary School students painted "Community Circles" in the nearby Fairway Drive Underpass.

These are also colorful mandelas painted along the walls.

Then in 2019, the Colts Neck Road Underpass was wrapped with an energetic mural called "Thoreau's Ensemble" by Ben Volta. The overlapping colorful lines are a combination of more than

700 individual drawings by local students and seniors.

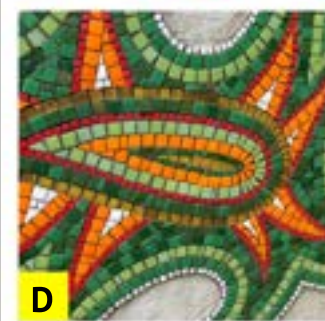
It takes a lot of work and planning by artists and community groups such as Public Art Reston to beautify an underpass in Reston. Let's hope for more artful underpasses in the future. In the meantime, let's celebrate the five sites we have. Don't pass over these underpasses. Because missing them would be a blunder-pass.



### Identify the Underpass Art

Match the underpass with these close-up pictures of the art:

1. North Shore Drive
2. Moorings Drive
3. Glade Drive
4. Fairway Drive
5. Colts Neck Road



## Find 8 Differences: Reston Farmers Market at Lake Anne



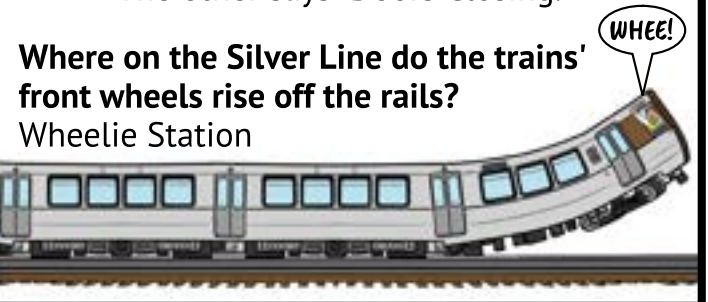
**Why is the Metro route through Reston called the Silver Line?**  
Because it serves Sterling.

**Which Metro station is the silliest?**  
Reston Clown Center



**What's the difference between a shopaholic and the Metro announcer?**  
One adores clothing.  
The other says "Doors Closing."

**Where on the Silver Line do the trains' front wheels rise off the rails?**  
Wheelie Station



# KIDS

## Sage Greene and the Mystery of the Nature Center Sundial

**Mystery Fiction by Arthur Semicolon Doyle**

Middle-school mystery solver, Sage Greene, is babysitting her neighbor Cassie on a warm but cloudy day. They strolled to the Walker Nature Center and Cassie joined a group of kids doing activities. Sage waits near the seven-foot-wide Memorial Sun Dial, near the entrance to the center.

Cassie runs to Sage with a paper in her hand. "What's that?" Cassie asks. Sage replies, "This is a sundial. It tells the time of day." Cassie says, "Oh, what time does it say?"

There is no shadow on the sundial. Sage looks up at the clouds. "It only works when the sun is out." "That's useless," says Cassie, "Don't they know that people have phones?" Before Sage can argue about that, Cassie shows her the paper and says, "This is a map for a scavenger hunt. The X's show where the treasure is."

