

THE RESTON
LETTER

Celebrating Dolly: Reston honors music icon

By Reston Letter staff

Reston Station hosted a Dolly Parton tribute concert on Sept. 25. Hundreds donned cowboy hats, pink attire and even wigs to sing and dance on Dolly Day. The day has been set aside since 2019 to honor Parton and celebrate her popular song “9 to 5,” which she wrote and recorded in the 1980s.

Karen Hester, who grew up in Danville, Va., singing gospel music, took center stage. Hester has impersonated Parton for more than 16 years. The evening was filled with classic Dolly songs, but Hester also performed some Elvis and invited one of her band members to join her for “Islands in the Stream,” which Parton famously recorded with Kenny Rogers. Hester brought a group of young girls and their father, all wearing cowboy hats, onto the stage to sing with her, along with some Dolly look-alikes from the crowd.

The performance had been planned before Parton passed away in August, but its timing provided an opportunity to honor not only her music but also her lifelong philanthropic work. The Dollywood Foundation, created in 1988, has touched lives around the globe through initiatives and funds she created for literacy, education, health care, disaster relief and anti-bullying.

Hester’s shows have become more meaningful with Parton’s passing.

“In every show, I always strive to honor Dolly and her legacy to the best of my ability. With Dolly’s passing, that holds true even more now than ever. I hope that the way I honor her in shows brings joy to the audiences and honors her legacy and her family,” she said.



Virginia native Karen Hester performed as Dolly Parton at Reston Station on Dolly Day. The concert was part of Reston Station’s “Fab Fridays” summer lineup of bands. Photos by Benjamin Burgess.

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors votes to bring crossing guards back

By Ava-Grace Satterfield, staff writer

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously Sept. 15 to restore crossing guards at 10 of the 13 Fairfax County Public Schools high schools that previously had them.

The decision to eliminate the guards during the spring budget process saved \$1.89 million but prompted public outcry amid multiple crashes

and close calls involving traffic.

“I bring my child to South Lakes High School every day, and in the first few days of school, traffic was insane ... I saw a few near-disasters,” said Reston Association President Travis Johnson.

Dozens of Fairfax County residents urged the board to allocate \$700,000 to permanently restore the guards, as well as fund additional pedes-

Continued on page 5



Community members and leaders gathered at the Fairfax County Government Center before the Board of Supervisors meeting on Sept. 15. Photo by Benjamin Burgess

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bulletin



The latest in the Reston development series, comedy mystery book set in Reston, the story of Capturing Joy Photography, Multicultural Festival recap. Runway To the Cure

education



High school theatre fall play previews, Armstrong Elementary remembers Sept. 11, Making an Impact column

lifestyle



Lake Anne dining options, hosting a Halloween party with High Heeled Hostess, housing update

kids

Adventures of Reston’s fuzzy new superhero, jack-o-lantern decor ideas, our chef’s last recipe for TRL

opinions

Dr. S. is back with some parenting tips, Restonian uncovers Flock cameras

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THE BULLETIN

Mission Statement:

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

Reston: What should 'New Town' become... and how?

Third in a series on the complex future facing our “New Town”

By Gene Powell, staff writer

There’s no debate that the Reston of 2026 is not, and cannot return to, what it was when founded in the 1960s. But the path to what Reston will be is complicated by differing plans, high-stakes investment, contentious disputes, vocal community groups, and even angry, anonymous online threats. Will the trend-setting planned community born in the 1960s retain its high-quality mix of business, commercial, residential, and recreational opportunities? Or will it build itself through slow transformation, some say “slide,” into just another metropolitan suburb?

Most recently, a quickening pace of new and repurposed development has focused on new apartments and townhomes, with multiple projects centered on the transportation corridor containing Metro’s Silver Line and the Dulles Toll Road that bisects the town.

There are some 11,000 new “residential units” in the study or planning phase or under construction. “Reston North,” “Reston East,” “Reston Crossing,” “Halley Rise” and “West of Wiehle” are large studies, projects or proposals that involve commercial, professional, and public spaces; and residential uses. There are a number of smaller developments on the table, most with townhouse communities replacing existing commercial buildings.

And then there is the highly contested proposal to replace at least one of Reston’s two original golf courses with townhomes, perhaps sharing the space with a park or a revised and improved

golf course.

County officials, developers, and opponents of various kinds of redevelopment all identify the long-standing controversy over the future of Reston National Golf Course as “the” example of issues involved in Reston’s future.

The golf course’s owners over the past 14 years have suggested alternative uses for the 164-acre tract south of the Dulles Toll Road: building out entirely in favor of multi-design townhomes, dividing the property between housing and some version of a public “linear park.” A plan moving forward now involves upgrading the existing course while using a 14-acre tract on one side of the course for housing.

Community groups and others argue on multiple fronts. One is reserving Reston founder Robert E. Simon’s original vision of two golf courses as a mainstay of the town’s commitment to “open space” and recreation. Another is defending a long-term Comprehensive Plan – updated as recently as 2025 – that was intended to balance Simon’s vision with the inevitable evolution of his dream city.

Developers argue the present 18-hole public course and its amenities are not economically viable and want to make changes including a driving range upgrade and a second, mid-course restaurant.

One of the recent voices on the course’s future is Michele Hudnall, a longtime Reston resident, president of the Whitney Park East Cluster Association, one of the town’s organized neighborhoods, and

a Realtor. Earlier this year, she presented town and county authorities with a study she did of about 800 residences adjacent or close to the course. She reported that turning the course over to residential use would drop adjacent home values by 15% and nearby home values by 10%.

Hudnall, who said she has received anonymous online threats since speaking out, said she is not opposed to any or all development but insists county officials require all projects to be rigorously reviewed through the lens of the Comprehensive Plan.

“We need to honor the past but not be shackled by it,” an approach she calls “governed growth” when considering future land use across Reston. “What I am seeing is a pattern: ‘We have all these empty office spaces. But those are failed businesses not failed buildings.’”

Connie Hartke, president of the grassroots “Rescue Reston” group, a Realtor and a board member of the Reston Citizens Association, is a frequent speaker against “any housing” on Reston National’s property.

She noted that the Hunter Mill District, the area of Fairfax County that includes Reston and a part of Tysons Corner, “has more development, in construction, planned and in development” than any other district in the county.

Hartke and Rescue Reston are focused on opposing development of both Reston National, south of the Dulles Toll Road, and the private Hidden Creek Country Club course north of the road. She said the pair are a focus of the town’s

Comprehensive Plan for development. “If the toll road is the ‘spine’ of Reston, the golf courses are the ‘lungs’ of Reston. Why give up that open space when there are plenty of other places” to build, she asked.

Hartke is not opposed to dense, even high-rise projects such as the 23.8-acre Reston Crossing along Edmund Halley Drive, south of the Town Center Metro station, which could include 40-story buildings and up to 1,400 new residential units. She said the area known as the Reston Transit Station zone is where such dense housing should be located. She calls Rescue Reston’s development view “right kind, right place.”

Looking to the future, Hartke is concerned that Reston’s traditional mix of government, commercial and residential space will be skewed heavily toward residential, costing the town open space and “places where small business ... and educational opportunities like trade schools” can find a home.

“I live in Reston, not on the golf course, and I like being able to drive five minutes to a grocery, six minutes to downtown.” She also fears recreational businesses and areas in Reston will be threatened someday by the same economic pressures driving the proposal to redevelop Reston National. “If we didn’t have these recreational opportunities (nearby), working parents and grandparents might not have the time” to get their children to “far away” facilities, she said.

Next: Big changes in big spaces coming to Reston

Runway To the Cure puts survivors in the spotlight

By Chuck Cascio, author and former South Lakes teacher

Bad weather did not stop the eighth annual Runway To the Cure fashion show Oct. 4. Organizers moved the event from the Reston Town Center Pavilion to the Hyatt Regency, where about 500 attendees heard the personal stories of 30 breast cancer survivors as they walked the stage wearing clothing provided by local shops Scout & Molly’s, Evereve, South Moon Under, Athleta and Potomac River Running.

Runway To the Cure (RTTC) is an all-volunteer nonprofit led by Board Chair Theresa Goudie, who said the event has grown into more than an annual fundraiser.

“Runway has become much more than a single-day fundraising event. It has become a community event that people look forward to, believe in and want to be part of,” she said.

In 2026, an estimated 321,910 women and 2,670 men in the United States will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer.

“Our models truly come from all walks of life and represent the many different experiences of breast cancer,” Goudie said. “Each survivor-model brings their own story, but when they come together on the stage, they represent something much larger: hope, strength and the reminder that no one has to face breast cancer alone.”

RTTC has provided funding to lo-

cal organizations including Step Sisters, the Tigerlily Foundation, IIIB’s Foundation and the National Breast Center Foundation. National beneficiaries have included Susan G. Komen, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, the Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation and METAvivor. This year’s national research beneficiary is the Nina Hyde Center for Breast Cancer Research at Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, while the VCS Cancer Foundation is the local beneficiary.

“Our history demonstrates how Runway’s impact has evolved,” Goudie said. “We are not simply raising money for one organization or one particular aspect of breast cancer. We are supporting a



Jillian Sanchez was one of the models at this year’s Runway To the Cure. Photo by Chuck Cascio

broader continuum,” from helping people facing treatment to funding research.

The runway also gives survivors an opportunity to speak openly about the experience of breast cancer. Their stories touched the audience, prompting cheers, applause and tears.

For some models, the disease brought changes in their hair, weight and appearance, as well as surgery and scars. But, as one survivor put it, “Breast cancer does not define me.”

Goudie said the models’ willingness to share their experiences is central to the event’s impact. Their courage, she said, helps other women see that they are not alone after being diagnosed.

Reston, Virginia

Winterfest

2026

Dec. 3–5 • 5 – 9 p.m.

Brown’s Chapel Park, Reston, VA

Tickets available beginning October 15.

Reston ASSOCIATION

Together we make Reston great

Reston.org/Winterfest

THE BULLETIN

Reston native to perform in Yale a cappella group

Contributed by
Yale Whiffenpoofs

The Yale Whiffenpoofs, the university’s a cappella group, will perform Thursday, Oct. 15, in Vienna, with Reston native and Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology graduate Cyrus Rivers among the singers.

For Rivers, the concert marks a return to the area where his musical interests began. The 2023 Jefferson graduate sang and performed in musical theater during high school and received a 2022 Cappies Award for his performance as Bruce Bogtrotter in “Roald Dahl’s Matilda The Musical.”

At Yale, Rivers was selected as one of 14 rising seniors to join the Whiffenpoofs of 2027. Founded in 1909, the group began as a quartet of seniors who gathered weekly at Mory’s Temple Bar in New Haven, Conn.