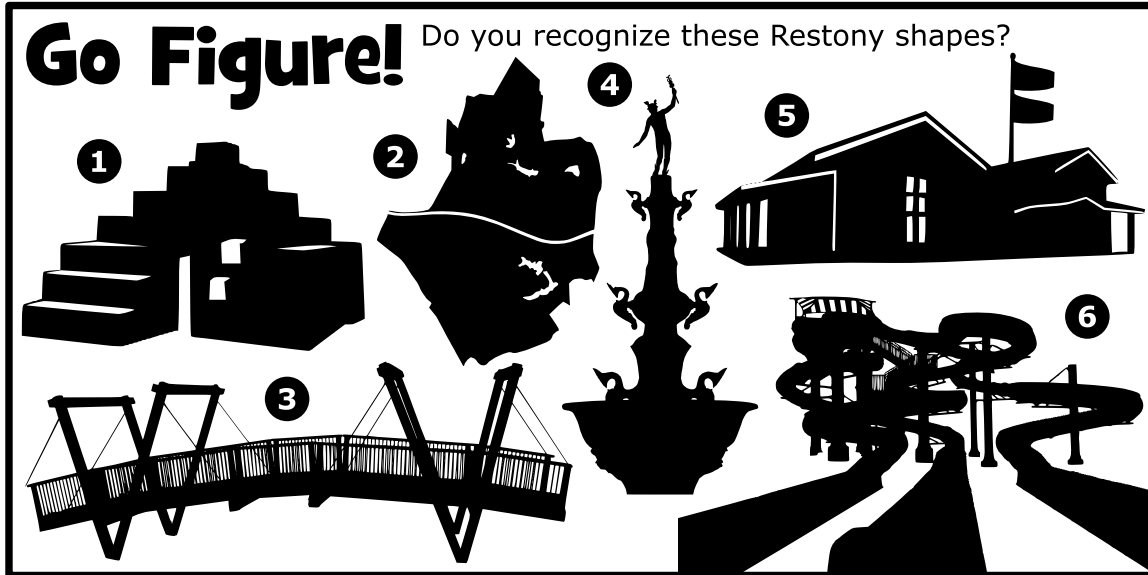
Cassie frowns at the map and turns it around in circles. "Which way is up?" Sage points to a letter N and an arrow on the map. "You want to hold the map so that arrow is pointing north." "Which way is north?" Cassie asks. Sage asks back, "They didn't give you a compass?"

"No. But, oooh! I have a compass app on my phone!" Cassie pulls out her phone and sees that the battery is at 1%. "Oh, no!" she says and she frantically flips through app icons on the phone looking for the compass app. As soon as she presses the Compass app, the screen goes dark. "Ahhh!" Cassie screams.

"Sage, use your phone!"

Sage smiles and points. "North is that way, and I know thanks to this." She pats the sundial. Cassie looks up at the cloudy sky. "But there's no sun," she says, "So it's as dead as my phone."

**How did Sage know which way was north?**



### Little Hands, Big Cookie Dough Bark

By Alexis Estep, mom, chef, Restonian



Quinn putting the finishing touches on our batch of cookie dough bark!

Cookie Dough Bark adapted from [yummytoddlerfood.com](http://yummytoddlerfood.com)

**Ingredients:**

- 1/2 cup peanut butter or cashew/almond butter or melted unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 1/4 cups almond flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup sprinkles

**Topping:**

- 1/4 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1 tsp coconut oil
- Sprinkles or flakey salt

Summertime is the best! We love biking/hiking local trails and especially swimming. With the longer days, there are more activities going on and so appetites and snacking are at an all time high. I usually like baking treats but in the summer no one wants to turn on the oven! That's where no-bake snacks come in. This recipe has been making the rounds and it's not hard to see why it is so popular. Cookie Dough Bark is a slam dunk recipe, simple ingredients that are interchangeable to suit likes/dietary restrictions and ready in a flash. We hope you enjoy our adaptation!

1. If your peanut butter/honey are firm, microwave them for 15 sec to make easier to stir
2. Add the ingredients to a medium bowl. Stir well with a spoon to make the batter evenly combined.
3. Use clean hands to spread the dough onto a parchment-lined baking pan to about 1/2-inch thick.
4. Melt 1/4 cup chocolate chips and 1 teaspoon coconut oil, then spread over the top. Top with sprinkles or flaky sea salt, if desired, and freeze for at least 20 minutes to set firm enough to snap into pieces. Store in the fridge or freezer in a storage bag after breaking.

### Solutions

**Identify the Underpass Art:** 1-C, 2-A, 3-D, 4-E, 5-B

**Find 8 Differences:** Left to Right: 1) Dinosaur in basket, 2) Sign says Beets, 3) Missing purse,, 4) Strawberries instead of beans, 5) Plant in pot, 6) Missing glasses, 7) Blank jar labels, 8) Crest on shirt

**Sage Greene Mystery:**

Sage points to the metal triangle on the sundial. "The part of the sundial that casts a shadow is called the gnomon and it points north. That's how I knew. Also, the angle of the gnomon matches the latitude of where it is on Earth."