The Whiffenpoofs now perform about 200 concerts a year and tour throughout

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15
7:30 PM
Church of the Holy Comforter
Vienna, VA

\$25 General Admission
\$15 Students

the United States and internationally. Their performances have included Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center and the White House.

The group draws members from the university’s undergraduate a cappella commu-

nity, which includes more than 300 singers in 17 groups. The Whiffenpoofs traditionally close their concerts with the “Whiffenpoof Song,” which has been recorded by artists including Bing Crosby and Elvis Presley.

The Northern Virginia concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. at Church of the Holy Comforter, 543 Beulah Road NE, Vienna. Tickets, \$17-\$48, are available at <https://whiffs.ticketbud.com/the-yale-whiffenpoofs-in-reston>.

'May He Reston Peace' turns Reston into a mystery novel

By Kaydence Smith, staff writer

For T.A. Ledinh, Reston was not love at first sight. After growing up in Vietnam and Paris, the author moved to the United States and lived in several cities, including Reston, where he spent 10 years. When he first arrived, he didn’t immediately see the appeal. Over time, however, his view changed, and he developed an affection for the planned community. That experience inspired his novel, “May He Reston Peace.”

Published in December 2025, the novel was written on and off over the past 20 years. It follows Tommy Chase, a suburban developer determined to avoid becoming an adult for as long as possible. When Tommy moves to Reston, his life takes an unexpected turn after he discovers a dead body and a mysterious flash drive, drawing him into a crime he can’t escape.

Reston serves as more than a backdrop. Its carefully planned neighbor-

hoods, walking paths and distinctive character provide a contrast to the crime unfolding around Tommy. Ledinh suggests that beneath the community’s orderly, peaceful exterior, more may be happening than residents realize.

Ledinh’s own evolution from being unimpressed with Reston to developing an affection for the community gives the novel a perspective that goes beyond simply using the town as a setting. Readers will recognize references to local roads, including Sunrise Valley Drive and South Lakes Drive, as well as landmarks such as Reston Town Center and Reston National Golf Course.

“May He Reston Peace” is a fast-moving mystery with a distinctly local setting. For readers familiar with Reston, part of the appeal is seeing recognizable streets and surroundings transformed into the stage for a murder mystery. For those unfamiliar with the community, the novel offers a suspenseful introduction to a planned community that, at



T.A. Ledinh wrote a “comedy mystery” set in Reston.

least in Ledinh’s fictional world, may not be as peaceful as it appears.

Ledinh plans to make the novel the first in a series centered on Reston and the mysteries it could conceal. For local readers, the series promises another way to view familiar surroundings—and wonder what secrets might be hiding beneath the community’s peaceful exterior.

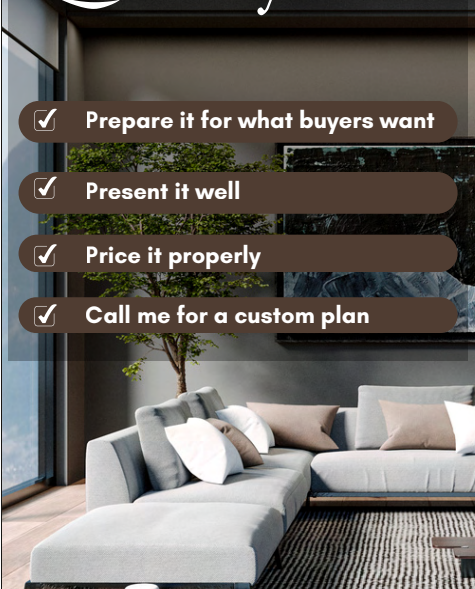
Reston Multicultural Festival delights thousands at Town Center



Approximately 12,000 visitors poured into Reston Town Center on Sept. 19 for the 25th annual Multicultural Festival presented by Reston Community Center. More than 20 performances were spread across three stages, with interactive street demonstrations and over 60 artisans. The festival lasted for seven hours, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Photos by Patricia Kovacs

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THE BULLETIN

Preserving the moments that matter: Capturing Joy Photography

By Lincoln Patience, staff writer

Joy Granados is a Herndon photographer, former social worker and adoptive mother. After 15 years in social work, she turned her love of photographing babies into a photography business that gives her more flexibility to spend time with her family.

She wants to recreate for other families the loving environment she experienced growing up.

“Our living room growing up was wall-to-wall photos,” Granados said. “I didn’t just have my parents telling me they loved me. I saw it.”

Granados became interested in social work while volunteering with a juvenile detention ministry in college, where she encountered children in foster care who had experienced trauma and emotional isolation. Granados spent a decade of her social work career in Fairfax County Public Schools.

“I wanted to be a vessel of love and healing to people.”

She initially planned to return to social work after adopting her son Lucas but needed an income that offered more flexibility.

“I got into photography with Lucas because I wanted those really cute newborn photos.”

When she and her husband sold their townhouse, she used some of the proceeds to buy a camera and take a photography course. As she developed her business, she decided to take a different approach from the quick sessions many

photographers offer.

Many photographers offer “mini sessions” that last 10 to 15 minutes. Granados understands the appeal, especially when young children have difficulty sitting still and posing, but the format reminded her of an overly brief social work session.

“It feels like drive-thru photography.”

Instead, she meets with families two or three times, including a visit before the shoot to help children become comfortable with her and to learn what kinds of photographs the family wants. She plays games such as tickle monster and Telephone with the children and occasionally lets them take a turn behind the camera.

After the shoot, families visit her Herndon studio to watch a video montage of the photographs.

“Usually it’s the moment right after you give the prompt that’s the most genuine, and those moments are gold.”

For Granados, the importance of preserving those moments comes from personal experience.

Granados and her husband had spent years trying to have a child. They used a service to aid in finding adoptive homes for babies, but with no success.

In July 2020, Granados became pregnant with her son Mateo, who she lost to trisomy 18, a rare chromosomal abnormality, about a month after he was born. She feared the pain that forming an attachment would bring but knew she needed to attach anyway.

“This is the child I’ve prayed for for decades,” she told a doctor who questioned



Capturing Joy Photography seeks to capture special connections in photo shoots.
Photo contributed by Joy Granados

her decision to continue the pregnancy. Mateo lived for 259 days after doctors first detected his heartbeat. The family continues to celebrate his birthday.

Granados credits Mateo with helping bring Lucas into her life. She said Lucas’ birth parents chose her and her husband after hearing Mateo’s story. The families were matched in July 2021, and Lucas was placed with them in August.

Lucas’ adoption was a domestic infant adoption and is an open adoption, Granados said. Catholic Charities handled the placement, and Lucas was placed

with the couple when he was 2 days old. The adoption was finalized when Lucas was about 5 months old.

She remains on good terms with Lucas’ birth family, she said. They sometimes travel from Florida to visit Lucas, whose name means “bringer of light.”

“He brought light into a very dark moment of our lives when we didn’t know we would be parents again.”

Granados is offering Reston Letter subscribers free photography sessions to the first 10 who visit her upcoming show. Details are on the subscribers’ insert.

Helping older adults spot AI deepfakes

By Katy Keffer, staff writer

The use of AI-generated deepfakes in scams is increasing, particularly those targeting older adults who may not recognize fraudulent activity. Lakshmi M. Katrapati, a student pursuing a computer science degree at George Mason University, is working to change that. As technology advances rapidly, she reaches out to senior living communities and centers to give back to the community. Since March 2026, she has given nearly 50 specialized presentations on deepfakes in Fairfax and Loudoun counties and Washington, D.C. At an Oct. 2 event at The Kensington Reston, she explained the topic to an engaged group that asked probing questions and left better prepared to spot deepfake videos.

Katrapati’s presentation, “AI For You: Staying Safe and Creative,” introduced broad AI concepts through interactive ChatGPT prompts based on audience questions. She also highlighted recent case studies in which deepfakes were used to manipulate people for financial gain. She shared multiple examples of how to distinguish authentic videos from fake ones, including vid-

eos of former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recommending a book and American businessman Bill Gates discussing technology.

But how can we recognize whether something is fake or real? That is the focus of Katrapati’s extracurricular presentations. She educates audiences about what to do if they are contacted by a stranger or believe an inquiry may not be legitimate.

If on the phone, in a Zoom meeting or on a FaceTime call, “look and listen for pauses in responses,” she recommends. These could indicate that AI is taking a moment to generate a response. During a video call, “you can have the person wave their hand in front of their face to verify authenticity.” She notes that visual inconsistencies can be a sign of a deepfake, although sophisticated deepfakes can be difficult to detect.

For potential voice scams, such as those targeting grandparents with a supposed grandchild’s voice, Katrapati suggests asking something personal but not sensitive that only the other person would know. Deepfakes can be created using actual video, images or audio, including material that may be available on a family member’s social media feeds. Recordings also can be created to mimic loved ones’ voices.

“Deepfakes are essentially another form of misinformation,” Katrapati said, “which has been around for some time.” As with other misinformation, “it’s always important to fact-check the information with reputable sources.” Government websites, nonprofit organizations and media outlets such as The Washington Post and The New York Times are among the sources to consider.

Audience members at The Kensington Reston also asked how AI can be used in daily life and how it could help in medicine and health care. “Its ability to summarize lots of material for the most relevant insight is beneficial,” Katrapati said. She also offered other tips for



GMU undergraduate student Lakshmi Katrapati presents at The Kensington Reston. Photo by The Kensington Reston

staying safe.

“Create a family safe code or password as one form of verification,” she advised. She cautioned people not to share private or intimate information that could be recorded and later used for fraudulent purposes. She also recommended letting a call go to voicemail if the caller’s identity is uncertain. If someone is concerned about a suspicious call, she advised hanging up and independently calling the person back using a known phone number rather than relying on the number provided by the caller.

The group asked how to stay ahead of AI’s advances, and Katrapati acknowledged that AI and deepfake technology are changing rapidly. As a junior at George Mason University, she hopes to work in the industry after completing her degree. Two options are top of mind: “I’d like to help make the AI models safer or even pursue the legislative side.”

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THE BULLETIN

Crossing guards, cont'd from page 1

trian safety measures.

South Lakes student Vivian Smozynski created a petition, "Return Crossing Guards to South Lakes High School," which garnered more than 500 signatures. She spoke to the board in support of restoring the guards.

"The petition has 525 signatures ... that is 525 students that are scared, proactive parents, and restless community members that disapprove of your actions," she said.

Hunter Mill school board representative Melanie Meren has followed the issue of pedestrian safety for the past two years.