As if on cue, the sun peeks out from the clouds and the gnomon casts a crisp shadow on the sundial. Sage puts an acorn on the dial at the shadow. Then Sage and Cassie follow the map for the scavenger hunt, hiking around the grounds of the Walker Nature Center.

Later, as they are leaving, Sage shows Cassie that the shadow on the sundial moved since she put the acorn on it. Based on the dial lines, they figure that one hour has passed. "So it's a timer too?" says Cassie. "Who knew sundials had so many apps!"

**Go Figure!:** 1) Pyramid sculpture at Lake Anne, 2) Map of Reston, 3) Van Gogh Bridge, 4) Mercury Fountain at Reston Town Center, 5) Walker Nature Center, 6) The Water Mine Family Swimmin' Hole

# OPINIONS

## You're 18. You need these documents

By Sean Joyner, Reston lawyer and guest writer

Once you turn 18, your parents lose the automatic legal authority to make decisions for you, even in an emergency. If a sudden medical crisis or accident leaves you unconscious or unable to communicate, you may be considered legally incapacitated. In that situation, your family cannot automatically step in on your behalf.

Without the proper legal documents in place, your family's hands could be tied, even if they are standing beside you in the emergency room. To help ensure your loved ones can assist you if needed, consider putting these two documents in place:

A financial power of attorney (POA) allows you to name a trusted person to handle financial matters if you become unable to do so yourself. This could include accessing your bank account to pay rent or resolving an insurance issue while you recover.

An immediate POA takes effect right away, while a "springing" POA only takes effect if a doctor certifies incapacity. For many young adults, naming a parent as an agent under an immediate POA can simplify matters by avoiding delays during a medical emergency. Whoever you choose should be someone mature, trustworthy and capable of acting in your best interests under pressure.

In Virginia, a medical power of attorney and living will are often combined into a single legal document called an Advance Medical Directive. This document serves two purposes: It appoints a health care agent to make medical decisions on your behalf if you become incapacitated, and

it outlines your wishes regarding life-prolonging procedures in the event of a terminal or vegetative condition.

Putting these wishes in writing can help spare family members from having to guess about your preferences during a crisis. As with a financial POA, choosing a health care agent requires careful thought. The role calls for someone who can advocate for your wishes and make difficult decisions under stressful circumstances. For many young adults, a parent or close family member is the most practical choice.


Once your documents are signed and notarized, scan them and share digital copies with your designated agents. Provide a copy of your Advance Medical Directive to your primary care physician. Your agent also may need access to your smartphone or digital accounts in an emergency, so make sure they know how to access important information if nec-

essary.

Keep the original documents in a safe place, such as a waterproof and fireproof box, alongside other important family records. Taking care of these documents can be an important first step into adulthood and may also open the door to conversations about your family's broader estate planning needs.


**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 and circumstances.


*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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Ask Doctor S.

## Dads, please take care of your mental health

I recently met with a young dad who asked me how he could better manage his stress. He explained that he has a demanding job in which he is unfulfilled and often comes home frustrated. His partner and children are happy to see him at the end of the day, but because he has not learned how to deal with his feelings, the people he loves most often get the worst of him. He has little patience for the "kid stuff" that can fill an evening: whining, disinterest in dinner, not listening at bedtime and overtired meltdowns.

Having grown up with emotionally unreliable adults, he survived by making himself small, meaning he learned to function without expressing emotional needs, overachieving in school and relying only on himself. By the time he met and married his partner decades later, he could comfortably express only two emotions: anger and withdrawal. Every time he experienced sadness, anxiety, disappointment, boredom, loneliness or other difficult emotions, he either became angry or isolated himself. This man is not alone. Many adult men exhibit similar emotional patterns, especially those who grew up with men who modeled the same behaviors. Over time, many men have learned to push down their feelings because it feels safer than experiencing them. When feelings are not released, however, they settle within the body and eventually emerge more loudly and destructively.

By the time many men become dads, they have already mastered several essential parenting skills, such as assembling impossible toys without instructions and pretending not to notice Play-Dough permanently embedded in the carpet. What many dads have not mastered is talking openly about their mental health.

For decades, psychological research focused primarily on maternal mental health and child development. That work remains critically important. But a growing body of research now makes something abundantly clear: Fathers' mental health profoundly shapes children's emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational development from infancy through adolescence. In other words, dads matter emotionally, not just structurally. Children do not

simply need a father who "shows up." They benefit from a father who is psychologically present.

For generations, men were often taught that being a "good dad" meant providing financially, remaining stoic and pushing through stress. Many men were raised with spoken and unspoken messages such as "Be strong," "Don't complain," "Stop crying" and "Don't ask for help." In other words, they were taught that vulnerability is weakness.

Contemporary research paints a different picture. Children thrive not simply from having an involved father, but from having an emotionally available one.

Studies show that dads who enter parenthood with untreated depression, chronic anxiety, unresolved trauma, substance misuse or high levels of stress are at greater risk for difficulties bonding with their children and supporting healthy family relationships. A 2023 meta-analysis in the Journal of Affective Disorders found significant associations between paternal mental health problems and stress surrounding fatherhood, particularly when pregnancies were unintended or dads felt emotionally unprepared. Research increasingly demonstrates that paternal mental health affects children's emotional and developmental outcomes and has linked paternal depression and chronic distress with increased behavioral difficulties, emotional dysregulation, language delays and social problems in children.

Conversely, dads who attend to their own emotional health model something profoundly valuable: that strength includes self-awareness, emotional regulation and the willingness to seek support when needed.

Children do not need flawless fathers. In fact, children benefit far more from dads who are authentic, reflective and capable of repairing mistakes than from dads who attempt to appear invulnerable. One of the healthiest messages a father can communicate is: "Feelings are manageable, relationships can heal and asking for help is normal."

For men considering fatherhood, emotional preparation deserves the same seriousness as fi-

nancial preparation. Therapy, stress management, healthy friendships, treatment for depression or anxiety, reducing substance use, improving communication skills and addressing unresolved childhood wounds are not luxuries. They are investments in future family stability.

For dads already raising young children, it is never too late to begin. For dads of tweens and teens, mental health is just as important. Adolescents are highly perceptive and often learn to cope by watching how parents manage stress, anger, disappointment and vulnerability. Dads who can remain emotionally steady, communicative and psychologically engaged during these years help create a home environment where teenagers are more likely to discuss difficult emotions rather than hide them. Sometimes the strongest sentence a father can say is not, "I've got this." Sometimes it is, "I think I need some support."

Happy Father's Day to all the dads and those who serve as dads!

Psych'd to see you next month! -Dr. S.

Do you have a question or a topic you'd like me to address? Please submit suggestions to [info@therestonletter.com](mailto:info@therestonletter.com).

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



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# LIFESTYLE

## Inside Art

By Louise Seirmarco-Yale,  
Reston Artist



Summer Light equals Summer Art. There are countless reasons why it is physically wonderful for us when the sun comes out, and the days become longer. Science knows the psychological effects of summer light on our mood and summer feels artistic! We are reminded again, in an unexpected way, that art is everywhere.

Summer intensifies our environment, with the very elements artists manipulate, like color saturation, reflected light, atmospheric depth, and shadows. In winter, objects dominate perception. In summer, light itself becomes the subject. Summer often feels inherently painterly. People become more emotionally receptive to beauty during summer months.

One reason is that light stops being merely functional, and becomes experiential. People suddenly notice glowing leaves, reflected water, elongated shadows, illuminated dust, evening sky gradients, silhouettes, and sparkling reflections. Painters train to notice these constantly.

Children naturally notice them too. Summer feels emotionally expansive, compared with winter's introspective mood. Both change our physiology, alter mood, and influence perception. A great artwork, like a beautiful summer morning, changes the state of the observer.