"Residents want road improvements faster before more people die. We need quick-build solutions while aligning engineering, funding, and coordination for lasting improvements," she told the board.

Community members also criticized the board for what they described as a lack of transparency about the reasoning behind the original decision.

"Show us the evidence that removing the crossing guard would be safe, not merely the

absence that it wouldn't be," said South Lakes parent David Michaelson.

Board members discussed the responsibility of citizens to protect pedestrians, as well as the need for education and infrastructure improvements.

"We need to make sure that kids and parents have options for ways for kids to get around," said Chairman Jeff McKay. "Many things that we decide here have an underpinning of public safety, even when they appear on the surface not to."

The Board of Supervisors also discussed forming a joint task force to address pedestrian and traffic safety issues and implement transportation measures.

Dranesville District Supervisor Bierman pointed to the board's commitment to improving pedestrian and traffic safety.

"We have committed to spend \$100 million over six years for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and as part of carryover today, we are putting another \$9 million towards it," he said.

Following the public hearing, crossing guard positions are expected to return to the county budget.

Washington West Film Festival to host East Coast premiere of 'JIMMY'

Contributed by WWFF

The Washington West Film Festival will host the East Coast premiere of "JIMMY," a biographical drama about actor Jimmy Stewart on Saturday, Oct. 10 at LOOK Cinemas in Reston Town Center. The festival runs Oct. 8-12.

KJ Apa ("Riverdale") stars as Stewart in the film, which follows the actor from his Academy Award-winning performance in "The Philadelphia Story" through his service as a combat pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. Stewart flew 20 combat missions over Europe and rose to the rank of colonel before returning to Hollywood and taking the role of George Bailey in "It's a Wonderful Life."

The film is direct-



LOOK Cinemas at Reston Town Center is one of several locations that host the Washington West Film Festival. Photo contributed by WWFF

ed by Aaron Burns and written by Justin Strawhand. Stewart's daughter, Kelly Stewart Harcourt, is an executive producer.

The festival also will present a Lifetime Achievement Award to Karolyn Grimes, who played Zuzu Bai-

ley in "It's a Wonderful Life," in recognition of the film's 80th anniversary. Grimes was 6 when she appeared in the 1946 film. Grimes is best known for the film's closing line: "Teacher says, every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings."

Founded in 2011, the Washington West Film Festival is based in Reston and presents independent films at venues in the Washington, D.C., area. Its events also raise money for charitable causes.

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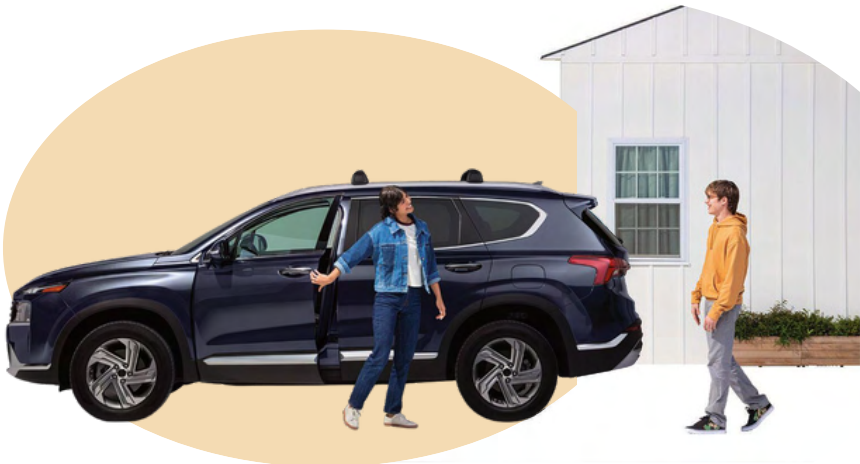
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Oct.
10

Rocktoberfest

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

17
OCT

Reston Home Tour

10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Explore Reston architecture up close
self-guided
Tickets \$35/\$40 Purchase via Reston Museum

17
OCT

Pumpkin Giveaway

Roxanne Watts and The Reston Letter
Parking lot of Oakbrook Church
Donuts, coffee, cider
9 a.m.-12 p.m.
free

17
OCT

ChalkFest at
Reston Town Center

10 a.m.-5 p.m.
free

17
OCT

Howl-O-Ween
Dog Festival

Dress your dog in a costume!
1-4 p.m.
Brown's Chapel Park Baseball Fields
free

18
OCT

Walk to End
Alzheimer's

8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Reston Town Center

23-24
OCT

Halloween House and
Trick-or-Treat Trail

5:45-8:45 p.m. both days
Walker Nature Center
\$15 RA members \$20/non-RA

23
OCT

Halloween Family
Fun Day

Costume parade, crafts, games
Reston Community Center Hunters Woods
free

24
OCT

Early Mountain
Vineyards tasting

1-5 p.m.
The Wine Cabinet
free

25
OCT

Fall-a-Palooza

Featuring Gonzo's Nose
family fall fun
4-7 p.m.
Reston Station
Free

25
OCT

Trick or Treat Beyond
Market Street

Take kids trick-or-treating at Town Center shops
Family fun, live music
12-3 p.m.
Reston Town Center

WEEKLY MARKET LINEUP

Farmers Market

SATURDAYS
ALL FALL

8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Lake Anne Plaza

SUNDAYS
ALL FALL

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Parking lot of
Halley Rise

31
OCT

RCC Spooktacular

Halloween event for families
12-3 p.m.
Hunters Woods Plaza

1
NOV

Thanksgiving Drive

Visit Reston Community Center website
for list of suggested items to donate

1
NOV

SUP Witches! Lake Anne
Halloween Coven Paddle

Paddleboard in your witch costumes
Leave Lakeside Cluster dock
1 p.m.

LIFETIME

Sometimes an artist

By Scott Parkin, staff writer

After I retired, I returned to something I had set aside decades earlier: becoming an artist. In 1969, I moved to rural Maine and spent a year living with my cousin and his wife, both of whom were artists.

I apprenticed myself to them. I drew landscapes and figures daily, painted dozens of watercolors and learned printmaking. Nine months after moving in, I joined a student sculptor from a nearby college for a joint gallery opening.

I sold one painting. To my dad.

My career as an artist was put on hold. Forty-four years later, retirement gave me another chance.

The Senior Citizens Higher Education Act allows Virginia residents age 60 and older to audit courses at public colleges and universities without paying tuition, subject to certain conditions. Many studies have linked lifelong learning to better health, greater adaptability and a stronger sense of purpose. I can attest to that.

The Northern Virginia Community College application process for its Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver program is simple. I signed up for a two-semester drawing course and, at the same time, took basic watercolor courses at Reston Community Center. I was drawing and painting again.

Still, I wanted another creative challenge. In high school, two of my best friends fancied themselves good writers. We made a friendly bet that one of us would write the great American novel within our lifetime.

George Mason University has an outstanding English department and a well-respected creative writing program. I applied for undergraduate admission so I could audit courses in the department through the university's Senior Citizen Waiver Program. Mason also offers writing and arts courses through the Osher Lifelong Learning



Learning art and literature isn't something limited to younger people. Pictured is Rosemarie Forsythe, an artist and juried member of the Reston Art Gallery.

Institute, but those courses generally are not free.

At 68, I became a Mason undergraduate, auditing several courses in writing and American literature and writing a few short stories and nonfiction essays. I also took studio drawing and physical education courses, but I have not started a novel.

At my 60th high school reunion last

June, I asked whether my former classmates had written a great American novel.

The bet lives on.

Scott L. Parkin is co-founder of Reston for a Lifetime (www.RestonforaLifetime.org), a nonprofit organization with a mission to educate and inform our community's residents about aging in place.

RESTON MUSEUM

RESTON HOME TOUR

Saturday, October 17, 2026
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

EDUCATION

South Lakes Theatre takes flight with 'Come From Away'

By Chuck Cascio, author and former South Lakes teacher

It is no accident that the South Lakes High School Theatre Arts Department has become the first school in the D.C. metropolitan area to win Critics and Awards Program (Cappies) honors for Best Musical, Best Critic Team and Best Play in a four-year period. The theatre program has established itself in recent years under the leadership of faculty member Michael Viola, who is proud to have students take on multiple shows again this year, including the award-winning musical "Come From Away," the true story of 7,000 airline passengers who found themselves stranded in the small town of Gander, Newfoundland, because of the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

How did such a unique show become part of the high school's production schedule? "After I saw a high school pilot production of 'Come From Away' in January 2026 at the Virginia Thespian Festival, I became hooked on the story and score,"

Viola explained. "When the rights became available a month later, I saw it as a sign. I felt confident that my students would excel both in their performances on stage and in their technical work behind the scenes."

The fact that the storyline is an important piece of recent history was also a major consideration for Viola. He felt it was meaningful to contextualize the significance of 9/11 for his theatre students so they could appreciate the story's uniqueness. "I've spent the first month of school emphasizing the gravity of 9/11 to the show's cast and crew," Viola said. "It's amazing to see how these kids rise to the occasion."

To help raise awareness of the impact of 9/11, Viola has brought in guest speakers, assigned research projects, shown documentaries and had his students read other works about the tragic events. "We are also looking into the real people that 'Come From Away' is based upon," he said. "All of this is in an effort to tell the story authentically."

The show will be performed at South Lakes High School Nov. 18-21, and Viola is understandably excited not only because of the musical's deep emotional elements, but also from a performance standpoint. "For the students involved in 'Come From Away,' this is their first time working with documentary/verbatim-style theatre," he said. "They are portraying real people, saying dialogue that was actually spoken. There's a responsibility that comes with this, and I know the students will benefit by bringing those words to life and by being the first school in our immediate area to do so."

Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 18-21, with a Saturday, Nov. 21, matinee at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for students and \$15 for adults and can be purchased online at www.slakes-theatre.com or at the door. On opening night, first responders who attend the show will be admitted free of charge.

"Whether or not some audience members are familiar with the 'Come From Away' story," Viola said, "they will be emotionally impacted. The script is poignantly relevant, especially with this year being the 25th anniversary of 9/11, and the score is deeply moving. It's hard



to hear anything like it in musical theatre. So many cultures, religions and identities are represented. 'Come From Away' is really a story for everyone."

Director explains concept of HHS Theatre's fall play

By Scott Pafumi, Herndon Theatre Director

It has been my great pleasure to call Herndon my home these last fifteen years, and I continue to be enamored of the people, the places, the history, and the community that makes this such a special place to work and live. In celebrating Thornton Wilder's classic drama "Our Town" as the kick-off to our Season of Carpe Diem, I want us all to take pride in the theatre family and community that we have lovingly built together.