The blue summer sky is perhaps the most universally "art-like" experience because the sky is never a fixed object. It is pure atmosphere, with changing color relationships which makes it inherently painterly. It seems to us like a vast color abstraction.

Sunlight through trees is possibly the most artistic experience emotionally. Moving patches of light make up a visual music, creating softness and surprise simultaneously. It is essentially living Impressionism, as Monet taught us.

Certain paintings produce what psychologists sometimes call "soft fascination", whereby attention is engaged without being strained. Art is always about emotional reaction. Ask yourself, "do I like looking at it?" That's soft fascination! Psychologically, longer summer days affect artistic feeling more than any single visual object

does. Prolonged golden light especially feels artistic as shadows lengthen, and contrasts lower.

It feels like life is less compressed than usual. Evening shadows feel more poetic, and more aesthetically pleasing, with lowered light and slowed activity. We can relax and enjoy life more. Even the summer swimming pool is psychologically powerful. Its blue-green color, and reflected light, feel like relief and pleasure, like art. Pool water color with its visually exaggerated reality is more saturated than ordinary life, inviting us to escape, to dreamlike suspension. Ah, art! We have wonderful pools in Reston! Use them, and all the other ways to enjoy summer light. Summer light is a physical and art booster. Make good use of it. Happy Summer Light!

*Louise Seirmarco-Yale is a Reston artist, speaker, teacher and author.*

## TRL Teen Feed

### Small decisions create big moments

By Meg Marsh, Reston neighbor

In this season, when milestones are celebrated on social media, end-of-year awards are presented and students throughout the world are putting on caps and gowns, it is easy to overlook the day-to-day decisions we make that come to define us in a way milestones rarely do.

Although some days may come with more anticipation, with the need to put on a fancy dress and heels or a jacket and tie, a full life is built every day. One day, we may be celebrated as an Outstanding Athlete or an Honor Roll Student. Another day, we decide whether to return the shopping cart from the parking lot to the front of the store. At the end of a quarter, we get a report card. Every day, we decide whether to open the door for someone else or clean up trash on the sidewalk. Turning the tassel on our caps at the end of a graduation ceremony is momentous. Each day, we are given the opportunity to decide whether to bend a rule.

Integrity is a characteristic built over time, usually in the simplest ways. How many slight rule-bending decisions make up a truly dishonest life? When do we really cross that line? How many white lies does it take to lose someone's trust? We may get lucky and never find out. At what point will a teacher or professor see that AI wrote our essay or came up with our thesis? Maybe never.

As humans, we have been granted the complex ability to develop and use our moral compass. When we are young, we may constantly need an adult to remind us to share or not hurt others. Each level of schooling comes with a new set of student rights and responsibilities. Out in society, we have laws, rules of conduct at work and guidelines. But what about our social contract? What do we owe one another and ourselves to live in the best community possible?

How do we take the lessons learned that helped us achieve great milestones and turn them into everyday pillars of our lives? A philosophical quote says "How we do one thing is how we do everything." That is a high bar to clear, given how imperfect humans can be. It is a wonderful goal, however, and a good reminder that if we practice early and often, telling the truth, completing our obligations, sharing our own original thoughts, taking care of our neighbors and picking up a little trash here and there, the moral muscle will grow stronger over time.

In a world full of ways to expedite our time, multiply our obligations and expand our content, useful or not, take a minute to see how it feels to slow down, do a little gut check and ensure that our ordinary days have as much integrity and meaning as our milestones.

Congratulations, today and every day!

## CARE Mobile Program's Senior Prom brings community and connection to Lake Anne

By Kaydence Smith, Staff Writer

The CARE Mobile Program, a division of ServiceSource, was developed to help older adults who experience social isolation. The Mobile Program goes directly into the community to interact with older adults and provide engagement opportunities, such as the Senior Prom held at the Lake Anne House.

Yashoda Premysler, CARE Mobile Program Manager, says that the impact these events have had is huge.

"I always ask residents what they enjoy about the events and why they come. Many tell me that if they didn't attend these events, they would simply stay in their apartments watching TV," Premysler states. "They tell me the events make them happy and give them something meaningful to do. It's also a chance to see neighbors and feel more connected to the community."

Because Care Mobile visits different communities every month, people get opportunities to learn new skills, meet new people, and become more engaged in their communities. "Over time, people start seeing the same faces at events and become more comfortable with one another. Then, even after I leave, they continue interacting on their own. They meet in the hallways, spend time in the lobby together, go on walks, or play board games. They're building friendships and support systems so they don't feel alone."

The Senior Prom took place at the Lake Anne House on May 27, and the turnout shocked even Care Mobile team members. With money given by Fairfax County, Care Mobile and ServiceSource were able to provide the community with a fun event complete with music and dancing, food, games, and prizes, a photobooth, and even a prom king and queen.

Premysler expresses her gratitude to both Lake Anne House for hosting, decorating, and catering, as well as the residents and volunteers who showed up for the event.



The Crowned Prom King and Queen. Photo by ServiceSource.



Senior Prom attendees pose. Photo by ServiceSource.

"It's also exciting to see both familiar faces and new residents attending. Some people have been coming to my events for years, and some join for the first time today," says Premysler.

To attend a Care Mobile Event or volunteer, visit <https://servicesource.org/care-mobile/>

# LIFESTYLE

## Reston Community Players and South Lakes Theatre Arts collaborate in production of 'Dear Evan Hansen'

Contributed by RCP

Reston Community Players are collaborating with South Lakes Theatre Arts on the Tony Award-winning musical Dear Evan Hansen, for a special summer production from July 24 through Aug. 1 at South Lakes High School.

This partnership brings together experienced community theatre artists and high school students in a mentorship-driven production model designed not only to produce an outstanding theatrical experience, but also to provide hands-on training and educational opportunities across every aspect of theatre-making.

Under the direction of Sarah Hardy, with Leslie Daugherty producing, Michael Viola serving as Associate Director, and Emily Woidka as Musical Director, students from 11 Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and Arlington Pub-

lic Schools will work side-by-side with adult artists and technicians from Reston Community Players both onstage and behind the scenes. Students will participate in acting, stage management, technical theatre, scenery construction, and production operations.

"This collaboration reflects the very best of community theatre," said Michael Barret Jones, President of Reston Community Players. "We're creating an environment where students can learn by doing."

"I am so excited for South Lakes Theatre Arts and Reston Community Players to partner on Dear Evan Hansen," said South Lakes Theatre Arts Teacher Michael Viola. "Both organizations take great pride in telling important stories, producing high quality theatre, and building community; I know both the students and adults will get a lot out of this experience."

Dear Evan Hansen, with a book by Ste-

ven Levenson and music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, has become one of the defining contemporary musicals of the last decade. The show explores themes of connection, loneliness, mental health, and the search for belonging.

**Performance Dates**  
 Friday, July 24 at 7:30 PM  
 Saturday, July 25 at 2:00 PM and 7:30 PM  
 Friday, July 31 at 7:30 PM  
 Saturday, August 1 at 2:00 PM and 7:30 PM

**Location**  
 South Lakes High School  
 11400 South Lakes Drive  
 Reston, VA 20191

**Tickets and Information**  
 For tickets and additional information, visit:  
[www.restonplayers.org](http://www.restonplayers.org) or [www.slakes-theatre.com/](http://www.slakes-theatre.com/)



### YOUR PET IN



SPECIAL EDITION: PETS

## World Cup edition: Eat, drink, believe

By Phantom Foodie

The beautiful game is back, and screens across Reston are about to get a serious workout. Just for kicks, allow me to pitch you a match-by-match menu worthy of the occasion, a lineup of dishes to make or order as Team USA takes the pitch. No one remembers every offside call, but they will remember that dish, or most valuable plate.

Team USA lands in Group D: three matches, three countries, three culinary opportunities. Let's play soccer, or rather, fútbol!