"Our Town" has been celebrated on the American stage as a classic drama for the last 90 years. It is still required reading in many high school and college English curriculums. This is my fourth time producing and directing this show over my 30-year career in educational theatre in Fairfax County—at a middle school in 1999, at a high school in 2005, at Herndon MS in 2015, and now. Each time, it has been a special journey for both me and the ensemble of players and technicians.

Please take special note that the playwright intended this show to be high-concept and low-tech; meaning, he did not want to clutter the stage with many props or set pieces. Thornton Wilder requests in the preface of the play that the emphasis should be on the story and the relationships, and not on material objects. To that end, you will notice quite a bit of pantomiming of things like cooking, opening doors, delivering the newspaper and milk, throwing a baseball, and even an imaginary horse named Bessie! The playwright asks us to suspend your disbelief and use your mind's eye to see and



HHS Theatre cast of "Our Town" rehearses. Photo contributed by HHS Theatre

hear the life of the town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire. In the three acts of this play, you will take a journey with the characters, led by the Stage Manager Narrators, and particularly through the life lens of Gibbs and Webb families.

The stage will be raked with planked wood, and mostly sparse in setting pieces, save some tables, chairs, and the quintessential wooden ladders. Each performer will research their character and their family unit, finding chairs that best fit their person. Sound effects like chickens, train whistles, school bells, the clanking of bottles, and the crow of a rooster will be made by the cast at the appropriate moments. Costuming will

be time period specific to the early 1900s New England. Lighting will be and gentle, with almost a sepia tone to create the illusion of memory. Props will be limited to what is called for in the script, where pantomiming skills will be rehearsed and perfected.

I hope you find yourself in the story of this play through the myriad of characters presented. This is Herndon Theatre, this is "Our Town;" whether it is the fictional Grover's Corners, or the real life of Herndon. Thank you for trusting the process as we work together to create this magical play. And here's hoping that you realize how beautiful life truly is, every, every minute.

Our Town

Herndon High School Theatre
Fall Mainstage 2026
Directed by Mr. Scott D. Pafumi
Assistant Director: Mr. Will Quinn
Assistant Student Director: Ian Wright
Stage Manager: Charlotte Waldrop
Assistant Stage Managers:
Mazzy Johnston & Virginia Williams

STAGE MANAGER 1	Ember Howard
STAGE MANAGER	Hamad Aljibreen
EMILY WEBB	Sayuri Tasaki
GEORGE GIBBS	Cole Nault
MRS GIBBS	Ruby Chernowetz
DOC GIBBS	Kenir Aleman
MRS WEBB	Natalie Delpino
MR WEBB	Luca Aten
MRS SOAMES	Molly Growney
SIMON STIMSON	Finnegan Cloney
REBECCA GIBBS	Bethany McKenica
SALLY WEBB	Mareike Rife
EMILY, AGE 12	Alyssa Ruark
HOWIE NEWSOME	Peter Horyczun
JOE CROWELL	Charles Rudolph
SI CROWELL	Aiden Evans

PROF. WILLARD	Daniel Siraj
CONSTABLE	Jonathan Noyes
MISS FOSTER	Caroline Sturgell
GRAVEDIGGERS	E.R Mitchell, C. Russell

ENSEMBLE

Marco Abrego, Linus Gacis, Ava Klein, Maggie Mullin, Cemelia Rangel, Autumn Smith, Evelyn Smith

CHOIR

Luca Aten, Ruby Chernowetz, Natalie Delpino, Aiden Evans, Molly Growney, E.R. Mitchell, Maggie Mullin, Charles Rudolph, C. Russell, Evelyn Smith, Autumn Smith

EDUCATION

The newest face around South Lakes Theatre Arts

By Sophia Shelley, South Lakes High School student writer

What makes a good teacher? Is it someone who has a genuine passion for the subject they teach or a driving desire to connect with their students? How about a hard worker who strives to make their classroom a place where students have everything they need to succeed?

For George Mason University senior Emma Harris, the answer might be all three.

A 2022 Herndon High School graduate, Harris recently returned to Fairfax County Public Schools to finish her degree in theater education. This year, she traveled across Baron Cameron Avenue to South Lakes High School, where she will spend the school year as a student teacher under theater program director Mike Viola.

Harris always knew she wanted to be a teacher. Coming from a family of teachers and drawing on her experience as an older sister, entering education was a natural choice. The subject she would teach, however, remained a mystery.

Theater came later. When Harris was

9, her mother signed her up for a summer program at NextStop Theatre, a nonprofit professional theater company in Herndon. Harris was somewhat apprehensive about whether she would like it but came away completely changed.

“The switch was flipped so instantly for me,” she recalled. “I was like, oh, this is where I’m meant to be.”

At South Lakes, Harris hopes to recreate the positive and encouraging environment in which she was first introduced to theater.

“It is so important, as an educator, to go out and first create an equitable, safe and community-based environment in which students can feel supported and encouraged by each other,” Harris said.

She knows exactly who she wants to be in her future classroom: a role model, a relatable figure and someone students can turn to for help.

Despite the wide range of programs in Fairfax — “The DMV area actually has one of the highest per capita number of theater companies!” — Harris acknowledges that not everyone has the same access, and that’s something she wants to

change.

“What really breaks my heart is people being like, ‘I want to be in the show, but I can’t afford the cast fee.’ ‘I want to be in the show, but my mom can’t drive me to rehearsals.’ I don’t want any of that in my future classroom. I just want it to be, ‘I want to do this. Here’s what I need.’ And I want to say, cool, here’s how we’re gonna show up for you.”

Harris will get her first opportunity to create that positive environment in December, when she directs South Lakes’ production of “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” Performances are scheduled for Dec. 11 and 12. She also will serve as assistant director for the school’s fall musical, “Come From Away,” with performances scheduled for Nov. 18-21.

“A Charlie Brown Christmas” is a show that is close to home for Harris. It was the second show she performed in and her family’s annual holiday movie, so she knows the story well and is excited to direct the play.

Although she has been at the school only a short time, Harris’ infectious optimism and passion for theater are already



Emma Harris is a student teacher in the SLHS Theatre department. Photo contributed by Emma Harris

evident throughout the program. “She’s very enthusiastic about theater, very enthusiastic about education, and a great asset to the program,” said Mike Viola, who met Harris over the summer at a staff event. “I think she’s going to make a great teacher.”

Armstrong students reflect on Sept. 11, 2001

Submitted by Armstrong Elementary

Twenty-five years after Sept. 11, Armstrong Elementary School students took time to remember and reflect on the events and their lasting impact on the country and local communities.

As part of the school’s remembrance activities, every class read “This Very Tree” by Sean Rubin. The book was adapted for kindergarten students to make the story and discussion age-appropriate.

Following the reading, students were invited to reflect on the story and what they had learned. Each student was asked to write a word or a few words describing how the book made them feel or how they felt learning about the tragedy.

Those reflections became part of a special display in the school lobby. Students wrote their words on leaves and placed them on a tree, creating a growing collection of thoughts and feelings shared by the Armstrong Elementary



A paper tree outside Armstrong Elementary’s main office is filled with leaves bearing students’ reflections after learning about Sept. 11, 2001. Photo contributed by AES

community.

The words reflected the students’ thoughtful responses to a difficult moment in history. Throughout the activity, students were respectful

and attentive as they listened, reflected and considered the importance of remembering.

The remembrance tree now stands in the school lobby as a visual reminder not

only of the events of 2001, but also of the compassion, empathy and thoughtfulness Armstrong students showed as they learned about history and reflected together.

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 39th crossword puzzle creation, made specifically for The Reston Letter readers!

M&Ms Galore

ACROSS

- Scratch, deface, etc.
- Female horse, 3+ years of age
- Video game hero with a kart
- Tropical Asian starling
- Brother of Curly or Larry

DOWN

- Branch of the Seine strategic in WWI
- Operatic solo
- ___ Speedwagon
- Creamy dressing or Irish county
- "___Bop," lead single of Hanson's debut album



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EDUCATION

Making an Impact

Matt Slavsky

By Chuck Cascio, author and former South Lakes teacher

For nearly 30 years, Matt Slavsky has worked as a private therapist with Family Perspectives, LLC, in Phoenix, Ariz., and as a crisis therapist for hospitals in and around the Phoenix Valley. He works with couples seeking therapy as well as individuals of all ages who are experiencing depression and anxiety. In addition to his ongoing work, Matt says he seeks to expand the number of “psychological evaluations for nonresident immigrants to the U.S. who have a spouse and/or children who would suffer extreme hardship if they were deported to their country of origin. In many cases, they have been working and supporting their family, but they are at risk for deportation, leaving their family without financial or emotional means to support themselves.”

Matt’s passion for his work has deep personal roots. “I was diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome at age 13,” he says, “and I have never completely overcome it, though the symptoms reduced at around age 19. Now they are nominal, but they are still there.” During his ongoing struggles with Tourette’s, he says, “I have become familiar with a plethora of comorbid disorders and mental health struggles other people experience.”

When he was a student at South Lakes High School in the late 1980s, Matt remembers “hearing about a couple of

people who had committed suicide, who had substance abuse issues, and others with behavioral health and other mental health issues.” Matt experienced a period of depression of his own in 11th grade, which resulted in him dropping out of school. He had not been attending school consistently, he says, and “at one point I dropped out but decided to return once I started to improve. However, I had to repeat my junior year. I wound up graduating in 1990 instead of 1989, the year I was supposed to graduate.”

As Matt dealt with his own experiences, he became acutely aware of what he was seeing others experience and what the field of mental health needed to address more deeply and quickly.

“At a young age I recall feeling like mental health issues among adolescents were minimized, and support was unavailable unless your own family addressed it, or you had behavioral issues that were disruptive,” he says. “If a student kept to themselves, regardless of what they may have been experiencing internally, unless they sought help, they were pretty much left to fend for themselves.”

Matt’s personal awareness and observations stimulated an intense desire to learn more about how people cope with mental illness so they can move on with their lives in a positive way, as he did. A psychology class at SLHS was particularly impactful: “I found it fascinating and it intrigued me to pursue a career of help-

ing others, particularly those who did not have a voice.”

At George Mason University, he majored in psychology, earned his master’s in social work at Arizona State University and then became a licensed clinical social worker.

In his professional role, Matt works with patients to help them deal with their issues in ways that do not rely on “psychotropic medication, which I think should not be used until other methods are explored, including sunlight, direct contact with peers (not only online!), physical movement or exercise, nutrition, and proper sleep.”

He is pleased that “mental health treatment has much less of a stigma these days, and I have the perception that it is encouraged instead of individuals being made to feel that they are considered ‘less than’ for seeking it. Of course, the stigma still exists but at a much lower level. Also, with more celebrities being willing to state their mental health issues, it is becoming much more accepted.”

Matt, his parents and sister lived in a couple of different Reston clusters before settling in Stratton Woods in 1984. He attended Terraset Elementary School, where “I was excited and fascinated by an underground school powered in some part by solar panels!” He then went to Langston Hughes Intermediate School, where he engaged in underground activity of his own:

“I had a pretty good scam going, buy-



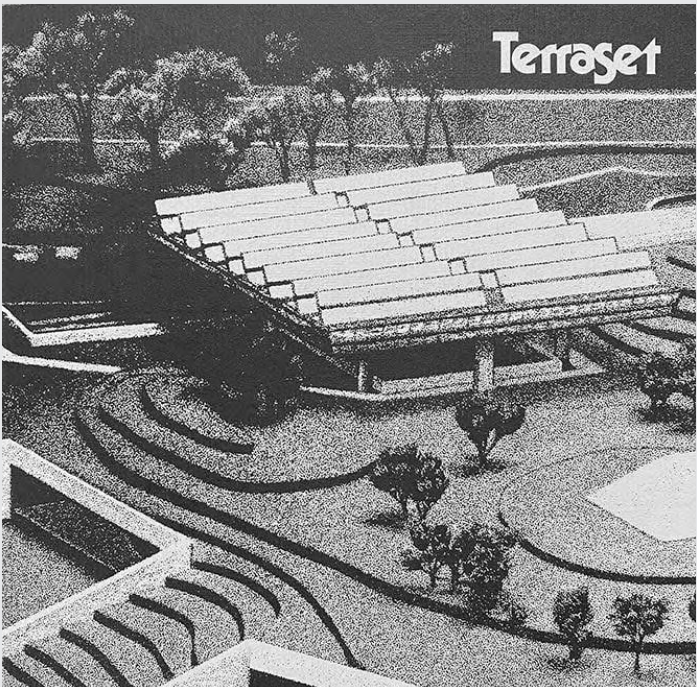
Matt Slavsky

ing bags of Blow Pops and gum at Kmart and then selling them at school for a quarter apiece. Shhhh, don’t let the authorities know!”

Matt cites his parents, Steve and Paula Slavsky, friends and members of Reston’s Jewish community “as being direct and indirect influences in support of my progress and achievements. Without these people I know that I would not be the man I am today. I am extremely grateful for the support I had, and especially my parents for helping me navigate the rough times and being hopeful for a better day.”

Though Matt and his wife, Tatiana, live in Arizona, he maintains his love for Reston, saying, “I will always call Reston home.”

Terraset Elementary School to turn 50 years old



Terraset Elementary will celebrate its 50th anniversary in February. Its name means “set in the Earth,” reflecting the school’s earth-sheltered design, which is built into a hill for natural thermal insulation. Designed in 1975 during the Arab oil embargo, the school was intended to reduce dependence on oil.

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and

Saturday, October 17
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DATE	TIME	LOCATION
OCT. 25	4:00PM - 7:00PM	1800 RESTON ROW PLAZA RESTON, VA 20190

Fall into the fun at Fall-A-Palooza, Reston Station’s ultimate celebration of the season! Enjoy live entertainment, family-friendly activities, fantastic food, and harvest inspired drinks.

EVENT KICKOFF
LIVE DJ FROM 4:00PM - 5:00PM

HEADLINER
GONZO’S NOSE - 5:00PM - 7:00PM



ALL DAY FUN

Sip-n-Stroll
Petting Zoo
Bounce House
Glitter Tattoos
Outdoor Games
Pop-Up Pumpkin Patch
Photo Booth



FOOD

Giant Bavarian Pretzels
Apple Cider Donuts
Cotton Candy
Caramel Apple
Gelato
And More...



DRINKS

Seasonal Cocktails
Spiked Apple Cider
Hot Apple Cider
Hot Chocolate
And More...

SPORTS

South Lakes High School recognizes 2026 Hall of Fame inductees

By Sarah Golden, staff writer

Fall, to many within the South Lakes High School community, means football games, band practice, homecoming and, of course, new classes and a slew of homework. It also means a new group of inductees to the South Lakes High School Sports Hall of Fame.

South Lakes celebrated the accomplishments of 10 new administrators, coaches, contributors, competitors and a state championship team on Sept. 25. The ceremony provided an opportunity for friends, family members, colleagues and coaches to introduce the inductees and speak about how their accomplishments have contributed to South Lakes' sports legacy.

Although long lists of accolades were shared and achievements highlighted, many speakers chose to focus on the inductees' impact both on and off the field. Honoree Jai Cole's younger sister talked

about how inspiring it was to watch her sister play basketball and how that experience helped prepare her to succeed on the same South Lakes team years later.

A nephew of inductee Carielle Doe spoke about how he wasn't surprised to hear about Doe's illustrious sports career, given that she went on to become a successful journalist, traveling the world to report on significant news stories.

Others talked about how the Hall of Fame ceremony provided an opportunity to look back and reflect on their time at South Lakes. Former coach Dave Cverko spoke about how thrilled he was to reconnect with inductee Ray Quintavell, whom he hadn't seen in more than 30 years.

The stories shared throughout the night made it clear that South Lakes' sports program is not just concerned with winning trophies and securing titles. Coaches, teachers, administrators and athletes alike care about leaving a

positive mark on their community. Judging by the reception at the 2026 awards ceremony, they have done just that.

Inductees:

- **Kim Brophy Retzer**—Administrator (2012-2024)
- **Scott Brown**—Coach (1994-2005)
- **Jai Cole**—Competitor (Varsity Basketball 1991-1993, Varsity Field Hockey 1990-1992)
- **Carielle Doe**—Competitor (Indoor & Outdoor Track and Field 1996-1998)
- **Jessica McGarry**—Competitor (Varsity Field Hockey 1993-1995, Varsity Basketball 1993-1996, Varsity Soccer 1993-1996)
- **Zachary Parker**—Competitor (Football 2013)
- **Ray Quintavell**—Competitor (Gymnastics 1983-1984)
- **Chuck & Fay Cascio**—Contributors (1978-1996)
- **1997 Virginia High School League Boys Gymnastics State Champions**



The Reston Letter staff writer and former South Lakes teacher Chuck Cascio and his wife and former teacher Faye Cascio, were inducted into the SLHS Sports Hall of Fame. Photo by Joseph Ankomah

Herndon-South Lakes rivalry continues a 46-year tradition

By Matt Reider, staff writer

For more than four decades, the Herndon and South Lakes football teams have met on the field in one of Fairfax County's enduring high school rivalries. The schools are only about four miles apart, and their annual matchup has become a tradition for players, families and fans from both communities.

The rivalry began in 1980, when Herndon defeated the newly established South Lakes varsity team 28-0. In 1998, the Baron Cameron Cup was introduced, giving the teams an added incentive to claim bragging rights and take home the trophy.

This year's matchup was decidedly one-sided. South Lakes defeated Herndon 48-0 on Oct. 2 to remain undefeated this season and reclaim the cup, while Herndon remained winless.

The rivalry has roots that go back even further. Herndon High School is the oldest continuously operating high school in Fairfax County. Its first building opened on Locust Street in 1911 with eight classrooms and an assembly hall. In 1914, Herndon became the county's first fully accredited high school and remained the only accredited high school in Fairfax County until 1920.

Herndon organized its first football team in 1945 and played its inaugural game against Leesburg High School that year.

South Lakes opened in 1978 with grades 7-10. Its football program began with a junior varsity schedule before the school fielded a varsity team. Tom Secules, an assistant coach at Annandale High School, was named head coach of the new program in 1978.

The first varsity meeting between Herndon and South Lakes took place in 1980. Herndon was a heavy favorite in the Great Falls District game and defeated South Lakes 28-0. South Lakes went on to win the next four meetings, and the rivalry became one of the area's most anticipated high school football games.

The schools' close proximity helped fuel the rivalry. Families and students from the two communities often knew

one another, while school boundary lines divided some Reston students between Herndon and South Lakes.

The game traditionally was the final contest of the season, drawing strong community support. In 1998, the Baron Cameron Cup was created to recognize the winner. The trophy takes its name from Baron Cameron Road, which connects the two communities and roughly follows the boundary between the schools. After the game, the teams gather at midfield for the trophy presentation, and the winner keeps the cup for the year.

Dan Coghlan knows the rivalry from several perspectives. He played for Herndon from 1998 to 2000, later became a teacher and now serves as assistant director of student activities.

"It's been a long-standing tradition between the Fighting Hornets and Seahawks," Coghlan said. "It symbolized pride when we won the cup. Herndon and SL will always be a rivalry because of the proximity between the two schools and families who attended both schools." He ended with, "Go Hornets!"

The rivalry has continued despite changes to the schools' district affiliations. South Lakes left the Liberty District and rejoined the Concorde District in 2021, while Herndon competes in the Liberty District. Because the schools are in different districts, their football matchup is a non-district game.

Regardless of each team's record, the Herndon-South Lakes game remains a highlight of the season. Players, coach-



While this year's Baron Cameron Bowl was one-sided, Herndon and South Lakes high schools are now nearly tied in wins and losses in the tradition of the bowl game that was introduced in 1998. Herndon leads the series 15-14. Photo by Will Bonham Photography

es and fans know the significance of the matchup long before kickoff.

The 2026 Baron Cameron Cup game was played Oct. 2 at South Lakes. Herndon entered the game 0-4, while South Lakes was 4-0. The Seahawks had won each of their first four games by at least 10 points and were preparing for the start of Concorde District play.

Andrew Duggan, South Lakes' athletic director, has compared the rivalry to a district game because "rivalry games matter a little bit more. The kids play hard every night, but you always seem to see an intensity that you might not see in another game."

This time, the intensity did not produce a close game. South Lakes defeated Herndon 48-0 on a rain-soaked field to improve to 5-0 and reclaim the Baron

Cameron Cup. Herndon fell to 0-5.

South Lakes scored on four of its first five possessions and led 27-0 at halftime. The Seahawks added three touchdowns in the second half, including two in the fourth quarter, while their defense held Herndon to 31 total yards.

Senior Christian Wyatt threw two touchdown passes and added a rushing touchdown. Sophomore Gavin Satterfield threw two touchdown passes after taking over at quarterback in the second half. Senior James Smith led the Seahawks' rushing attack with 16 carries for 105 yards.

The victory narrowed Herndon's overall advantage in the series to 15-14. The Hornets still lead the series, but South Lakes now holds the Baron Cameron Cup once again.