### June 12, 9 p.m. ET: USA vs. Paraguay

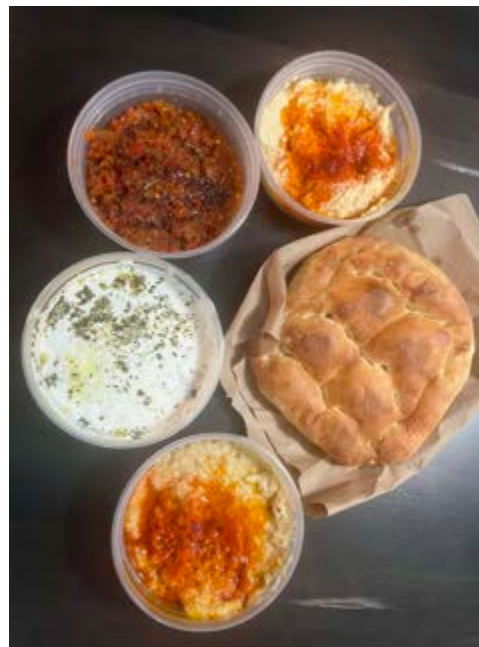
A Friday night opener in Los Angeles deserves a proper formation. Paraguay's culinary soul is built on corn, beef and the smoke of an open grill, and a simple play is empanadas: golden, hand-crimped pastries filled with savory delights.

Although technically Argentine, **Empanadas de Mendoza** at North Point Village Center has you fully covered, with 12 flavors including traditional beef, spicy chorizo, pineapple chicken and honey barbecue pork. I've indulged in empanadas from Bogotá to Barcelona, and these are the real deal. They will be part of my summer rotation, paired with grilled corn on the cob. I prefer mine baked, but you can also get them fried for extra crunch. Order ahead, grab a batch and add their delicious chimichurri sauce on the side. *Goal.*

For a homegrown American appetizer to round out the half, Old Bay deviled eggs are always a crowd-pleaser and squarely on our *home turf*. The Dash Rapid Egg Cooker remains this foodie's go-to for simple, perfectly cooked eggs every time.

### June 19, 3 p.m. ET: USA vs. Australia

An afternoon match calls for a laid-back *set piece*. Australia's food culture leans coastal and fresh, so fire up the cast-iron skillet and go with grilled shrimp skewers and a zesty citrus aioli. Or keep things Australian-American neutral with a classic pulled pork slider spread. Low and slow wins the day, but if you're short on time or without a slow cooker, add takeout from **Willards BBQ** in the Home Depot shopping center to your *playbook*.



Get a taste of the World Cup with some local eateries: Empanadas de Mendoza, Willards and Taste of Istanbul! Photos by Phantom Foodie.



Tasty barbecue and scrumptious sides await every fan.

For the adventurous, try a Vegemite and Nutella sandwich. The sweet-and-salty combination will have your watch party talking at halftime. Grab a craft lager, Foster's, or an Athletic Brewing non-alcoholic option and let the afternoon unfold. Bonus points if someone brings Tim Tams. Consider it *extra time* for dessert.

I will be serving crispy air-fryer onion rings with my homemade blooming onion sauce and may even try my hand at a classic beef-and-bacon meat pie.

### June 25, 10 p.m. ET: USA vs. Türkiye

A late-night kickoff demands food built for the hour. Turkish cuisine is one of the world's great snacking traditions, featuring flaky börek with feta and spinach, spiced lamb flatbread, and mezze spreads made for lingering. Pick up phyllo dough at any grocery store and layer it with feta, egg and herbs before baking.

For those who would rather *stay out* of the kitchen, **Taste of Istanbul** in Reston Town Center offers a strong mezze spread that travels well. The classic döner wrap and flatbreads are flavorful options that are ideal for late-night sharing.

After a full *90-minute match*, at minimum, have Turkish coffee ready for the morning.

Should Team USA advance, new opponents will mean new menus. Culinary inspiration and global sports are a winning combination. As the great Ted Lasso once said, "I believe in hope. I believe in belief." Believe in Team USA. And believe in the spread. Let's go!

*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.*

### Answer Key

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D	O	G		R	P	N
O	E	N		E	A	R
S	L	I	E	V	N	U
		T	U			
N	O	S	D	L	O	H
I	N	U		L	A	
W	O	B		A	B	

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