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11

KIDS

Jack-o'-lantern and pumpkin decoration styles

By Bob Welland, Kids Section editor

Let's look at different styles of decorating pumpkins to inspire your jack-o'-lantern this Halloween.



Classic Cut Out Face

The classic jack-o-lantern face has triangular eyes and nose. But why? Vegetable carving started with turnips, beets, and potatoes long before pumpkins were discovered in the Americas. The easiest shape to cut out of a hard vegetable with a straight knife was a triangle, so the triangular shape became the norm.

Silhouettes

You can make more complex spooky scenes with the Silhouette method. Instead of cutting out the main subject, you carve

away the background or negative space around it. The subject remains as solid, un-carved pumpkin skin, while the light shines through the cut-out area.

Use the Guts

Your pumpkin is filled with stringy, gooey guts and seeds. After you scoop them out, what if you use them instead of throwing them away? The seeds have a pointy end so you could stick them in flesh around the mouth to give your jack-o-lantern teeth. The stringy guts could be put on top as hair, or if you want to be gross, make them spill out of the mouth like barf.

Painted Pumpkins

If you'd rather wave around a paintbrush than a knife, then consider using the pumpkin as a canvas for a painting. You could paint the classic triangle eyes and nose for a two-dimensional face. Or you can use the ball shape of the pumpkin to paint curvy subjects such as a creepy eyeball, a sports ball or a round character like BB-8, Kirby or Jigglypuff. There's no



light inside it so display your pumpkin in a well-lit area.

3D Sculpture

If you're an advanced carver, you can peel off the outer skin and then use the thick pumpkin flesh as the material for a three dimensional sculpture. You scrape away the flesh layer by layer to create different depths. Be careful not to cut all the way through. The best pumpkins for this are heavy with thick walls.

Back Carving

If you hollow out a pumpkin, put a light inside and remove some outer pumpkin skin, the exposed flesh will glow. The thinner the wall, the brighter it will glow. You could make a secret message by carving letters into the inside wall, and they would appear to glow only when there's a light inside.

Little Hands, Big Butterfingers

By Alexis Estep, mom, chef, Restonian



Quinn, Lars, Leif and Mailin are all in on the Butterfinger action!

From fun decorations to spooky celebrations, October is a favorite month in our house! In fact, we started decorating at the beginning of September. We also love sweets... well, the kids and I do. Their dad only loves chocolate. We have a quest to recreate our favorite candies in honor of Halloween. Last year we did pumpkin-spice copycat PB cups, and this year it's Butterfingers.

Author's Note: My family and I are relocating to Spain in December, so this will be my last newsletter. I loved writing it every month and will miss it! Adios my dear readers!

Butterfingers Ingredients:

- 1 3/4 cup Corn Flake Cereal
- 1/2 cup Peanut Butter
- 1/4 cup Maple Syrup

- 3 tbsp Sugar
- 1 tsp Vanilla paste
- 1/4 cup Unsalted butter

Coating:

- 1 1/2 cup Chocolate Chips
- 1 tbsp Coconut Oil (if needed to thin the chocolate)
- Flaky Sea Salt, if desired

Instructions:

1. Combine the butter, maple syrup, and sugar in a small saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce to low, allowing it to simmer for a few minutes until it begins to thicken. Remove from heat.
3. Stir in the peanut butter and vanilla. Then add the cereal.
4. Using an ice cube tray, divide the mixture among the compartments,

- pressing in firmly. Place in the freezer for 1-2 hours until hardened.
5. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Melt the chocolate until smooth. You can stir in a tbsp of coconut oil if you need to thin the chocolate a bit to make the dipping easier. Dip each bar and place on the lined cookie sheet, and sprinkle with sea salt if desired.
 6. Return to the freezer until the chocolate has hardened.
 7. Store in an airtight container in the freezer and allow to thaw for 5-10 minutes before eating for the best texture! If you can't have peanut butter, you can substitute any nut/seed butter, but it won't taste exactly like a Butterfinger.

Reston's Fuzziest Superhero

FAIR-FOX

VS

COOPER THE HAWK

CHILDREN HAVE HALLOWEEN FUN AT THE RESTON TOWN CENTER... INCLUDING OUR HERO, FAIR-FOX.

A BOY ACCIDENTALLY DROPS A CANDY BAR ON THE GROUND.

SUDDENLY FAIR-FOX HEARS LOUD SCREECHES FROM THE SKY!

IT'S COOPER THE HAWK SOARING TOWARDS HIS PREY!

STOP, COOPER! THAT CANDY IS NOT YOURS!

I DON'T WANT CANDY. I WANT THAT BIG MOUSE.

THAT'S A HUMAN IN A COSTUME.

OOPS.

WINNER OF BEST GROUP COSTUME GOES TO THIS MOUSE, FOX AND HAWK!

ANOTHER THRILLING WIN FOR FAIR-FOX!

KIDS

Sage Greene and the mystery of the two pink ghosts

Mystery Fiction by
Arthur Semicolon Doyle

It's Halloween and Reston's middle school sleuth, Sage Greene, is planning to hand out candy tonight. The doorbell rings and Sage thinks it's a little early for trick-or-treaters. The sun is still out.

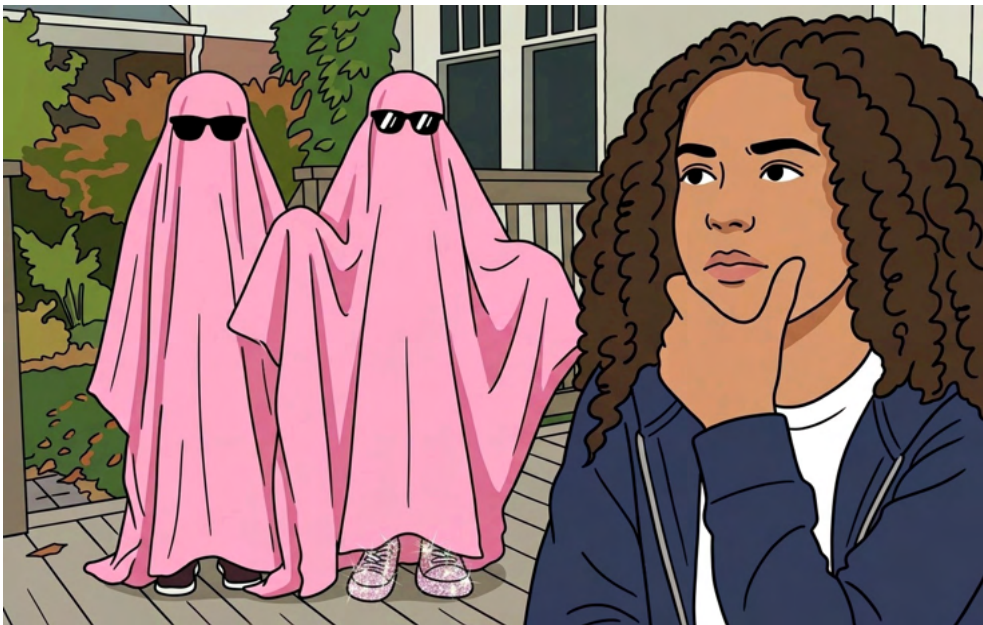
She opens the door to find two pink ghosts on her porch. Not real ghosts, but two kids under pink bedsheets, wearing sunglasses. They look identical, except the ghost on the right has sparkly gems on her shoes. "Hello, ghosts," says Sage. No reply. They just stand there. She asks, "Aren't you going to say trick-or-treat?"

The ghost on the right raises a hand out from under the sheet. It has a blue latex glove on and

presents a paper card to Sage. Sage reads the card out loud.

*"To scare Sage Greene on Halloween night,
Give her a mystery she might not get right.
Can she guess, without making us speak,
Who is Cassie and who is Monique?"*

Sage understands the game now. Cassie is her eight-year-old neighbor that she often babysits. Monique is Cassie's best friend. Normally, the girls look very different. Cassie has a simple fashion and grooming style while Monique likes to be "bedazzled." She always wears glittery makeup around her eyes, little rhinestones on her long acrylic nails, and sparkly sneakers. They also have



different skin tones, but they are the exact same height.

Sage smiles. "Nice costumes. Those sunglasses hide your eyes well." Sage tries to give the card to the left ghost, but she doesn't take it. The right ghost reaches over with her blue

pinches the card away from Sage.

Sage says to the right ghost, "I think I see Monique's sparkly shoes under your sheet, but I know you switched shoes. You are Cassie."

How does Sage know?



Find 8 Differences:
Paddleboarding Witches on Lake Anne



Solutions

Sage Greene Mystery:

Cassie wails like an angry ghost and pulls off her sheet. "Aaagh! How do you know it was me? I was even wearing Monique's shoes!" To the left, Monique also pulls off her sheet and says, "Yeah, and you couldn't see her hand in that glove."

Sage says, "You're right, Monique, that I couldn't see her skin tone or any decoration on her hand, but the latex glove fits tightly and if you had it over your long acrylic nails, it'd be very obvious. Cassie pinched the card when she took it back. That would have looked more awkward if done with long nails."

The girls look disappointed. Sage cheers them up by saying, "Even though your trick didn't work, that doesn't mean we can't have some treats." So Sage and the two pink ghosts happily snack on some early Halloween candy.

Find 8 Differences: Left to Right: 1) Less geese, 2) Frankenstein monster, 3) Standing on one leg, 4) Fountain flows to left, 5) Stripes on tights, 6) Less windows on houses, 7) Net instead of oar, 8) Dinosaur on dock

OPINIONS

Ask Doctor S.

When kids expect more: Understanding entitlement

I hear versions of the same comments from parents all the time: “My daughter thinks everything should go her way.” “My son can’t handle being told no.” “She thinks she deserves a better grade.” “He expects us to fix everything for him.” “She doesn’t appreciate anything we do for her.”

Sometimes the child is 6. Sometimes 16. And sometimes the “child” is 26 and still living at home while Mom and Dad are doing his laundry, making his appointments, paying his bills and wondering quietly: How did this happen?

Most parents I know are working hard to raise well-adjusted children. But I do think we have developed a habit of making life a little too comfortable and child-centered. Then we are surprised when our children expect the world to work the same way.

Psychological entitlement is the belief that we deserve special treatment, privileges or positive outcomes, even when we haven’t necessarily earned them. Entitlement can look surprisingly ordinary. It is expecting a parent to bring the forgotten homework. It is demanding a new phone because “everyone else has one.” It is becoming furious when a teacher gives a disappointing grade. It is expecting an exception to the rule or assuming that a parent will solve every problem. Sometimes it is simply being unable to hear the two most developmentally important words in the English language: “Not now.”

Every child will be selfish, demanding and unreasonable at times. The problem is when the behavior becomes a pattern and the adults around the child continually accommodate it.

Research on child development shows that children learn not only from what parents tell them but also from what parents model. One longitudinal study found that parental overvaluation—communicating to children that they are more special or deserving than other people—is associated with increases in children’s narcissistic traits over time. Parental warmth, meanwhile, was associated with healthy self-esteem. That distinction is worth remembering. Warmth says, “You are loved.” Overvaluation says, “You are better than everyone else.”

Children are watching when parents complain because the restaurant got our order wrong, insist that someone “fix this” immediately, become outraged when we have to wait or routinely demand special treatment. If we often bend the rules because our child is tired, busy, stressed or “just having a hard day,” we may be teaching them that rules are only for other people.

This is where things get tricky. Parents want their children to be happy. We want them to have opportunities and things we did not have. We want to protect them from unnecessary suffering. But there is a difference between giving a child a good life and giving a child a life in which nothing is ever difficult. So what can parents actually do?

1. **Say no. “No” is a complete sentence.** Children do not always need a 15-minute explanation of why they cannot have the newest phone, another pair of expensive sneakers or a third sleepover this week.
2. **Stop rescuing.** Your child forgot the homework? Had a disagreement with a friend? Before you jump in, ask yourself: “Is this my problem, or my child’s opportunity to learn?” Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is step back.
3. **Give your child responsibilities.** Chores are not punishment. Being part of a family means contributing to the family.
4. Let your child be unhappy. Children can learn to tolerate frustration, solve problems, recover from disappointment and function when life doesn’t cooperate.
5. **Let your child earn things.** There is something valuable about wanting something, working for it and eventually getting it. Teach your child to save money, wait for a birthday or work toward a privilege. Let your child experience the satisfaction of saying, “I did that.”
6. **Teach gratitude by practicing it yourself.** Thank the server. Thank the teacher. Thank your spouse. Tell your children when someone has helped you. Children learn gratitude not just by being told to be



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- grateful but by living around grateful people.
7. **Teach responsibility instead of blame.** When something goes wrong, encourage your child to ask: “What was my part?” “What could I have done differently?” and “What can I learn?” Those questions can be more useful than “Whose fault is it?”
 8. **Model the behavior you want to see.** If you want a humble child, practice humility. If you want a grateful child, practice gratitude. If you want a child who can handle criticism, let your child see you accept criticism without becoming defensive.

We do not need to deprive our children to teach them gratitude or be harsh to teach responsibility. Children need love. They also need limits.

Perhaps the best question for parents is not, “Am I giving my child enough?” but, “Am I teaching my child how to be a good person?”

Happy autumn, everyone! Psych’d to see you next month!- Dr. S.

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

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

Restonian

Meet the Flockers

Ever get the feeling you’re being watched? The Restonian On Your Side I-Team “hit the pavement” (logged onto AOL to Bing Ask Jeeves dot com) and found 18 Flock cameras positioned around our earth-toned community, presumably tracking our daily comings and goings. So yes, you most certainly are.

The usual hand-wringers will wring their hands about privacy. Fairfax County has paused adding new Flock cameras, and the county school board just passed an outright ban. But we’re Restonians, by gum, and we’re used to people with clipboards peering at our homes’ siding through binoculars! We’ve got nothing to hide, except maybe that sconce that replaced an original 1960s outdoor light fixture, presumably made out of reclaimed Korean War munitions and asbestos, next to our front door.

But we digress. Let’s put (tastefully earth-toned) Flock cameras on every square

inch of Reston, and use their powers for good! Consider:

Parking areas. It’ll be the last time those jerks two doors down let their guests park in the clearly marked RESERVED SPACE #4. An added bonus if we spring for the attachment that crushes noncompliant cars into suitcase-sized cubes.

Lakes. If these cameras can track every license plate, surely they can catch that one goose that keeps befouling the yard.

Pickleball courts. Mabel will think twice before heading over with her Silver Sneakers pals without a reservation!

Town center. With their microscopic eye for detail, maybe they can find the non-chain retailers and restaurants.

The golf courses. This one’s a public safety issue. Without constant observation, we might wake up one morning to find one of the greens missing, replaced by a gaggle of “double stacked” townhouses, whatever those are, the end.

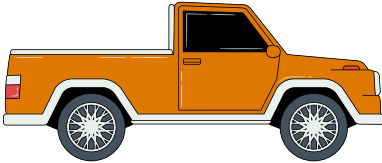
Pumpkin Giveaway!

Enjoy cider, coffee, and donuts while you choose a **free** pumpkin

Saturday OCT 17, 9a.m.-12p.m.



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Oakbrook Church



Oakbrook Church, 1700 Reston Pkwy, 20194



LIFESTYLE

Celebrate Virginia Wine Month with a day trip from Reston

By Heidi Kibirsky, The Wine Cabinet

October is Virginia Wine Month, making it a good time to escape Reston for a day of wine, food and scenery. For a memorable getaway, head west and south to two Virginia wineries: Early Mountain Vineyards in Madison and Barboursville Vineyards near Charlottesville.

First Stop: Early Mountain Vineyards

Begin your day at Early Mountain Vineyards, nestled at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, about 83 miles, or 1½ hours, from Reston. Autumn is an especially appealing time to visit as harvest wraps up, grapes arrive from the vineyard and nearby farms provide an abundance of seasonal ingredients for the kitchen.

“October is one of the most exciting times to experience Virginia wine country. Harvest is wrapping up, the landscape is beautiful, and there’s this incredible energy at the wineries,” says Bekah Erkel, director of marketing at Early Mountain. “Virginia Wine Month gives people a reason to get out, explore, and experience the quality of the wine, food and hospitality happening across the state.”

Start with a guided tasting of Early Mountain’s wines, then linger over lunch. Executive Chef Tim Moore, who honed his craft at The Inn at Little Washington during its rise to Michelin-star recognition, creates a seasonal menu based on ingredients arriving from local farms, sometimes harvested that morning and plated that afternoon. Choose an à la carte lunch or wine-paired prix fixe ex-



Early Mountain Vineyards at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains is a great first stop on a day trip to celebrate Virginia Wine Month. Photo by EM Vineyards

perience, or settle in with a glass of wine while enjoying the vineyard views.

Second Stop: Barboursville Vineyards

Continue south to Barboursville Vineyards, just 19 miles, or about 25 minutes, from Early Mountain. One of Virginia’s historic wine destinations, Barboursville offers tastings in the Discovery Room or the Library 1821 experience, featuring current and older vintages accompanied by cheese, charcuterie and seasonal fare.

Leave time to stroll the estate and see the ruins of the Barbour family mansion, designed in the Palladian style by Thomas Jefferson. The combination of vineyards, history and grounds makes Barboursville a destination worth lingering over.

Tip from The Wine Cabinet staff: Try Nascent, Barboursville’s distinctive white blend of Viognier, Vermentino and Falanghina. Floral, fresh and aromatic, it’s a staff favorite and earned 94 points from James Suckling.

Then settle in for dinner at Palladio Restaurant, where a Northern Italian ap-

proach to Virginia ingredients complements the wines produced on the estate. Instead of driving back to Reston after dinner, stay the night. Barboursville offers accommodations on the property, making it easy to turn the day trip into an overnight getaway.

Perhaps longtime winemaker and estate manager Luca Paschina sums it up best: “I have been very blessed to be able to live and love this magnificent Estate for 37 years. It always reminded me of my beloved Italy. This Estate of Wine is full of vivid history, breathtaking landscapes, wholesome wines, fine food and lodging... perhaps sounds like Italy?”

Keep the Virginia Wine Month celebration going in Reston!

You don’t have to drive to wine country to explore Virginia wines. The Wine Cabinet in North Point Village Center will host a free Early Mountain Vineyards tasting Oct. 24 from 1-5 p.m., offering a chance to sample wines from the Virginia producer right here in Reston.

Reston's housing market changes

By Roxanne Watts

Pumpkins brighten doorsteps all over town now, including at Julie and Ned’s new Reston home. As the new owners revel in the beauty of their home and the season, they think back to the circumstances that brought them there. Their story illustrates recent changes in the Reston market, both in buyer behavior and seller expectations.

Julie and Ned were not the first to fall for their lovely renovated home in South Reston. It went under contract within five days to an overseas buyer who had a change of heart and withdrew. Realtors throughout Reston are noting more buyers voiding contracts, and many are routinely seeking backup contracts.

Soon after the home went back on the market, Julie and Ned toured it and loved it but did not act. They had a list of other homes to consider and wanted to investigate Reston Association’s benefits and limitations. Two other couples were equally interested but were tracking other homes, comparing features and pricing, and taking their time.

On day 32, all three submitted contracts, all at full price and all with home inspection contingencies. Julie and Ned’s cash offer was selected for a quick two-week settlement date and no financing contingency, removing risk for the seller.

Thirty-two days, then three offers: That seeming contradiction says a great deal about our market. Buyers are taking weeks to compare numerous properties before deciding. With rates increasing to

the mid-7s, they are reassessing what they can comfortably afford, and watching the economy closely. Locally, average days on the market have increased from 26 to 42 days, and to 55 days nationally. Yet when condition, location, pricing and presentation come together, serious buyers will compete. Well-priced homes in excellent condition can still attract multiple offers.

Not every segment of Reston is behaving the same. As of Sept. 20, detached home values were still appreciating, townhome prices had plateaued and condominium values had dropped 5%. Condominiums are facing substantially more competition from a 50% increase in inventory, and their fees can be a deterrent. The typical fee is \$620 per month, but they vary enormously, from \$379 to \$2,500 depending on community, unit size and inclusions. Some large Midtown units, about 3,000 square feet, exceed \$2,500 per month. Owners in some complexes also pay the Reston Association assessment of \$890 annually. Comparatively, single-family homes are \$74 per month and townhomes around \$145 per month. The pricing data is from 1,027 Reston closings listed in Bright MLS for the 12 months preceding Sept. 20.

Mortgage rates, hovering around 7.5%, are having a huge impact. To compensate, lenders are bringing back old programs, such as the 2-1 buydown, where the rate can be reduced for a couple of years for a fee. Some sellers are offering to cover that fee or provide a credit for buyers to use at their discretion.

Condition matters more than ever. If



Reston’s charming neighborhoods continue to attract many buyers. Photo by TRL

you are a seller planning to list early next year, choose an agent now and walk through the property to identify which improvements are worth making and which are not. Line up painters and other contractors before their schedules fill. Have photos taken while there is attractive greenspace or fall color. Begin discussing pricing now, and know the first weeks on the market bring the greatest attention.

With all these changes, Reston maintains its enormous appeal. The lakes and greenspace, amenities, restaurants, shopping and entertainment create a uniquely desirable place to live and attract the most successful businesses. The beautiful neighborhoods and their residents all contribute to a strong sense of community and an extraordinary place to call home.

Speaking of community, don’t miss our Annual Pumpkin Giveaway on Saturday, Oct. 17, from 9 a.m. to noon at Oakbrook Church, 1700 Reston Parkway. Coffee, donuts and plenty of goodwill will be on hand.

Inside Art

By Louise Seirmarco-Yale, Reston Artist



Orange suddenly seems to be all around us. Have we not been looking? Could we not see orange everywhere? Why, then,

in October is it so obvious?

Has the color been missing? Or were we simply unaware? Naturally, there is orange that isn’t exclusive to October, but which the season teaches us to notice: the orange glow of a low sunset, firelight, rust on an old fence, a copper pot, a construction cone against fallen leaves, an orange cat sitting on a porch, car headlights catching an orange leaf, a persimmon against a gray sky. Suddenly, these ordinary oranges seem to belong to October because our eyes have been primed for the color.

October doesn’t change the colors around us. It changes what we notice. The month brings into question the art of seeing, not just looking. Orange has been hiding in carrots, traffic cones, rust, sunsets, flames, bricks, cats, flowers, food and packaging, and even inside green leaves, waiting for the chlorophyll to disappear.

Then fall arrives and suddenly we become orange-conscious. The season simply gives us permission to notice the color. Discovery adds another layer of pleasure: that little surprise.

Pumpkins are especially associated with October. Some sources simply describe it as “pumpkin season.” We start to notice pumpkins piled in fields, farm stands and front yards.

Other orange highlights, such as maple and other autumn leaves, turn from green to brilliant orange. Late marigolds and chrysanthemums, along with fallen orange leaves, accumulate on sidewalks, lawns, gutters and water. Adding gourds and winter squash adds texture to our color hunt.

We must also consider the orange that humans manufacture for the season: jack-o’-lanterns glowing from within, orange porch lights, Halloween candy wrappers, candy corn, orange-and-black store displays, plastic pumpkin buckets carried by children, orange paper decorations in classroom windows, orange lights strung around houses, orange candles, orange costumes, pumpkin signs at roadside stands and orange table decorations. Candy corn is particularly interesting because its orange-yellow-white combination became strongly associated with the fall harvest and Halloween.

You expect autumn leaves to be beautiful. You don’t expect to encounter that ridiculously wonderful candy you loved when you were 8. The delight in seeing often begins with noticing something you weren’t expecting to notice. Just like in art, where discovery is part of the joy.

“Where has the color been all year?” is an exercise in seeing, discovering, remembering and delighting. It is artful awareness as we notice a crooked tree or an especially beautiful architectural detail. Sometimes what we notice surprises us. Artful attention lets us discover it again. The lesson, then, is to practice noticing art.

This October, practice artful discovery. Find a splash of color that surprises and delights you. Practicing daily art attention enriches life. You will wonder why you haven’t noticed it all this time.

Louise Seirmarco-Yale is a Reston artist, speaker, teacher and author of “Art. You Be The Judge. Reawaken Your Instincts and Enjoy Art On Your Own Terms,” available as a free download at www.peopleneedart.com and on Amazon. She is also on Facebook and Instagram at @louise_seirmarco_art.

LIFESTYLE

How to host a Halloween murder mystery like a pro

By Noelle Sharbaugh,
High-Heeled Hostess

A murder mystery party transforms an ordinary Halloween into something more memorable. Costumes, accusations, dramatic reveals and unexpected twists pull guests into the experience. For one evening, your home becomes part theater, part game and part dinner party. With the right atmosphere and a few intentional details, guests quickly fall into character and the evening takes on a life of its own.

Start With a Theme

The secret to a cohesive murder mystery party is choosing a strong theme that influences everything from the cocktails and menu to the décor and guest attire.

Theme Ideas:

- Haunted Manor
- Roaring 1920s Speakeasy
- Hollywood Glamour
- Gothic Victorian Dinner
- Masquerade Ball

Many murder mystery kits already include character assignments, clues and timelines, and can be ordered online. Your role becomes creating the atmosphere that brings the story to life.

Send Invitations in Advance

The party begins the moment the invitations arrive. Build anticipation by sending themed invitations with costume suggestions and character details. Guests who embrace their roles often become the highlight of the evening.

Invitation Tips:

- Include the party theme

- Suggest attire or costumes
- Add guest character assignments
- Use dramatic wording or clues
- Encourage guests to get into character

Think of the invitation as the opening scene. Set the tone early and guests will arrive ready to play along.

Create a Dramatic Atmosphere

The atmosphere is everything at a murder mystery party. The mood should begin the moment guests walk through the door.

Easy Ways to Elevate the Space:

- Use candlelight throughout the room
- Dim overhead lighting
- Add Halloween-themed colors to your table
- Incorporate vintage books, lanterns, clocks, goblets or other moody elements
- Use cloth napkins and layered place settings
- Add printed menus or character cards at each seat
- Consider a Halloween-themed playlist to set the mood

The details don't need to feel elaborate, only intentional. They can create more impact than over-the-top decorations. Pinterest offers plenty of murder mystery visuals and styling ideas.

Keep the Menu Simple

A murder mystery party works best when the host can stay engaged with guests rather than disappearing into the kitchen. Choose food that can be prepared ahead of time so the evening flows naturally.

Crowd-Friendly Ideas:

- Charcuterie boards
- Bite-sized appetizers
- Seasonal pasta dishes or soups
- Dark chocolate desserts
- Mini desserts and sweets
- Signature Cocktail Ideas:
- Black Widow Smash
- Blood Orange Margarita
- Smoky Old Fashioned
- Champagne with dark berries

Always include both alcoholic and non-alcoholic options and a self-serve drink station.

Don't Forget the Music

Music shapes the energy of the evening and keeps guests immersed.

Playlist Inspiration:

- Vintage jazz for a speakeasy theme
- Moody instrumental music
- Elegant piano or string arrangements
- Cinematic Halloween scores

Keep the playlist subtle and in the background.

Focus on the Guest Experience

The most memorable murder mystery parties happen when guests stop feeling self-conscious and fully lean into the experience. Accusations become dramatic, alliances form across the table and everyone begins eyeing one another suspiciously.

Final Hosting Tips:

- Set the table ahead of time
- Give each character a place card or special seat at the table
- Light candles before guests arrive
- Have plenty of ice and drinks prepared



Ambiance is everything at a Halloween party.
Photo by HHH

- Print clues and instructions in advance

Remember, tonight you're not just the host; you're a character. Play your part and have fun.

Most importantly, have fun with it. The laughter, dramatic reveals and unexpected moments are what guests will remember.

So, Reston ... whodunit?

Noelle Sharbaugh, the High Heeled Hostess, is a published and award-winning tablescapes designer dedicated to helping others transform dining experiences into unforgettable events. For more tips, tricks and hosting inspiration, visit www.highheeledhostess.com or email noelle@highheeledhostess.com.

Lake Trip: Pack your appetite

By Phantom Foodie
Contributions by Ms. Foodie

Did you know Lake Anne Plaza is on the National Register of Historic Places? If the crisp fall air has you craving an outdoor food adventure, consider these locally owned foodie options.

Café Anne

Café Anne serves French-Algerian-inspired baguette sandwiches and platters made with locally sourced meat, along with unique sides such as Okinawan sweet potato and coconut rice. Vegetarians will enjoy the marinated tofu and chickpea sandwiches. Catering is available.

Café Montmarte

If your palate leans toward French and Vietnamese fusion, head to this plaza bistro for shrimp summer rolls, pho, salmon or quiche. It has some of the best outdoor umbrella seating on the lake. With friendly service, it's a relaxed spot for brunch, lunch or dinner.

CHIBOO Bakery

Have a sweet tooth or need a unique hostess gift? CHIBOO Bakery operates a 100% gluten-free kitchen and also takes custom orders for other allergens. Its macarons are made with almond flour, and seasonal flavors range from classic pistachio to brown sugar cinnamon, along with tea, fruit and floral options. Les macarons sont très bien!

Elden St Tea Shop

This loose-leaf tea shop is the go-to spot for a warm cup of tea, bridal showers or birthday parties. With dozens of hand-curated loose-leaf teas in stock, you can pick up a gift or a favorite blend to

take home. Mark your calendar for Nov. 7 and 8 for the annual Northern Virginia Tea Festival at the lake.

Kalypso's Sports Tavern

A cornerstone of Lake Anne, Kalypso's offers an extensive menu and even more lakeside seating. Go for the atmosphere and lively entertainment while enjoying traditional tzatziki, gyros or fresh-baked pizzas. It's a popular spot, so pack your patience, as service is consistently hit-or-miss.

Lake Anne Coffee House & Wine Bar

From delicious breakfast options to upscale seasonal dinners, Lake Anne Coffee House & Wine Bar is a favorite with local foodies. Both the patio and upstairs dining room have a fireplace, making it an intimate place to sip wine or catch live music. The happy hour specials are excellent, too.

Lake Anne Brew House

This award-winning taproom pours small-batch, Reston-inspired craft beers, including favorites such as Lake Anne Lager. The venue hosts trivia night and Theology on Tap, and the outdoor seating area is ideal for spectating at one of the plaza's many community events. A future expansion is in the works.

Kinship Wine & Wares

In the mood to choose a new favorite bottle of wine? Stop by for an educational tasting with owner and sommelier Jen. Shop the vintage homewares while you sip and support this new small business.

La Migueleña 2 Market & Carniceria Latina

Don't overlook this hidden Latin gem tucked along the perimeter of the plaza

lot. I go for the pupusas and fresh cuts from the butcher counter for my own carne asada creations. It's part market, part casual eatery, with breakfast burritos and tamales also offered.

Nordic Knot

This Reston bakery makes soft pretzels, pretzel dogs and pretzel croissants, baking its doughy deliciousness out of a commercial kitchen. As the weather turns cold and the holidays approach, reserve a holiday charcuterie order early before they sell out.

If you've been to the annual Cardboard Boat Regatta, consider a return to Lake Anne for the wickedly fun SUP Witches Halloween Coven Paddle on Nov. 1, or visit your friends at the Reston Letter at the Farmers Market before it closes on Nov. 21.

Disclaimer: The Reston Letter and its staff do not receive solicitation fees, 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.

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M&Ms Galore				



Café Anne is one of the options for food at Lake Anne. Photo by TRL